

THIRD PARTIES IN THE U.S. POLITICAL SYSTEM WHAT EXTERNAL  
AND INTERNAL ISSUES SHAPE PUBLIC PRECEPTION OF  
LIBERTARIAN PARTY/POLITICIANS?

JACQUELINE ANN FIEST

Master's Program in Communication

APPROVED:

---

Eduardo Barrera, Ph.D., Chair

---

Sarah De Los Santos Upton, Ph.D.

---

Pratyusha Basu, Ph.D.

---

Stephen Crites, Ph.D.  
Dean of the Graduate School

Copyright ©

by

Jacqueline Ann Fiest

2019

## **Dedication**

This paper is dedicated to my dear friend Charlotte Wiedel. This would not have been possible without you.

Thank you.



THIRD PARTIES IN THE U.S. POLITICAL SYSTEM WHAT EXTERNAL  
AND INTERNAL ISSUES SHAPE PUBLIC PRECEPTION OF  
LIBERTARIAN PARTY/POLITICIANS?

by

JACQUELINE ANN FIEST, BA

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at El Paso

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION  
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT EL PASO

May 2019

ProQuest Number: 13865379

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 13865379

Published by ProQuest LLC (2019). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code  
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.  
789 East Eisenhower Parkway  
P.O. Box 1346  
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

## Table of Contents

Table of Contents .....	iv
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Literature Review .....	3
What is Political Communication?.....	3
Violence in Political Rhetoric .....	4
Chapter Two: Research Methods.....	8
Data Collection and Analysis Methods .....	8
Interview Respondents .....	9
Chapter Three: Research Findings.....	13
What is a Libertarian? .....	13
The History of the Libertarian Party in the United States .....	15
Prominent Third Party/Libertarian Personalities .....	18
American Libertarianism versus Other American Political Philosophies .....	21
The Republican Party .....	22
The Democratic Party.....	25
Reasons for Lack of Libertarian Candidates on the Ballot.....	30
Our Own Perspectives .....	34
Toxic Fringe.....	34
Public Popularity.....	37
Straight Ticket Voting .....	39
Laws to Keep Libertarians Off the Ballot.....	42
Race in the Libertarian Philosophy/Party .....	46
Gender and Feminism in the Libertarian Philosophy/Party.....	50
Conclusion .....	60
References .....	62
Scholarly References.....	62
Appendix A. Supplementary Data File .....	73

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The current two-party system has dominated American politics for much of history, but as voters find themselves frustrated with a limited set of choices, more are becoming open to the idea of a third-party option. According to Newsweek, 61% of people believe America needs a third major political party. That number jumps to 77% among independents (Haltiwanger, 2017). In almost every other part of American life, a variety of choices is considered a benefit. A CNN poll done in conjunction with ORC International reflected that only 5% of Americans feel the federal government in Washington DC, which overwhelmingly consists of Republicans and Democrats (with only two Independents), represents people like themselves “very well” (CNN/ORC poll results, 2016). Despite this available gap for third parties to exploit and build support among American voters, they have largely failed to do so. In my thesis, I intend to address how media has been used to spread a message that is particularly damaging to Libertarian candidates, but also can be used to help spread a new political message. Overall, I’d like to address what external and internal issues shape public perception of libertarian party/politicians,

What third party or independent candidates/campaigns have been successful in the past at spreading their messages and what can we learn from that now? What have past independent or third-party candidates running for office – either successfully or unsuccessfully – found either helped or hurt them through the process? Examining these issues may help determine where third parties, specifically the Libertarian Party, have failed when it comes to connecting with American voters and where they can succeed in the future.



In order to fully understand the dynamics of the current two-party system, it's important to know that these issues started showing up in U.S. politics as soon as the American Revolution was won. The two major parties of that time, the Federalists run by Alexander Hamilton and the Anti-Federalists (also known as the Democratic-Republicans) run by Thomas Jefferson largely disagreed over three points: foreign policy, the economy and the nature of government (Origins, n.d.). These are the same topics the two major parties disagree about now. Hamilton wanted to make a government similar to that of the British monarchy, with a strong central government including a central bank and a strong political executive. Jefferson, after engaging in revolution against the strong, domineering monarchy of England, believed a central bank and a strong political executive would have too much power. His preference was for power to lie with the states and their individual bodies, not with the federal government (Origins, n.d.).

Hamilton's Federalists are today's Democrats, believing in a strong central government, while Jefferson's Democrat-Republicans evolved into today's Republican Party, espousing belief in states' authority and limiting the power of the federal government. These major disagreements first escalated in the 1790s (Origins, n.d.) and while the names of the parties have changed, they are still debating same issues 229 years later.

As we start this thesis, I'd like to state at the open that I have been a libertarian since 2008. After having seen the good and the bad, I have welcomed the opportunity to sit down and look at the issues that plague the party, overall philosophy as well as what can we do to be more successful moving forward.

## Literature Review

The political communication landscape has changed dramatically in the last 30 years, starting with the advent of the internet, then transforming in ways never imagined with the creation and growth of social media. Not only does it provide direct access to voters in a way that is historically unmatched, but it also gives the voters direct access to the candidates. The voting public now has deeper access to political candidates than ever before and thus know more about them than we ever have. During Franklin Delano Roosevelt's presidency (1933-1945) it was considered controversial to show him in his wheelchair (necessitated by his battle with polio) (Clausen, 2015); it was considered disrespectful to show the president in a way that made him appear weak. In the current environment, the media regularly posts articles concerning President Trump's alleged affairs with pornography stars and Playboy bunnies and New York Congressman Anthony Weiner's sexting with a minor (for which he was sent to prison). As the demand for information has grown and has become more easily available at our fingertips, nothing is off limits.

### What is Political Communication?

Political communication is defined by Pippa Norris at Harvard University as an interactive process concerning the transmission of information among politicians, the news media, and the public (Norris, 2004). A field of study that originated in American higher education systems in the 1970s, it was heavily influenced by the disciplines of social psychology, mass communication and political science. The influence of these fields on political communication can be seen when you consider political communication's "four great men" Harold Lasswell, Paul Lazarsfeld, Kurt Lewin and Carl Hovland were all trained in social psychology (Ryfe, 2001). Social psychology influenced political communication as it observes

voters' moods, patterns and actions, which helped cement political communication as a legitimate science. Mass Communication studies the effects of media on voters, candidates and the political process. As social media gained dominance in American society, its influence extends to the political sphere as well. Political science helped by understanding business as usual in the political world, for example, understanding that politics is not about the actions of individuals, but the actions of groups (Ryfe, 2001). Norris further explains that operates downwards from the governing bodies to the citizens, horizontally among political actors and upwards from the public to the government. There are several different types of communication that go into this process that range from social media and other means of electronic communication to older ways of communication, such as direct mailing, telephone, and email surveys. From there, things can be broken down even further from that point, applying studies of rhetoric, persuasion, and propaganda to the information spread.

#### Violence in Political Rhetoric

One of the most important things to know about rhetoric is that it is an art form. The word itself comes from the Greek word *rhetorike*: the art (*tekhne*) of persuasion by a speaker (*rhetor*). In English, the name given to the practice of persuasion is rhetoric (Martin, 2014). The study of political rhetoric is a focus on not only what is being said, but how it is being said, specifically within the political sphere. This is very important when you consider the random nature of political speeches, which often cover a variety of subjects that those watching will often have strong feelings about (Rank, 1980). Rhetoric is used by political candidates to convince voters that they, and often their party, are worthy of their votes and financial support.

Focusing on some of the negative aspects of rhetoric in political communication, particularly violent rhetoric, its effects on political communication have become apparent in the

first two years of the Donald Trump presidency. More so than any other president in history, Donald Trump's language has been angry and divisive and its effect on his most ardent supporters has been unprecedented.

On October 21, 2018, a man was arrested for groping a woman on a plane while she slept. He was arrested after the plane landed in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and stated that President Trump said it was permissible to grab women by their private parts (McCluskey, 2018). At a high school basketball game in Kansas City in 2016, predominantly white students from Warrensburg High School got up and turned their backs to the opposing team's African-American members (Cameron, 2017). In December of 2016, a reporter for AL.com was walking his dogs when he saw the Klu Klux Klan (KKK) distributing flyers, urging "whitey" to get off the fence and continued, "We must right the ship in the next 4 years as we may never get another chance to secure a future for our race and children." The reporter confirmed with the KKK that the flyers were official communications from the organization (Archibald, 2016). Groups like the Klan appear to be more comfortable displaying their violent prejudice in public.

In a study done by Nathan Kalmoe from George Washington University and printed in *Political Communication*, it was found that, despite a decline in societal violence overall, across multiple experiments performed, "mild violent metaphors multiply support for political violence among aggressive citizens, especially young adults" in the United States and Norway (Kalmoe, 2014). Kalmoe found that this was related to leaders often using terms like fight, combat and war when speaking on domestic political issues (Stack, 2018). A particularly brutal example of this in the recent political landscape was an ad run by Pennsylvania governor candidate Scott Wagner: "Well, Governor Wolf, let me tell you what, between now and Nov. 6, you better put a catcher's mask on your face, because I'm going to stomp all over your face with golf spikes".

In an article titled “Twisting Tongues and Twisting Arms” published in the *European Journal of International Relations*, Krebs and Jackson (2007) discuss rhetorical coercion and say it consists of parties attempting to maneuver each other onto more favorable rhetorical terrain and thereby close off routes of acceptable rebuttal. Continuous use of violent rhetoric for everyday political discourse, and our growing numbness to it, has allowed it to turn into spiked shoes on someone’s face, and the loss of a life, over an attempt to violently get the one-up on a political ideology.

I believe the correlation between this violence and the issues facing the LP as it relates to news coverage, is sensationalism. The idea that the news covers sensationalism more often than not is something that has been long heard. This is why we have the old adage, “If it bleeds, it leads.” But, judging by the previously discussed ad put out by Scott Wagner, as well as the fact that groups like the Klan are now out unabashedly advertising their beliefs, the media creators are also now embracing violence and sensationalism in their rhetoric. Viewer attention is now dominated by shock value rather than education and valuable information. I would argue this is bad not only for the LP, but everyone.

#### News Media Involvement in Political Communication

One change that may have contributed to this divisive mindset is that major news outlets appear biased towards one or another political slant. For example, the Fox News Channel is considered conservative and has been criticized over its blatant support of Donald Trump, while CNN and MSNBC are known for a more liberal audience (Blake, 2014). News media bias allows people to exist in a vacuum and seems to have affected public perception. According to a 2016 Pew Research poll, 27% of Democrats and 36% of Republicans see the opposite party as a threat to American well-being (Suh, 2016). According to the same Pew poll, 64% of conservatives and

49% of liberals say most of their close friends agree with them on the political views. Also, 50% of conservatives and 35% of liberals say they find it important to live where most people share their political views and 30% of conservatives and 23% of liberals said they would be unhappy if a family member married someone who was a member of the opposite party. These are some serious feelings to cast onto one's friends, family, coworkers and others around us when only six out of ten Americans voted in the 2016 presidential election (McDonald, 2018).

While the news media is ferociously covering the latest political fight, gaffe or controversy of the day, libertarians receive little to no coverage. The Media Research Center looked at 1,713 stories related to that year's presidential campaign that appeared on ABC, CBS and NBC between the beginning of January to the end of August of 2016. Donald Trump received 1,773 minutes of coverage, Hilary Clinton received 1,020 minutes while Libertarian candidate Gary Johnson received 11 seconds of coverage. (Harper, 2016). I wonder if the time spent covering the bickering between Clinton and Trump could have been used to show Americans the substantial records of Gary Johnson and his running mate, Bill Weld. Could that have had influenced the election? Maybe. Maybe not. But is the responsibility of the news media to cover sensationalism, or the facts? It's worth pointing out that a vast amount of programming is needed to fill a 24-hour news cycle, which most Americans freely consume. As much as we want to blame the media for certain ills in American society, it can be argued that some personal and national soul searching is overdue regarding who is empowering the media to say or do certain things in the constant push for likes, retweets and advertising dollars.

## Chapter Two: Research Methods

For this thesis, I chose to conduct my research in the form of interviews because my goal is for this paper to have a “round table” effect. I want to get people who are passionate and knowledgeable about politics, libertarian philosophy and the effect of the government on the people in one conversation to discuss what barriers exist, what progress has been made, what can be done better and what needs to be discarded. My hope is that a reader of this paper may see a comment by one of the interviewees and choose to explore it further. Due to the connectivity of the modern world, such a person could go to Twitter, reach out to the interviewee directly and continue the conversation there. Bringing people and ideas together is important for the LP right now as candidates are on more ballots in more places than ever before. The accessibility of people like Nick Sarwark, the Chair of the Libertarian Party, and his willingness to speak to people on social media is something that I believe can and should be utilized in order to expand on the ideas that define and can enlarge the party. This presence on social media can also expose different ideas and ways of thinking, for example Kat Murti’s and Elizabeth Nolan Brown’s reconceptions of libertarian feminism. The first step is getting these ideas or issues identified and then opening them up for discussion.

### Data Collection and Analysis Methods

I conducted 11 semi structured, in-depth interviews with people who have identified as libertarians and have been involved publicly in some way with either the party or the ideology. Each of them has considerable experience in at least one of the issues discussed in this paper that the LP is facing now.

All interviews were done via Skype and were conducted during a two-week period in the month of February of 2019. Eight interviews were done in a face to face video format, while one

was done via audio interview only because of technological issues. Due to time constraints, one person returned their questions and answers to me by email, and one other responded by making their own video reading my questions and replying with their answers.

Anytime Skype is used to do an interview, even if it's an audio-only interview, Skype provides a video file. I ran these video files through a written transcription program called Transcribe, edited the transcriptions, and then read the interviews. As I re-read the interviews, I looked for common themes related to issues currently facing either the Libertarian Party or libertarian philosophy. As each new issue was identified, statements related to that issue were highlighted with a certain color. By the time I completed reading the transcripts, I used yellow, purple, green, grey and pink highlighting. I then grouped all statements of a certain color together and used these groupings as the basis for topics to examine.

#### Interview Respondents

##### Carla Gericke

Gericke was formerly president of the Free State Project, a political movement to recruit Libertarian-minded people to move to New Hampshire and was named one of New Hampshire Magazine's "2014 Remarkable Women". Her strong belief in holding police accountable for their actions led her to win an appeals case in the First Circuit Court affirming the rights of Americans to film police officers. When she ran for Senate in 2018, she ran as a Republican.

##### Glenn Jacobs

Before entering local politics, Jacobs had been a professional wrestler with World Wrestling Entertainment (WWE), starting his career with the company in 1995. Jacobs started speaking on libertarian issues in 2008, using his celebrity status and name recognition; it is his experiences that supported the idea that there is an existing "stigma" on Libertarianism such that



even a well-known Libertarian celebrity candidate was insecure using that title when running for office.

I wanted to explore what drove them away from the Libertarian Party during their political campaigns and more specifically why both of them went to the Republican Party. Did that decision represent a possible lack of tolerance for the Libertarian Party and the issues it is currently facing (ballot access, lack of funding, work to gather signatures, etc.)? Did they consider affiliating with the Democratic Party? Are they still involved with the Republican Party after their campaigns?

#### Barry Hess

I also interviewed Barry Hess. Mr. Hess has seen close up some of the laws used to keep Libertarians off the ballot during his pursuit of the governor's seat in Arizona. Why are these laws being passed and what can be done to circumvent the hardships these laws place on third-party politicians? I also wanted to delve into some of his experiences as a libertarian candidate as he has been a stalwart on the libertarian scene in the state of Arizona since the early 2000s.

#### Elizabeth Nolan Brown, Kat Murti and Cathy Resigwitz

I also interviewed Elizabeth Nolan Brown, Kat Murti, and Cathy Resigwitz. Brown and Murti are co-founders of Feminists for Liberty. Murti is the Cato Institute's Senior Digital Outreach Manager and Brown is an associate editor for libertarian publication Reason Magazine. Resigwitz is another libertarian feminist, who writes a housing column for the Bay City Beacon and writes on sex worker issues for Sex and the State). For a philosophy that claims to embrace individual liberty and sovereignty, why are there not more women, people of color and people of differing sexual orientations identifying with libertarianism? What can be done to increase diversity in libertarian ideology and/or the LP? Where do libertarians stand on issues such as the

legalization of sex work and the rights of minorities and homosexuals? What organizations are involved in bringing these issues to the forefront?

Norma Jean Almodovar

I also had spoke to Norma Jean Almodovar. Almodovar, a former LAPD peace officer and sex worker, speaks and writes on the rights of sex workers in the United States. She also ran for Lieutenant Governor of California in 1986 as a Libertarian. Issues surrounding police are often weighted for libertarians because the police can act with force on behalf of the state. What is the history of police – and for Almodovar specifically, the Los Angeles Police Department – and what tactics do they use? How does this affect the perceptions of government and the rights of certain groups, such as sex workers? Where is that information gathered and/or made available?

Nicholas Sarwark

Nicholas Sarwark, the Chair of the Libertarian Party in the United States, was also interviewed. I believed that as party Chair he could offer perspective on both libertarian ideology and LP platform positions and responses on issues such as immigration, including the recent increase in immigrants coming to Mexico and the United States from Central America, and the rights of minorities. Why does he think there are not more people of color in the LP and what are possible remedies? Does he think there are more or less women in the LP than in previous years? How does the party react to the “fringe elements” of the libertarian philosophy that exist online? How does he believe the War on Drugs has affected the immigration issues America is currently facing?

Ken Moellman

I interviewed Ken Moellman, former Chair of the Libertarian Party for the state of Kentucky, about his experiences fighting for ballot access for the Libertarian Party in his state, including struggles to gather and verify signatures. What was the process? Was it fair, and why or why not? How much did the process cost? What steps have been taken, if any, to streamline this process to help libertarians (or others) get on the ballot? Does he believe the national Libertarian Party has provided support to the local candidates in ballot access and visibility? Can they do more to help? What kind of help do they need?

#### Jonathan Blanks

I also interviewed Jonathan Blanks, Research Associate with the Cato Institute who often writes on issues of race. Why are there so few people of color involved with the libertarian philosophy and/or party? What can be done to bring more people of color to the philosophy, which will assist to bringing them to the party? Does the Libertarian Party's history with conservatism keep some people of color from identifying as libertarian?

#### Larry Sharpe

Finally, I spoke to Larry Sharpe, Libertarian Party candidate for governor of New York in 2018. What was it like running for office as a libertarian in a big government, high tax state? How does he feel about certain social issues as a libertarian? Should prostitution be illegal? What is the key to getting libertarian candidates in campaign debates?

## Chapter Three: Research Findings

### The Libertarian Philosophy/Party

What is a Libertarian?

One obstacle I believe to be largely responsible for the lack of understanding of what a libertarian is, is indeed a lack of understanding. So many Americans are conditioned to think of politics along a traditional left/right, Democrat/Republican spectrum that they are unsure where libertarianism fits on the spectrum they have known and operated within all their lives.

According to Bas Van Der Vossen (2017) in an entry in the Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics,

Libertarianism is a theory in political philosophy that strongly values individual freedom and is skeptical about the justified scope of government in our lives. Libertarians see individuals as sovereign, as people who have a right to control their bodies and work, who are free to decide how to interact with willing others, and who cannot be forced to do things against their will without very strong justification.

American public politics is attached to the idea of a left/right paradigm. However, American Libertarian activist David Nolan developed a cartesian coordinate chart in 1969 that has become influential as a more precise way of measuring political affiliation, appropriately called “The Nolan Chart”; it has also been called “The World’s Smallest Political Quiz”. The quiz is usually presented in an online format and consists of questions measuring one’s opinions on personal and economics freedoms. The more open to freedom a responder’s answers are, the higher the score. Then the scores are mapped on the chart based on the numerical scores on the bottom of the chart for both economic and personal freedom. The higher the score on both sides,

and the nearer to the top of the chart, the more Libertarian the beliefs of the user (Know Your Politics, n.d.).

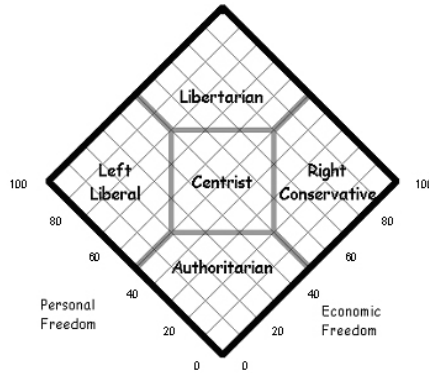


Figure 1. Nolan Chart

The Nolan Chart is built on an older model called the Political Compass, which was explored in *Rampant Journal of Individualist Thought* in 1968 as a way expand and measurement viewpoints along the political spectrum is discussed going back to a book published in 1957 entitled *Sense and Nonsense in Psychology* written by H.J. Eysenck (Bryson & McDill, 1968).

On page 21 of this paper is this example of the Political Compass.

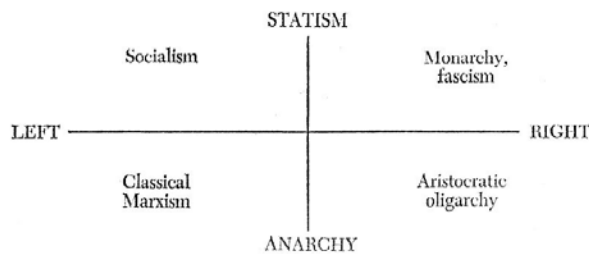


Figure 2. Political Compass Model

There are two axes on this compass: Economic, displayed horizontally, and Social, visualized vertically. On the official website for the Political Compass, copyrighted by Pace News, the compass is explained by measuring the axes as running from -10 to +10 on each axis. A user answers a series of questions, and in an attempt to be user friendly, on the website's analysis page, examples of commonly known historical individuals such as Joseph Stalin, Adolph Hitler, Margaret Thatcher and Mahatma Gandhi are used to help new users understand examples of placement on the compass (The Political Compass, n.d.). The more one is open to a free market with minimal government interference, the more to the right on the economic spectrum one will fall; conversely, the more one believes in government intervening in economic affairs, the further to the left one will fall. On the social scale, the more one's answers reveal belief in personal freedom, the nearer to the bottom the responder will land; the more a person believes the actions of individuals should be controlled, one will end up nearer to the top of the social scale.

### The History of the Libertarian Party in the United States

The Libertarian Party (LP) was first founded in Colorado Springs, CO in 1971. The first national convention for the party was held in 1972; John Hospers, a professor at USC was nominated for president and Tonie Nathan, a radio personality from Eugene, OR was nominated for vice president (Winter, 2001). When a former Nixon supporter decided to throw his support behind Hospers and Nathan, Nathan became the first woman and person of Jewish ancestry to receive an electoral college vote in the United States (Boaz 2014).

In 1977 the Libertarians were on the ballot in seven states and won their first ever public offices. Elaine Lindsey won a Circleville, Ohio City Council seat; and Norman Betros Jr. was elected to the city Board of Education in Haldane, New York. (Winter, 2001) This was this same

year that the Cato Institute, a prominent libertarian think tank, was established (About Cato, 2018). Also, in that year, the Libertarian Party's Vice-Presidential candidate, Tonie Nathan, attended the International Women's Year conference in Texas where she spoke out against "big government feminists", saying, "Like women nagging their husband for a new dress, they were nagging Congress for a new law or program," (Winter, 2001). Another libertarian think tank, the Reason Foundation, was established in 1978 (About Reason, 2018).

In 1980, The Statue of Liberty was adopted as the symbol of the party. In 1982, the Libertarian Party challenged President Ronald Regan for proposing a very large tax increase. By 1985, the number of Libertarians in office in the United States was up to 49. Also, in 1985, Paul Jacob, former Chair of the Libertarian Party was convicted and served six months in prison for refusing to register for the draft, and the Advocates for Self-Government was created by Marshall Fritz. In 1986, Norma Jean Almodovar, a former LAPD officer and sex worker, got a large amount of attention when she ran for lieutenant governor in California. One particularly notable part of her campaign was a poster she debuted where she was completely nude, wearing only red tape, with a caption, "Cut the Red Tape". She received over 100,000 votes (MyBio, n.d.).

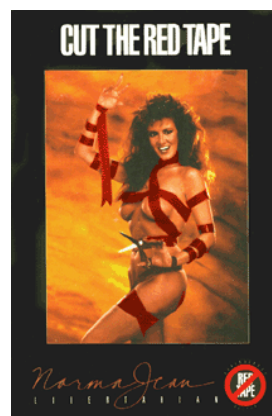


Figure 3. Cut The Red Tape

In 1987, Dr. Ron Paul left the Republican party and joined the Libertarian Party while libertarians won every seat on the city council in Big Water, UT (Winter, 2001). The Libertarians won a big victory in 1989 when they won a Supreme Court case which necessitated how parties were required to organize. In 1990, the Libertarians had their second female vice presidential candidate in Nancy Lord Taker her first step into politics as she ran for Washington DC mayor. In 1991, Rothaus and Carl Warbuton, both from New Hampshire, resigned from the Republican Party and joined the Libertarian Party. (Winter, 2001) In 1994, 40 libertarians were either appointed or elected to public office in the United States. In that same year, the Libertarian party received some questionable publicity when radio shock-jock Howard Stern won the nomination for the governorship in the state of New York as a Libertarian candidate (Sack, 1994). Stern's positions were out of touch with Libertarian philosophy as one of his platforms was to reinstate the death penalty. (This is not a libertarian value. The official website for the Libertarian Party clearly states, "We oppose the administration of the death penalty by the state" (2018 Platform, n.d.)). Stern ending up dropping out of the race upon learning that, if he ran, he would have to provide not only his home address, but his income, to the state of New York in a way that would eventually see that information become public.

In 1996, the Libertarian Party celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and in February of 1998, African American civil rights leader Roy Innis joined. In 2008 Libertarians nominated Bob Barr to run for president to contrast with what was viewed as George W. Bush's interventionist policies at the time. (Libertarians challenge, 2017). By 2013, 130 Libertarians were holding elected office and the LP boasted 250,000 registered voters (Short History, n.d.).



## Prominent Third Party/Libertarian Personalities

### Gary Johnson

Gary Johnson's success in politics started with his success in business. After starting his own construction business, Big J Enterprises, in 1976 (Guzzon, 2016), Johnson eventually grew it into a \$38-million-dollar enterprise (Gary Johnson, 2018) before eventually selling it in 1999 (Barret, n.d.). With that success, he campaigned for governor of New Mexico, spending \$500,000 of his own money (Lynch, 2001), using the slogan "People Before Politics" (Samuels, 2016). He won that office as a Republican, despite the fact that New Mexico tends to lean Democratic, often two to one (Martin, 2012). His first term was so successful that the Democrats campaigned hard to prevent him from winning a second. Then Vice President Al Gore, as well as then First Lady Hilary Rodham Clinton, campaigned for Martin Chavez, Johnson's opponent; and the Democratic Governors Association wrote a \$165,000 check to Chavez's campaign (Ayres, 1998). Johnson did well as governor despite often being stonewalled by a largely Democratic state legislature (Miller, 2000). Johnson would go onto defeat Chavez (Lizza, 2017), making him the first governor in New Mexico history to be elected to two consecutive four-year terms (Lynch, 2001). Due to state set term limits, Johnson left the governor position in 2003. This is when the Libertarian Party started expressing interest in him. But he unequivocally stated that he was not interested, saying, "I do consider it very flattering, but I'm a Republican, and I'm not going to run for President" (Janofsky, 1999). Eventually, Johnson was persuaded to run as a Libertarian, and in the 2012 presidential election, he earned 1,012, 617 votes, which equaled one percent of the popular vote (Tuccille, 2012). In the 2016 election, while on the ballot as a Libertarian in all 50 states, Johnson still managed to obtain 4,489,235 votes, or 3.27% of the

popular vote (Leip, 2016). While that was a considerable jump, which reflected well on Johnson and for the Libertarian Party, it was not enough to come close to victory in the election.

### Ross Perot

Ross Perot, a successful businessman who did not like to give up, ran for president twice, first in 1992 as an Independent and then in 1996 as a member of the Reform Party. Like Johnson, Perot was a successful businessman who founded Electronic Data Systems Corporation in June 27, 1962. He built EDS into a successful enterprise that was sold for \$2.5 billion to GM on June 27, 1984. After the sale of EDS, Perot founded Perot Systems Corporation in 1988 and sat on the board of directors. On an edition of Larry King Live that aired on February 20, 1992, Perot announced he would enter the next presidential race if he could get on the ballot on all 50 states, but then backed out on July 16th saying he couldn't win, as well as expressing concerns about the electoral college. He then re-entered the race in September 1992 after qualifying for the ballot in all 50 states running as an independent. In his first race, he came in third with 18.9% of the vote behind Bill Clinton and the incumbent George Herbert Walker Bush. He ran again as a Reform Party candidate in 2016, receiving only 8% of the vote. (Ross Perot Fast Facts, 2018).

Even though Perot's second run for the presidency as a Reform Party candidate netted a smaller percent of the vote, it's notable as an example of a potentially prominent third party at the time. During the 1992 election, nearly one in five votes cast went for Perot. That is the strongest support any third-party or independent candidate has had since 1912 (Jelen, 2001). That early success caused current president Donald Trump to consider running as a member of the Reform Party at the time. The Reform Party also had notable wins, including Jesse Ventura, who won his bid for Minnesota governor as a member of the Reform Party in 1996 (Jelen, 2001). In 2018, Ventura said he was confident he could beat Trump in a presidential election saying

Trump “will not have a chance” (Carnevale, 2018). He said he has had some interest from the U.S. Green Party and is interested in pushing for marijuana legalization and moving the United States away from the use of fossil fuels.

### Thomas Sowell

A Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University since September 1980, Thomas Sowell has consistently been a voice for Libertarians on economic issues.

Sowell has earned an A.B. in Economics from Harvard College in 1958, an A.M. in Economics from Columbia University in 1959, and a Ph.D. in Economics from University of Chicago in 1968. He often writes on issues of economics and, as an African American, also sometimes on race. A former Marxist (Sawhill, 2011), Sowell claims that his change to a more fiscally conservative point of view came when he was working as an intern for the federal government in the summer of 1960 while studying Puerto Rican minimum wage laws. In an interview with Salon.com, Sowell said,

It was painfully clear that as they pushed up minimum wage levels, which they did at that time industry by industry, the employment levels were falling. I was studying the sugar industry. There were two explanations of what was happening. One was the conventional economic explanation: that as you pushed up the minimum-wage level, you were pricing people out of their jobs. The other one was that there were a series of hurricanes that had come through Puerto Rico, destroying sugar cane in the field, and therefore employment was lower (Sawhill, 2011).

When asked in that interview if he felt defined by the term “conservative”, Sowell rejected that term, and labels in general. But he also stated, “I prefer not to have labels, but I suspect that "libertarian" would suit me better than many others, although I disagree with the

libertarian movement on a number of things -- military preparedness, for instance.” (Sawhill, 2011),

An example of a text written by Sowell that dealt with economics and race is *Discrimination and Disparities*, published in 2018, which examined why so many policies that intended to fix economic disparities between groups have been ineffective or even counterproductive.

#### American Libertarianism versus Other American Political Philosophies

American libertarians believe strongly in individualism, self-sufficiency, freedom of association and laissez-faire economics. Some libertarians, who fall far on the right of the political spectrum and often identify as anarchists, believe any government to be invalid or even criminal in many (if not all) of its functions; for example, people in this category consider taxes to be collected under duress, since the government sets the amounts to pay, the timeline under which to pay, and threatens arrest and/or imprisonment if not paid according to those rules.

However, some libertarians see legitimate uses for government, and thus justify collection of taxes for things that are considered a legitimate use of government authority, such as operation of the U.S. Postal Service, fire, police and other emergency services, road construction and maintenance, and...placing and collecting taxes. No matter where individuals fall on the American political spectrum, if they believe in small government and personal freedom they are invited to look at the official Libertarian Party (LP) in the United States.

The Libertarian Party was founded in 1971 and its preamble states:

As Libertarians, we seek a world of liberty: a world in which all individuals are sovereign over their own lives and are not forced to sacrifice their values for the benefit of others.

We believe that respect for individual rights is the essential precondition for a free and prosperous world, that force and fraud must be banished from human relationships, and that only through freedom can peace and prosperity be realized.

Consequently, we defend each person's right to engage in any activity that is peaceful and honest, and welcome the diversity that freedom brings. The world we seek to build is one where individuals are free to follow their own dreams in their own ways, without interference from government or any authoritarian power (2018 Platform, n.d.).

How does this compare to other political parties and philosophies?

### The Republican Party

The Republican Party in the United States is rooted in American social conservatism and generally advocates for laissez-faire economic policies. Most Republicans are strong supporters of ideas such as American Exceptionalism, Judeo-Christian values, pro-life points of view regarding abortion, free trade and free markets. There has been an ongoing connection between Libertarians and Republicans due to overlapping positive beliefs in low taxes, gun ownership, and small government where economic policies are concerned,

Glenn Jacobs, mayor of Knoxville, Tennessee, formerly identified as a Libertarian, participating in the Free State Project and hosting a libertarian podcast called, "The Tiny Political Show". However, when he ran for office in 2018 he ran as a Republican. When I asked him about that, he said that he saw similarities between the American Libertarian philosophy and the platform of the Republican Party, so he was comfortable running as a Republican due to their expressed belief in, "...small government and keeping government out," of the lives of private citizens and stressed that he believes overall that, "parties are parties". He went onto say that, "My goal as a Republican is actually what Ron Paul did and what Rand Paul is doing: To try to

push the Republican party in an even more small government way, and to grow the party among non-traditional Republicans. Among women, minorities and young people. Because I think the message of freedom should resonate with everybody.”

Republicans often rely heavily on the United States Constitution and link themselves to the U.S. Founding Fathers, most notably John Adams, calling him the “intellectual father of American conservatism” (Ripley, 1965).

One difference between many Republicans and libertarian philosophy in general is that libertarians are uncomfortable with the role of religious morality (Judeo-Christian or otherwise) in governing or regulating private behavior, or indeed in government itself (such as compulsory prayer at official government functions or pledging of allegiance which includes the words “under God”). By contrast, the Christian Right has been influential in the selection of candidates and the crafting of policy in the Republican Party for decades (Knuckey, 1999). For example, the 2016 Republican Party Platform stated, “Strong families, depending upon God and one another, advance the cause of liberty by lessening the need for government in their daily lives” (Great American Families, 2016). According to Pew Research, 58% of Republicans consider themselves Evangelical Christians (Religion in America, 2015).

Laws blocking marriage equality, adoption, transgender bathroom choice, abortion access, and social and reproductive rights of the public based on sexual orientation, gender identity, etc., are frowned upon by the Libertarian Party philosophy as limits on individual freedom and personal choice. According to the Libertarian Party Platform:

Sexual orientation, preference, gender, or gender identity should have no impact on the government’s treatment of individuals, such as in current marriage, child custody, adoption, immigration or military service laws. Government does not have the authority

to define, promote, license or restrict personal relationships, regardless of the number of participants. Consenting adults should be free to choose their own sexual practices and personal relationships. Until such time as the government stops its illegitimate practice of marriage licensing, such licenses must be granted to all consenting adults who apply.

(2018 Platform, n.d.)

Most Republicans and other fiscal conservatives agree with Libertarian belief in free trade, free markets and laissez-faire economics, which is defined as a “policy of minimum governmental interference in the economic affairs of individuals and society,” (Laissez-faire, 2018). The 2016 Republican Platform likened high taxes to putting cement shoes on cross-country runners. However, right now Republicans seem to be tolerating government intervention in the economy in the form of mercantilist policies such as taxes and tariffs. Republican President Donald Trump is threatening to place considerable tariffs on various countries and economic alliances, including Canada, Mexico, the European Union (Bort, 2018), and China, in the amounts of hundreds of billions of dollars (Blumberg, 2018). Economic sectors such as automobile manufacturing, agriculture, and processed foods have taken large financial hits, such as the price of Coca-Cola going up due to the cost of aluminum, jobs lost due to companies like Harley Davidson being forced to move production to Europe to avoid higher steel and aluminum costs, and the price of beer rising due to the cost of beer kegs going up when tariffs forced keg producers to turn to overseas providers, as well as more jobs being lost (Bort, 2018). This has cost American jobs and caused significant damage to the United States’ reputation with its international trading partners. As an example, in retaliation for the Trump tariffs, China has placed \$60 billion worth of tariffs on U.S. products including coffee, leather, and auto parts. The Chinese State Council Tariff Commission said, “In violation of the bilateral consensus reached

after multiple rounds of negotiations, the United States has again unilaterally escalated trade frictions" (China plans tariffs, 2018). The Libertarian Party staunchly opposes this use of tariffs, and thus its 2018 Platform stated:

Libertarians want all members of society to have abundant opportunities to achieve economic success. A free and competitive market allocates resources in the most efficient manner. Each person has the right to offer goods and services to others on the free market. The only proper role of government in the economic realm is to protect property rights, adjudicate disputes, and provide a legal framework in which voluntary trade is protected. All efforts by government to redistribute wealth, or to control or manage trade, are improper in a free society. (2018 Platform, n.d.)

#### The Democratic Party

Perhaps the one issue on which most Democrats and Libertarians disagree is on the issue of gun control: regulating the purchase, sale, possession, carrying, and use of certain classes of firearms. During my interview with Libertarian Party Chair Nick Sarwark, he made it clear there was no compromise on the issue of gun control in America, saying:

This is going to do the salt the earth thing, but I think most Libertarians are not going to give you any ground on anything that can be carried by an individual. You can probably get a little wiggle room on like an RPG. It's carried by an individual but it's really for tanks and planes. There's some Libertarians that are going to be like, "Yea. You should have one of those too because, why not?" We just put out a press release because they brought magazine limits back in the Congress over in The House. What we pointed out was Libertarians would like to reduce the amount of gun violence in the United States. And we're one of the few political parties that actually has plans that would reduce the



amount of gun violence. The Democrats would like to focus on things like high-capacity magazines and expanding the number of people required to have a background check prior to a firearm transfer. The Republicans, at least the president, are willing to give up things like bump stocks, which are basically a novelty item. It's akin to putting a 5-liter Mustang engine into a Miata. It's not a good idea, but it probably from my perspective shouldn't be illegal.

The Libertarian Party also differs from the Democratic Party on issues of taxation. According to the Libertarian Party Platform:

...we think that government forcing people to pay taxes is inherently wrong.

Libertarians advocate for voluntary exchange, where people are free to make their own choices about what to do with their lives, their time, their bodies, their livelihood, and their dollars. If Americans want to give money to the government for one reason or another, they should be free to do so. If Americans prefer to spend their money on other things, then they should be free to do that also. (2018 Platform, n.d.)

To quote long-time libertarian Carla Gerick from my interview with her for this thesis, “Taxation IS theft!”

Searching the Democratic Party Platform using the term “taxes” as a search term, provides a good idea of the centrality of taxes to Democratic policy goals. It’s worth noting that the term only exists to make the point that businesses and the rich should have to pay their fair share of them, or to express a desire to close off-shore tax havens to avoid paying them. It then goes on later to talk about “investing in rural America” and “building strong cities and metro areas”. These are worthwhile endeavors, but what is not discussed is: what the Democrats mean

by “businesses” and “the rich”. Like “democracy” and “freedom”, these are vague terms that hide specific costs—in this case just who is considered “rich” or what is considered to be a “business” (as opposed to an individual).

As an example, the Affordable Care Act, according to their website, was intended to  
Make affordable health insurance available to more people. The law provides consumers with subsidies (“premium tax credits”) that lower costs for households with incomes between 100% and 400% of the federal poverty level.” (Affordable Care Act, n.d.)

One of the controversial aspects of that legislation was the individual mandate. According to Healthcare.org:

“You may owe the fee for any month you, your spouse, or your tax dependents don't have qualifying health coverage (sometimes called "minimum essential coverage"). In 2017, the fine was \$695 per adult and \$347.50 per child under 18 (Individual Mandate, n.d.).

To penalize someone for being unable, or even unwilling, to purchase something is a large government overreach into the personal economic choices of citizens. Also, while the program has noble intentions, it's become increasingly out of reach for the people it was meant to help. According to Amy Goldstein at the Washington Post, “Sixty-year-olds with a \$50,000 income must pay at least one-fifth of what they earn for the least expensive premiums for health plans in Affordable Care Act marketplaces across a broad swath of the Midwest, the analysis shows. In much of the country, those premiums require at least one-sixth of such people's income.” (Goldstein, 2019).

However, in the current world we live in, it's unlikely that any political party is going to move into office and immediately cut all taxes and end all government services, shut down the military and fire all government employees. Is there room for compromise? I asked Elizabeth Nolan Brown, associate editor at *Reason Magazine* and co-founder of Feminists for Liberty, if she felt there was room for compromise on some of the common functions of government in the modern day to reform if not eliminate some government programs that are generally agreed to be wasteful, redundant, ineffective, or counterproductive. Could we abolish the Transportation Security Agency (TSA) or the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE)? Could we close unnecessary military bases outside of the physical United States? The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) did not exist until 2002; do we still need it now? Could we have the Affordable Care Act (ACA), for example, if we cut back on other large and possibly unnecessary expenses? Brown said:

I think that's so smart because there's too many times people will argue these stupid principles. You don't need to sell everyone on this perfect libertarian ideal because it's never going to happen.... Let's talk about the areas where we agree because usually people can find a lot of areas where they do agree about cutting down the biggest things. If they don't it's like that's fine. They don't have to be on board with us on literally everything in order to work with them, which is I think a problem that libertarians have.

It is my impression that, much as Republicans and Democrats talk about “focusing on what we do agree on”, the last 230 years of political bickering should show that they do not live up to that. Partisanship is more prevalent now than it has ever been. Libertarians are not going to help themselves by burrowing into the belief that we are the only party that is 100% right and

refuse to compromise due to “principles”. If the goal of our party is to serve the American people, we do not serve ourselves by not being willing to compromise, and thus not gaining notable accomplishments. In fact, we should be the first to offer compromise.

The idea of trying too hard to meet some predetermined libertarian standard was echoed by Johnathan Blanks, Research Associate with the Cato Institute:

I'm a policy guy. For example, libertarian policy is like, legalize marijuana and you don't really need to tax and regulate it...I, on the other hand, I want this to pass. Therefore, I'm going to support taxation and regulation. But as a libertarian, I'm supposed to hate taxation and regulation. Well I can talk about this and say, “Well you can't tax it too much because that's going to create a gray or black market.”

Despite the differences with the Democratic Party, Nick Sarwark believes there is a lot of common ground between the Democrats and Libertarians. He said during my interview with him:

The immigration stuff, historically, has been more appealing to the left than the right...All the criminal justice, the drug war stuff tends to appeal to the left. The marriage equality stuff appealed to the left, there's the anti-war stuff is a left-leaning appeal. Other than the tax things and the gun stuff, most of our positions appeal to the left more than the right when you come down to looking at them as positions.

I believe the best thing for the LP to do is to distance itself from the Republican Party and to grow alliances with the Democratic Party. The LP's place is somewhere in the middle, but at this time, I feel they are too far to the right. The links to racism and misogyny comes from the

link to Republicans, but we share a belief in the rights of people to open a business and contribute to the free market without being bogged down under an overwhelming amount of regulation and taxes. Our beliefs that people should be able to come to the United States for whatever reason they choose, the rights of people to marry whomever they please and to greatly minimize the amount of our citizens we are sending off to war should align the LP more with the Democrats. But, it's important to keep in mind the government's role is to protect the rights of the people, so we need to make sure that it does not become too large in the process that is smothering our citizenry.

#### Reasons for Lack of Libertarian Candidates on the Ballot

One arguable reason that many voters have not given Libertarian candidates serious consideration is a lack of available candidates at a visible level. For example, since the establishment of the Libertarian Party in 1971, only 10 Libertarians have run for President of the United States. While there are currently 186 libertarians holding some type of elected office in the United States, they are overwhelmingly in local positions such as mayors, school board members, and local or city council members (Elected Officials, n.d.). In contrast, there are currently no Libertarians, and only two Independents, in Congress (Manning, 2016). This begs the question: why are there so many libertarians at local levels, but none at the state or national levels?

One reason is that there are laws passed to keep Libertarians and other third parties off the ballot, to aid the two major parties (Fisher, 2017). If third party candidates are no threat to the party that currently holds the majority in the House, Senate, and the Supreme Court, why would Republicans want to keep Libertarians off the ballot?

Libertarians, like Republicans, have traditionally supported an unfettered free market. With people's economic concerns being at the crux of local, state and national political involvement, the Republicans see competition in these areas as a threat to their political territory. A third-party option also allows a person to vote for a free-market option, while not having to support policies enacted by the current administration considered by some to be racist and xenophobic. Instead of finding a way to make itself more palatable to fiscally conservative voters, the Republican Party is working to limit the choices of Americans at the ballot box by keeping Libertarian candidates off the ballot.

For example, in the state of Arizona in 2004, 25 libertarian candidates qualified to be on the ballot. In 2008, 19 qualified. In 2016, in comparison, only one candidate qualified for the ballot and none made it to the general election. This severe drop in Libertarian candidates is due to laws that drastically raised the number of signatures a Libertarian candidate needed to qualify for the ballot. Prior to this, third party candidates were able to qualify for the ballot by collecting signatures reflecting one half of one percent of those registered with the party of the candidate working to get on the ballot. After the law passed, candidates had to collect signatures reflecting one half of one percent of all eligible voters in the state. Under the old law, a Libertarian Party candidate had to collect 134 signatures to be listed on the ballot; once the law passed, the number of signatures needed jumped to 3,023. (Fisher, 2017) In the 2018 state governor election, Arizona libertarian Barry Hess was not listed on the ballot for the first time since 2002. (Fischer, 2018). Not wanting to go down without a fight, Hess stated that if the Republicans continued to use this tactic to "win by exclusion", local libertarians would consider throwing their support behind Democrats (Fischer, 2018).

In the state of Georgia, any political party that receives fewer than 20 percent of the cast votes for governor, or fewer than 20 percent for president in the entire US, must obtain notarized signatures from five percent of eligible voters in their district to place someone on the ballot for Congress. To date, this standard has never been met (Libertarians Challenge, 2017).

In Tennessee, for a new party to get on the ballot, 33,844 signatures are required, while an Independent only requires 25, with the exception of an Independent running for president, which requires 275. No group has met the requirements for party ballot qualification in Tennessee since 1968 (Winger, 2018).

Once signatures from voters are collected, there is no guarantee that they will all be counted. In an attempt to get Libertarians on the ballot in Ohio, 100,000 signatures were collected at the cost of \$200,000 and 20,000 hours of volunteer time according to Harold Thomas, the Libertarian Party's executive committee chairman. This surpassed the minimum requirement needed to get on the ballot, one percent of the total votes cast in Ohio in the presidential election, or 55,000 signatures. However, when the signatures were submitted, only 60,000 were deemed valid. While that was 5,000 more than the number required to get the Libertarians on the ballot, it is questionable that a Republican, in this case the Ohio Secretary of State Jon Husted, would be allowed to count and justify the signatures of people who are working to get a party that stands in direct opposition of Husted's on the ballot (Skalka, 2018).

For a country that prides itself on freedom, equal opportunity and democracy, the reality that there are laws in the United States specifically set up to keep any person, or any party, out of the political system is troubling. Also, while both of the major political parties continuously claim to be protecting the United States Constitution, the document itself doesn't mention any political parties by name. No party or person has the right to work against or to suppress any

other to keep them out of the political environment. Some of our Founding Fathers were weary of political parties altogether due to their experiences with the tyrannical government they escaped when they fled Britain and King George III (Bass, 2009). This divisiveness between political parties is something that has only grown in American politics despite the warning of the new nation's first president, George Washington, in 1796 as part of his farewell address:

“Without looking forward to an extremity of this kind (which nevertheless ought not to be entirely out of sight), the common and continual mischiefs of the spirit of party are sufficient to make it the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain it” (President George Washington's Farewell Address, 1796).



## Research Findings

After completing each interview and gathering each different point of view, I have identified five issues that I believe are hindering the Libertarian Party/libertarian philosophy and preventing it from connecting with voters in a way that is vital for its success. Some of the issues identified were not surprising: Lack of ballot access, lack of support for third party candidates, gender issues in the party, race issues in the party and the differences between upper case L and lower case L libertarians. Two issues that came up in multiple interviews from people with differing perspectives were less expected: Straight ticket voting and our own perspectives as libertarians.

### Our Own Perspectives

One thing that may do the most to keep libertarians out of public offices may be our own perspectives.

### Toxic Fringe

One common theme discussed in the libertarian community is the idea of the “lower case L” libertarian and the “upper case L” Libertarian. “Lower case L” libertarians are generally understood to be those who claim to follow the philosophy of liberty but are not involved with the Libertarian Party. Obviously, many people can self-define as belonging to this group. Some members of this group congregate online to discuss issues; and accusations have been brought that notions of individual liberty within this group may be ways of justifying racism, sexism and homophobia. For example, they will use the idea of freedom of association to justify discrimination. While most “lower case L” libertarians do not fall into this category, a good number of them do. Jonathan Blanks mentioned an example of this when he was discussing the Civil Rights Act. An acquaintance, when confronted with the truth that African-Americans

couldn't travel with the guarantee of getting a hotel room due to discrimination before the Civil Rights Act was implemented, replied, "So?"

Such discussions can sometime turn toxic, as described by Cathy Reizenwitz:

Oh, yeah, definitely. The libertarian brand is mostly decided by lowercase libertarians. And that brand is fucking toxic. It's really bad.

People who are casually looking into libertarianism and finding these kinds of discussions may be deterred from looking further into our philosophy. I asked Kat Murti of Feminists for Liberty if she had similar experiences:

There has been a sort of sexism and the... "feminism is cancer". I think an alignment with a lot of rape denial which I think is largely not from originally a negative standpoint. I mean, it's much more about, like, support for due process and things like that, but you end up bringing in a lot of, like, rape denial elements and things like that...I think this is changing as libertarianism is becoming less of a fringe belief, but when you are a fringe belief you tend to attract a lot of people at the fringe and that includes a lot of misogynists and people like that.

I also mentioned this to Carla Gericke who, as president of the Free State Project, spent quite a bit of time with this group. A lot of libertarians deliberately stay out of the political party as a way to protest what they see as a corrupt system; many of those libertarians were involved with the Free State Project. Did she see much sexism or racism?

Certainly, for me, I had no idea how toxic the online asshole libertarian environment could be. E.g., we banned Chris Cantwell in Fall 2013, years before he became "the Crying Nazi", and I took the flak, I was the problem, even though I was right, and I'm still waiting for someone to be like, Good fucking call, Carla.

Christopher Cantwell, the person Carla is referring to, now famously known as “The Crying Nazi”, is a former lower case L libertarian turned alt-right personality who was arrested during the Charlottesville “Unite the Right” rally in 2017. Upon finding out there was a warrant out for his arrest over his use of tear gas, he famously posted a video on YouTube, crying.

The issue of this fringe element could be having some effect on the way people view libertarianism. Respecting free speech is something that the LP strongly supports. But unfortunately, a few people with extremist beliefs, such as conspiracy theories, white nationalism or gender discrimination, may be driving other people away from the party/philosophy.

How does this fringe aspect affect libertarians who do not share these views, who do associate with the party, and who want to participate within the system? Maybe even run for office? I asked Libertarian Party Chair Nick Sarwark how he felt this more toxic fringe was affecting the party:

I don't think they're helping. But I also don't think that that's the problem to focus on... The most important libertarian in the entire Libertarian Party is you.

Because for your colleagues, for the people in your department, for your friends, you're the only libertarian they're ever going to meet. They're not going to meet me. They're not going to meet Gary Johnson. They're not going to meet all these other people, they're going to meet you. And so how you interact with them and what perception they get of you as a person, and whether or not you're genuine, whether you care about their ideas, is more important than every other thing that happens online, because that's a real human interaction. And so, if they meet you and they go, you know, “She seems nice enough. I could have a beer with her.

Maybe she's a little nutty on the border but you know, I'm not mad about it, you

know, everybody's wrong about something. She seems like a genuine person who cares about her community..." that does more than, you know, thousands of dollars' worth of marketing campaigns. Because you've created a positive impression of libertarianism and Libertarians in the minds of your friends. And that's more powerful than some jackass on Facebook because they can just go, "Yeah, that's some jackass on Facebook. It's full of jackasses."

### Public Popularity

Another approach that could help libertarians connect with voters would be to interact with the public more. Because libertarianism is individualist and freedom-loving, and most libertarians believes people should be left alone as long as they are not harming others, most libertarians also tend to be private people. That can be counterproductive to trying to get elected to office with the public trust. Being elected to public office requires your community to have faith in you. One good example of this public trust is Beto O'Rourke. While people's opinions of politicians often go no further than party affiliation, O'Rourke was a popular state senator in Texas. The fact that O'Rourke, as a Democrat, nearly defeated Republican incumbent Ted Cruz for a senate seat in 2018 was an impressive showing. That level of popularity is built over a long period of participation in a community and nearly impossible to accomplish if a person has not invested heavily in a local political (or artistic, business, etc.) setting. Ken Moellman, former Chair of the Libertarian Party of Kentucky discussed this:

... It doesn't hurt if you've already been doing stuff in the community.

That's another problem with libertarians generally. We like to leave people

alone, which means we hide in our homes and don't do a lot in the community. Having a reputation in the community helps.

Barry Hess echoed that sentiment while telling a story about struggling to gather signatures to get a libertarian on the ballot in Arizona:

Now...we had at that time twenty-six thousand registered Libertarians scattered all over Arizona, mostly in the backwoods country, but Libertarians tend to like to just be left alone. And so, we're talking enormous difficulty in getting the signatures.

Hess confirms not only the difficulty libertarians have accessing the ballot, but also the need for more of a public presence if libertarians want to be successful. Why should someone who knows nothing of the LP or a particular candidate sign a petition?

Larry Sharpe, who ran for governor of New York, also raised this issue. Having been on the campaign trail recently, what was his recommendation for libertarians?

Be popular. That's all that matters. It sounds so cheesy. It sounds so dumb, but it's exactly the answer. Be popular... If Kim Kardashian was a libertarian and she ran for president, we'd be in every debate. Guaranteed. And she would have no idea what she's saying but we'd be in every debate. Because people want to see Kim Kardashian because she's popular. So, you want to solve our problem, be popular. That's what I try to do. Be popular. I was the guy on Joe Rogan. I was the guy on Dave Rubin. I was the guy who did comedy clubs. I was the guy who did Dave Smith. I was a guy who did Glenn Beck. Why? I'm the guy who does lives every week. I'm the guy who does all my stuff live on Facebook, on YouTube, on Twitter. Why? To be popular. That's the answer I'm trying to show other people,

to be popular. If you're popular, people want to see you. If people want to see you, you'll be in debates. I wasn't popular enough. I wish I was more popular. But again, most of us aren't. Also, again, I picked up the mantle, let someone else come up behind me, and be more popular than me.

As much as libertarians love our privacy, if we want more of us on the ballots, we will have to come out of our shells, risk rejection and put the ideas that we hold dear in front of the voting public. It's time that we throw our hat into the ring and hit the trail.

### Straight Ticket Voting

According to the National Conference of State Legislatures, straight ticket voting, "...allows voters to choose a party's entire slate of candidates with just a single ballot mark. Voters make one punch or mark on the ballot in order to vote for every candidate of that party for each partisan office on the ballot." As of now, nine states offer straight ticket voting including Alabama, Indiana, Michigan, Kentucky, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Texas and Utah. It's worth noting that in Indiana Senate Bill 61 abolished straight ticket voting for at-large races and in Texas the straight ticket option was voted out in the 2017 legislature. However, this will not go into effect until 2020 (Ncsl.org, 2019).

In appearance, straight ticket voting allows Americans to simplify a process that can be cumbersome, even bothersome. It allows the politically loyal to push one button and support those who uphold the political values they hold dear. Why is this controversial?

In an article in the *Albuquerque Journal*, former New Mexico Secretary of State Brad Winter discusses this, saying:

Straight-ticket voting promotes the election of a party, not the election of a candidate.

Straight-ticket voting makes it more difficult for independents or minor-party candidates

to compete against the two major political parties. At a time when voter registration is showing a solid shift toward independent identification, this move by the secretary of state seems to be nothing more than a cold ear or even a slap in the face for New Mexicans who are looking for independent voices and individual qualities in the people they elect.

The point that straight ticket voting speaks to the electability of a party, not a candidate, is important. A CNN poll done with ORC International found that only 5% of Americans feel that the federal government represents them well (CNN/ORC poll results, 2016). All current members of Congress are Republicans or Democrats, with the exceptions of Maine's Angus King and Vermont's Bernie Sanders (Current third-party and independent, n.d.). Straight ticket voting can prevent eligible candidates from getting votes, specifically at the local level. For example, when I spoke to Nick Sarwark, Chair of the Libertarian Party, he pointed out that,

This [straight ticket voting] is also an issue for people, just to use an example, Justin Amash, in Michigan. One of the things that I think has prevented him from making a switch from the political party he's in right now to the one that really fits his ideals much better, is that Michigan still has the straight ticket voting device. A Michigan voter can go in and say, "R", and be done and that just goes "R" all the way down and it doesn't examine our races.

Another way that straight ticket voting can be damaging is its effect on local candidates and their efforts to reach out to local constituents. Unfortunately, many voters focus on the highly visible national elections, leaving the local races – the ones that would most directly affect their lives – to fall by the wayside. Ken Moellman, former Chair of the Libertarian Party for the state of Kentucky spoke to me on this, saying:

We're one of the eight states that still has a stupid straight party ticket button. There are so many elections decided by straight ticket. In states like Kentucky the local strategy is significantly hampered because people come out and are like, "I'm just voting Republican. Stop the Democrats." And you end up with that but then it trickles all the way down to the bottom of the ballot. What does Donald Trump have to do with the county election? Nothing. Other than you're getting these Trump or anti-Trump votes at the top and straight ticket booths affect the bottom. So, people just switch parties to basically say, "Okay. As long as I can get through the primary, I'm going to win because all the people here vote straight Republican," and it's a huge percentage. It's like 75 to 80 percent of people use the straight ticket button. So, you're already basically losing by not running as a D [Democrat] or R [Republican] in states with straight party ticket and you're fighting an uphill battle even more so than normal."

Straight ticket voting also inadvertently causes people to vote for candidates they do not agree with. As an example, within the Republican Party, two popular candidates' personalities that often clashed were John McCain and Donald Trump. If a voter supported John McCain, but did not like Donald Trump, a straight ticket vote would cause someone to vote for someone they did support. Do voters realize this? I asked Barry Hess that question, long time libertarian and candidate for Arizona governor:

And I realized why Reagan had actually brought up some points that later became relevant. One of them was on straight ticket voting. He said it would be the destruction of America. And to test it out, I was speaking about it with a lot of, especially Republican, but actually a lot of Democrat functions as well. I was



invited more enthusiastically from the Republicans because they thought I was one of them. And it was kind of interesting when you start to see the mentality of these people. It is a religious fervor. And I would ask people, I'd say, "How many people here voted straight ticket?" And, of course, all the idiots would raise their hands and I'd say okay. Well we want to get clean up This Republican party is what you're always talking about. Let's get on with that. "Does anybody know what a RINO (Republican in Name Only) is?"

And the crowd would all laugh. You know, I knew the response they would laugh and go, "Yeah!" and they'd start yelling out names. You know, John McCain was a favorite name to throw up there, but they're there were a whole ton of them. And I said, "Okay, now, how many people, would you raise your hands again, voted for those people?" Well, very few put their hands up and I said, "Okay, let's try this again, how many people voted straight ticket?" and they raised their hands again. And I said now look around. Think about this. You're the ones electing these morons. And people actually gave me a lot of grief after that.

Straight ticket voting, described to me as "painful" by Nick Sarwark, is a very destructive addition to the political process. As shown above, many voters do not clearly understand the basic voting process, much less the intricacies of party platforms and dynamics, local campaigns, and local candidates who tend to get less media coverage.

#### Laws to Keep Libertarians Off the Ballot

One of the biggest hurdles facing libertarian candidates today are laws requiring large numbers of verified, and in some cases notarized, signatures in order for them to get on the

ballot. This can sometimes be an overwhelming burden. One example of this was provided to me by Ken Moellman, speaking about his run State Treasurer of Kentucky in 2011:

Most of our candidates, myself included, have a full-time job and we're trying to run a campaign, and we're trying to do all this stuff. We don't have the time to get the signatures. What you end up doing is you hire professional signature gatherers. We typically try to use actual libertarians to do that from the libertarian side. I paid approximately \$14,500 for signatures in that race.

These laws create what essentially amounts to a monopoly in political races and often leads to Republicans blaming libertarians when they lose. (Democrats tend to blame their losses on the Green Party.) Rather than innovating ideas and processes in order to stay relevant in an ever-growing political market, the two major parties focus on changing the laws (which they make and control) to eliminate the competition.

In order to understand how these laws affect libertarians, the first phrase that must be understood is “modicum of support”. Ken Moellman explains:

“Modicum of support” is the legal standard that upholds all of these ballot access laws. The idea is that ballot access laws are legal because they prevent ballot crowding, ballot confusion and frivolous candidates. So, the courts use the word so that a candidate can be required to show that they have a modicum of support. The old parties, because they have a base of 40 or 50 percent of the population as a base, they have that modicum.

Republicans and Democrats are largely unaffected by this process as they are the two major parties. They continue to pass such laws without hesitation because they are not affected,

but possible completion is. What can go wrong with gathering signatures? What are some of the details that can cause difficulty in this process? Moellman further explains:

All dates must have a month, a day, and the year... Then after month/day/year you have a signature and some states will actually try to make you match the actual signature that's on a voter registration card. Somebody might have registered to vote 25 years ago and your signature changes a little bit over time. You know, I'm Ken, right? I might have signed my form, because I'm doing a legal form, Kenneth. That's not my signature, but let's say I did that for my legal form. I signed the petition Ken, some states kick you out on that even though that's your legal signature. It's s legally binding to sign things that way. One of the states had a middle initial rule where you had to have the middle initial. There's all these crazy rules in all these states. In Kentucky, the one that got people the most is actually a fail in the form. The end of the form is city, then they use an ampersand and then state, so they're asking for city and state.... People read that as City / State like city or state, not city and zip code. So, what you end up with is people that are volunteers helping get signatures and aren't watching very closely... is a bunch of signatures that only have a city or only have a zip code. Then there's this thing we call “monkey see, monkey do” or “the waterfall effect,” where somebody screws it up and everyone who signs the exact same way as the person before. You end up with a sheet full of broken signatures because somebody didn't read city and zip. You end up with lots of weird issues

like that... In Kentucky, to do a petition, we have very limited initiative and referendum rights. But, if you want to do a petition to stop a tax increase, they make you sort the signatures by precinct. Each person has to sign on the one that's for their precinct. Who knows what they're voting precinct is? I am big into politics. I don't know what my precinct number is. I know where I vote, but they have these combined precincts now with five or six different places that vote in the same place. I don't know which one is mine. I had to look at my voting record their precinct number. Nobody knows their precincts!!”

As the world becomes more technologically advanced, libertarians are finding ways to use this to their advantage. Moellman expands on this:

We've built some software to help us do validation.... One of the things we've got is a program that we call “The Validator” that helps us validate signatures in a very quick manner. Essentially you just type in the house number and part of the street name. It either matches or it doesn't. You can blow through signatures very quickly. It's a weird thing, but if you live at 1444 Main Street, there's not going to be a lot of 1444 Main Streets in your entire state. As long as you have 1444 Main Street, it shows me every single one of them. I can type in 1444 Main, it'll show me everything that matches 1444 Main throughout the whole state. Even on ones where we don't have a printed name, just a crazy signature, it's like, “Well I can make out that's a ‘C’”. I can make out that's an ‘H’ . Do any of these match?” So, we're able to do validation at a very rapid pace, we're able to

do it very well and now we're doing somewhere in the neighborhood of 80 percent to a 100 percent validation. The margin of our error shrinks from less than a percent to zero as we get closer to a hundred percent validation and that's what we've had to do. It takes it's an immense amount of work.

In an attempt to quell meaningful political competition, such laws are placed requiring libertarians (and other third parties) jump through legislative hoops, and then requires those who are willing to jump to know their voting precinct. However, as you can tell by the steps taken by Moellman, libertarians continue to pursue full ballot access in the US in all counties and all 50 states.

#### Race in the Libertarian Philosophy/Party

One of the areas where there was some contradictory opinions was on the topic of race in libertarianism. Does the LP, or the overall libertarian philosophy, have a race issue? And what constitutes a race issue? Jonathan Blanks, a research associate for the Cato Institute who writes on race issues, stated:

If you look at the history of libertarian thought in this country, there is a very strong parallel with segregationists, lost causers, and white political grievance. Keep in mind part of the early school choice movement were segregation academies in the South. They're like, "I don't want my child to go to school with black people. Therefore, we're going to keep them out of school for years or start these private schools where basically only white kids go. American libertarianism is so tightly held to the founding and the ideals, the racism came with it.... I had a guy I knew, we were at retreat for work and I was talking about pre Civil Rights Act because there are

still Libertarians who believe the Civil Rights Act infringes on the freedom of association by banning segregation in housing accommodations and in food service...I was just like, “Dude, you understand that black people couldn't drive around this country and know that they had a place to stay. It's a restriction on freedom of travel.” He just...looks at me and he goes, “So?” I was just like, “You don't care about liberty. You care about doing your own thing. And there's a major difference. I think there is a massive blind spot in libertarianism to stuff like that.

This is an important insight. Some of the issues libertarians hold dear do come from racist beginnings. As Blanks stated, libertarians believe in school choice. It is very common for people of higher economic means to congregate in communities, excluding others – including people of color - who do not have as much money. Where property taxes fund schools and other community infrastructure, taxes on higher property values allows more money to go to the schools wealthier families' children attend, while children from poorer communities attend schools that have lower revenue and fewer resources. School choice allows parents to send their children to schools where they believe their children will thrive, not necessarily those government dictates. An important note to this conversation, however, is that the desire to pull children out of specific schools started with desegregation. Racist, white parents did not want their children going to school with people of color, so they wanted the right to put their child into segregated academies. I believe parents have the right to make these decisions for their children, so I stand by school choice. But libertarians should not act as though color-blind to these issues. Indeed, such positions without thoughtful conversation and outreach could explain why so few

members of the Libertarian Party are people of color. I posed the question about the low membership numbers of people of color to Nick Sarwark:

I don't think that the philosophy has a race problem. I don't think the party has a race problem. Although we have the underrepresentation that I mentioned earlier. I think the race problem stems from the prior fusionism. I think it's a holdover where we got a lot of people who came from the political right who may have already had certain racial biases who came in and thought, "This is how things should be." As a party and a movement, we have to be careful, as libertarianism attracts people who are political outsiders. The issue is sometimes people are political outsiders because they have non-mainstream philosophical beliefs about individual freedom; sometimes they're outsiders because they're racist jerks. Being accepting of people who are minorities politically should not be taken as being giving sanction or approval to people and saying that those ideas that are outside the mainstream are good or right. I think it's actually incumbent on us as libertarians, more so than people of other political ideologies, to be very clear about our ethical and aesthetic preferences because we're so laissez-faire as far as what you're allowed to do... Historically everyone comes to the libertarian party through their own path. There's something that triggers them that they want to be a Libertarian. It could be guns. It could be immigration. It could be the War on Drugs. It could be ending the Fed, or gold or whatever it is. Historically Libertarians have gone out of their way to talk to other people about the thing that brought them to the

party. Which is kind of the opposite of what salespeople are supposed to do, which is listen to what the other person cares about and then talk to them about their issues. We've done a poor job of talking to communities of color about what values we have that are resonant with the issues that they have. A lot of it is the social proof and less people see people like them in the Libertarian Party.

To add to Mr. Sarwark's statement: a "race problem" in the LP doesn't necessarily mean a large number of racist members. A lack of members of color may also be considered a problem on its own. If the social proof shows a minimal number of people of color, that problem needs to be addressed. I do recognize that planks of the LP say we do not tolerate racism, but if the Party lacks members of different races that statement cannot stand alone. What else can be done? For another opinion on the issue of race, I turned to Kat Murti from Feminists for Liberty, who is Indian-American.

I don't think libertarianism has a race issue. I think certain segments of the libertarian movement absolutely do. I think those are two very different things. Libertarianism is a fringe movement. It's also a very tolerant movement, one that allows in people with various beliefs. For instance, you have the right to believe whatever you want, right? You can have really heinous beliefs. What a lot of people confuse that with is, that they'll...start to believe those heinous beliefs are libertarian and they're not right. Like for instance on discrimination, you, a Libertarian, would say, "yes, of course, you have the right to discriminate, you have the right to refuse to work with someone or to refuse someone on your property or



whatever it is for whatever reason, whether that's their race, sexuality or anything like that. But those beliefs are actually not libertarian.

I believe that in the case of race, as long as libertarians continue to speak up and show that racism will never be welcomed in that movement, the fringe will be weeded out. It's important to note that this does not only fall on the shoulders of Nick Sarwark and the higher ups of the LP, but also everyday members. This must be a priority for all those that call themselves libertarians, as this is a philosophy which falls back on individuality and respect for the individual.

#### Gender and Feminism in the Libertarian Philosophy/Party

According to the views that I've collected, a lot of the "libertarian" people who have non-libertarian views on race also have non-libertarian views on sex and gender. Libertarian feminist blogger Cathy Reizenwitz shares her experiences saying:

And it wasn't reasoned arguments either. It was like a lot of like, "Collectivist! You're a socialist! You're pretending to be a libertarian to like push feminism! You just want attention!" It was really gendered, very emotional, ad hominem attacks... It was like a very unpleasant "wake up" situation. I kind of assumed that the whole reason that libertarians hadn't talked about feminism very much was oversight essentially. What I realized is that actually a lot of people who are calling themselves libertarians are actually very conservative and all of the conservative anti-feminism has a very large and active presence in libertarianism.

This is an area where it is imperative for libertarians to distinguish ourselves from conservatives, especially social conservatives. Conservatives have attached themselves to religion, particularly Evangelical Christianity, and that has significantly influenced the social

conservative movement. Libertarians should respect the rights of women to live as homemakers if they choose to. But the idea that women should be mothers and homemakers, because that's their expected role as women, should have no place in libertarianism. I questioned Nick Sarwark about his perspective on the status of women in the membership of the LP, and he explained:

I do see a lot more women in the party than the stereotypes would suggest. Our current interim executive director is a woman, our previous political and executive director was a woman, our membership manager is a woman, our designer is a woman.

Women's active and visible LP participation is a great sign. When I asked Mr. Sarwark to expand on the idea of feminism being "collectivist" (and a complaint of many anti-feminists inside and outside the LP) and thus something libertarianism should stand against, Sarwark replied:

No, it's a common fallacy. It also is used to tell people that they shouldn't fight for marriage equality because you can't identify as gay... Collectivism is judging a group based on an identity that they have. It's not collectivist to know what boxes you check and that's how people identify themselves... That is a denial of individualism.

I agree with what is being said here. Collectivism is placing all people in groups that show people in a negative light. That is what's harmful. Taking into consideration that some people choose to view the world a certain way due to their experiences is not collectivism. That's respecting individuality, which is what libertarianism is about. I asked Kat Murti about the idea of feminism inside libertarianism doing working hard to break people out of collectivist idea:

Both libertarianism and feminism are fundamentally about... freeing individuals to pursue the life path that they think best without any sort of

state constructions on pushing them one way or another. If anything, feminism really is about freeing people from the collectivism of gender essentialism, this idea that who you are is fundamentally shaped by your sex and gender and that you can't be an individual outside of that. So, I think feminism and libertarianism both are very much individualist philosophies and part and parcel. Really, I'm not sure if I would say that... all feminists are necessarily libertarian, but I think that if you are truly a libertarian you would be a feminist as well.

Addressing issues regarding women is important so that libertarianism can grow. I believe that Murti and Nolan-Brown are great women who led this charge. Nolan-Brown is known for her reporting on human trafficking and her conclusion that it is not the national crisis as others believe and has been propagandized to support the modern police state. Kat Murti, mentioned previously, absolutely supports women's rights, but also supports men's rights to due process, specifically regarding rape accusations. In other words, libertarian belief in due process and freedom from non-necessary government intervention protects the freedoms of everyone, women and men alike.

I also spoke with 2018 senate candidate Carla Gericke regarding women in the Libertarian Party/libertarian movement:

We need more women thought-leaders to step up. We need more women role models. We need to celebrate and encourage the ones who put themselves out there. We need to be pushier about getting speaking slots. We need to demand equal treatment and perks on the speaking circuit. I

LOVE IT when new women movers come to NH and tell me I inspired them to move.

Women within the libertarian movement are working to make feminism and female representation more visible in other ways. Feminists for Liberty was founded in 2016 by Kat Murti and Elizabeth Nolan Brown. Elizabeth Nolan Brown described the goals of their organization:

It's me and Kat Murti. Kat works at the Cato Institute. We've been together, and we finally got incorporated and started holding regular events. Our first one was really good... We want to be sort of an online home for libertarian feminism. What we really want to do is sort of to be a clearinghouse for libertarian feminist speakers and voices and be a repository where people are looking for these issues, what people think about them and can find other people who are working at specific areas. That's our eventual goal.

From Kat Murti:

Feminists for Liberty is an organization I co-founded along with Elizabeth Nolan Brown... We were reacting to as well as what we'd seen sort of as a dangerous bend within the libertarian movement. There is a lot of people who are sort of pursuing this feminism is cancer, anti-feminist mindset. Which we of course, like as I mentioned before we believe that feminism and libertarianism are very much intertwined and share similar goals... I think our goal is really to shape the message both in the feminist movement and the libertarian movement and the media at large and the

national conversation. We really do try to join in conversations as we see them happening online, we go to a lot of events like for instance the Women's March... We've gone the last couple of years, we've dressed as suffragettes and one of these Libertarians sashes kind of like the suffragettes used to wear the suffragette ribbons and carried signs that say things like, "I'm with her." with a picture of Lady Liberty or our slogan, "Anti-statism, anti-sexism, pro markets, pro-choice".

### Views on Prostitution and Human Trafficking

Feminist libertarian women can bring new insights and perspectives to issues involving state power and the choices of women. Nolan-Brown, mentioned earlier, has written contrarian views on the increasing US focus on human trafficking. For example, in an article regarding the Florida bust where New England Patriots owner Robert Kraft was arrested, Brown wrote:

If the women employed at these businesses were really the victims of "modern slavery," why did police take six months to get them out of that situation? Why did it require repeat intimate undercover visits and building misdemeanor prostitution charges against all sorts of random men before these "heroes" decided to intervene?

While interviewing Larry Sharpe, a libertarian who ran for governor of New York in 2018, I asked about his perspective on the "emergency" of human trafficking. Here is his response:

It is absolutely overblown. They call a woman who has been caught by a pimp "human trafficking". It's not human trafficking. She's been caught by a pimp. That's not human trafficking. When you grab people from

Ukraine and bring them to the United States, or you capture them here and lock them up? That's human trafficking. This is illegal prostitution. Not that it's good. It's just not human trafficking. Manslaughter is bad, but it's not murder. Illegal prostitution is still bad, it's just not human trafficking.

How do the numbers on human trafficking get so blown out of proportion if what is actually going on is voluntary sex work? Norma Jean Almodovar is a writer and speaker on sex work. She's gathered an impressive body of work on sex workers' rights, police corruption and human trafficking. A long-time libertarian, she ran for Lt. Governor of California in 1986:

What usually happens is they consider anybody that's under 18 to be "sex trafficked". Let's say that you're from another country and you're here working. And you knew you were going to work [in that trade] when you came here, you understood that was how you were going to make money till you paid off your debt. So, you get arrested. And the police say, "Were you trafficked?" If you say "no" and you did this voluntarily, you're going to get deported. If you say, "Yes, I was trafficked and I'm willing to testify against the people that made it possible for me to come here," you get to stay.

I want to clarify what is being said here, and make sure this is not interpreted as victim blaming. What Almodovar is saying is that the police often inflate their numbers. As the War on Drugs slows and legalized marijuana becomes more common and accepted, the police need justification for their power, paycheck, and over militarization. If the police can find women who are involved in voluntary illegal prostitution and get them to state that they are being trafficked in return for lighter sentences, the police and the criminal justice system can inflate the numbers

showing victims and harm, and thus the scope of the problem, supporting the popular belief that human trafficking is an epidemic This will allow them to continue breaking down doors, throwing flash grenades into baby's cribs (Stelloh, 2015) and shooting innocent children in the arms of their grandmothers (Abbey-Lambertz, 2015).

How do libertarians feel about prostitution? Should sex work be legalized, leaving it open to government regulation, such as how it is currently administered in Nevada? Or should it simply be decriminalized, leaving individual sex workers to set their own rules? Here is Larry Sharpe's opinion:

Well first off, it absolutely should not be illegal. A majority of people, not all, but the majority of people who go into prostitution are purposefully or unconsciously engaging in self-destructive behavior. You think I'm making this up? Do your homework. That's what happened. They're engaging in self-destructive behavior. They're searching for something they don't have. Ask anyone who's been in that field, they say the same thing: "What I thought I was getting from my pimp was love. That's all I knew. I left my family because of abuse." That's so common. Why wouldn't I try, if I have any compassion as a human being, to make it as safe as possible? The problem is the vast majority of women, and some men, who go into prostitution, the only way they come out is death or jail. That's it. Now if you look at places where prostitution is legal, that is not true. Not even close. Look at the Netherlands. Look at Nevada...

I asked Larry if he thought a decriminalized system of prostitution in the United States should be based on the model used in Nevada or left to the free market.

Specifically, I asked how would he have handled prostitution in New York if he had won his race for governor. He answered:

You have to go to Nevada... Because when you make radical change too fast, people become afraid and rebel. Even if it's for their own good, even if you're righteous, even if it's correct, doesn't matter. I do change management organizations all the time. It's part of what I do. When you make radical change people rebel, even if it's for their own good. It's human nature. So, the first step is Nevada. Then you find the right step after that... I would just let consumers decide what makes the most sense right? Some communities aren't going to want it. I wouldn't force it. I'm all about local laws. There are going to be communities who say, "I don't want prostitution in my county." Okay fine. I'm just saying, at a state level, I'm not going to say that prostitution is illegal. If the county wants to keep it, you know what's going to happen? Some counties will open up brothels. That will happen. Similar to Nevada. Certain places you can have brothels, in other places, you can't. Some counties will open up brothels. Let them; they'll be regulated like any of the business. No different. Same as other businesses. Employees. Protection, right? What does every prostitute who has a pimp say? They say, "The pimp beat, me hurt me, hit me, took my money." Well, now he can't do that anymore because he goes to jail. You can't do anymore. Dennis Hoff, the guy who passed away in Nevada, He ran the Bunny Ranch. He was basically a pimp right? And what would he do? Did he exploit women? I guess. But guess what, he



didn't take their money. They made more money than would have made on the street.

Norma Jean Almodovar has a different perspective. Keeping in mind that she has been a sex worker, her experience and input is particularly appreciated.

No, no, no, no, no, no, no Nevada. The reason being is because, unfortunately when you legalize, particularly, commercial sex, it makes new and special laws that regulate prostitutes and, once again, gives law enforcement the opportunity to use those laws to harass sex workers. I certainly would never have worked in the brothel. Dennis Hof invited me up there and wanted me to be a manager of one is of his brothels many years ago, and I'm like, "No, I really can't". Because, as a woman, I want to be able to make choices of where I want to do my work, when I want to do my work and I don't want to be picked out of a lineup. I want my clients to be able to choose me, and I choose them, in a setting of my choice. Not some place where I have to sit on a couch, "Oh, hi". I'm totally into, like, one-on-one. I worked through several Madams. The only laws that should apply to prostitution are the laws that apply to any other profession, any other relationship period. You can't rape someone, you can't traffic them, you can't take their money. You can't put their working situation where they like feel like they're being exploited, or anything like that. Those rights already exist for every worker and every woman and every situation and you don't need new and special laws to apply only to

us. If women want to work in a brothel, fine, there's people that thrive in brothel work, but should that be the only way that I can work? Hell no!

Almodovar's answer explains why so many libertarians favor decriminalization rather than legalization. Legal sex workers can continue to be harassed by police because the laws police uphold can be held over their heads. I asked Jonathan Blanks, a self-described "policy guy" for his perspective on prostitution:

... My perspective [is] as [a] criminal justice guy, and police policy particularly, it's something that I'm interested in. And sex workers are like, "We don't want legalization. We want decriminalization." There is a difference there. I know from a drug perspective, we're for legalization as opposed to decrim. From most of the sex workers that I follow on Twitter, they like decrim, not legalization. Which is an interesting dichotomy, but that's sort of on a tangent. It's one of those things where, it's the world's oldest profession and we still treat it like it's something we can eradicate. Like the drug war.

Under decriminalization, female or male sex workers who want to work in a brothel can. Those who choose to work on their own, out of a little black book, can. This allows more freedom for those involved in order to put an end to a huge injustice in American history.

## Conclusion

I would like to close out my paper by thanking everyone who sat down with me on this thesis. It was an honor to discuss the party and philosophy that are important to me with people who know the issues and we able to provide some very valuable insight.

After speaking to Brown, Murti, Reisenwitz and Almodovar, I am very excited for the direction women are taking within libertarianism. Women have long faced an uphill battle for respect in conservative circles. While the libertarian women I have spoken to do seem to have faced that struggle, clearly they are not letting it stop them, are moving forward head on, and making libertarianism a safe and much less toxic place for everyone.

Examining specifically the subject of race, I think more could be done in libertarian circles. For example, Nick Sarwark told me that he felt that the LP makes it clear that the party does not stand for racism. And strong statements have indeed been made: Libertarian National Committee Executive Director Wes Benedict stated after the death of Heather Heyer in 2017 in Charlottesville, VA, “There is no room for racists and bigots in the Libertarian Party. If there are white nationalists who - inappropriately - are members of the Libertarian Party, I ask them to submit their resignations today. We don’t want them to associate with the Libertarian Party, and we don’t want their money” (Benedict, 2017). However, Sarwark also discussed social proof and how it shows that there are very few people of color in the party. I believe that leads to the question, are these statements sufficient? Do we need to reach out more, and how? Perhaps the LP can reach out to existing people of color within the party to find out what welcomes or supports them, what does not, and what might be done differently. Because the LP is so accepting of people who join from the Republican Party, even the fringe of the Republican Party, there are some racist elements that have come with them. Also, expecting only the national party

to address these issues is not sufficient. Individual libertarians will need to identify issues regarding race they encounter, name them, and condemn them where appropriate. The party members are the LP's backbone and need to lead the way.

Through this interview process, I found that some of the biggest challenges facing the party are currently being addressed: straight ticket voting is allowed in only 8 states and one, Texas, will be discontinuing it in 2020. This loss will not force people to educate themselves before heading to the ballot, but it will make it less simple to be complacent. The unfortunate truth is many people vote only the top of the ticket, leaving a lot of local races decided by who happens to be aligned with that top person, rather than the candidate that will best serve the community.

Libertarians such as Ken Moellman are leading the way towards full ballot access and I hope that the party and its members will support their work. This is vital for the future of the party. Moellman's statement that he has dropped tens of thousands of dollars of his own movement into this fight should show all of us that this work is important and libertarians can win this battle with time and full support.

I hope that this contribution to libertarian research will start a discussion regarding what can be done to make the LP more successful without it turning into "circling wagons, then shooting inward". With the help of a diverse group of people, including everyone from anarchist leaning "lower case L" libertarians, to the chair of the Libertarian Party, we have examined some of the issues plaguing libertarianism today: issues with gender, issues with race, corrupt laws to keep libertarians off the books, losing good people to the Republican Party and our own perspectives keeping us off the ballots and on the couch. Now, what are we going to do about it?

## References

### Scholarly References

Bass, H. F., Jr. (2009). *Historical Dictionary of United States Political Parties* (2nd ed.).

Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Bryson, M. C., & McDill, W. R. (1968). The Political Spectrum: A Bi-Dimensional Approach. *Rampant Journal of Individualist Thought*, 4(2), 19-26.

Jelen, T. G. (2001). *Ross for boss: The Perot phenomenon and beyond*. Albany, NY:

State Univ. of New York Press.

Kalmoe, N. P. (2014). Fueling the Fire: Violent Metaphors, Trait Aggression, and

Support for Political Violence. *Political Communication*, 31(4), 545-563.

doi:10.1080/10584609.2013.852642

Knuckey, J. (1999). Religious Conservatives, the Republican Party and Evolving Party

Coalitions in the United States. *Party Politics*, 5(4), 485-496.

doi:10.1177/1354068899005004004

Krebs, R. R., & Jackson, P. T. (2007). Twisting Tongues and Twisting Arms: The Power

of Political Rhetoric. *European Journal of International Relations*, 13(1), 35-66.

doi:10.1177/1354066107074284

Manning, J. E. (2016). *Membership of the 114th Congress: A Profile*. Congressional

Research Service.

Martin, J. (2014). *Politics and rhetoric: A critical introduction*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Norris, Pippa. (2004). Political Communications. *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*.

<https://sites.hks.harvard.edu/fs/pnorris/ Acrobat/Political%20Communications%20encyclopedia2.pdf>

Ripley, R. B. (1965). Adams, Burke, and Eighteenth-Century Conservatism. *Political Science Quarterly*, 80(2), 216. doi:10.2307/2147740

Rothbard, M. N. (2006). *An Austrian perspective on the history of economic thought*. Auburn, Alabama: Ludwig von Mises Institute.

Ryfe, D. M. (2001). History and Political Communication: An Introduction. *Political Communication*, 18(4), 407-420. doi:10.1080/10584600152647119

## Non-Scholarly References

2018 Platform. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.lp.org/platform/>

Abbey-Lambertz, K. (2015, January 30). Charges Dropped Against Cop Who Shot Sleeping 7-Year-Old Girl. Retrieved from [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/joseph-weekley-charges-dismissed-aiyana-stanley-jones\\_n\\_6566032](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/joseph-weekley-charges-dismissed-aiyana-stanley-jones_n_6566032)

About Cato. (2018, August 06). Retrieved from <https://www.cato.org/about>

About Reason Foundation. (2018, July 17). Retrieved from <https://reason.org/about-reason-foundation/>

Affordable Care Act (ACA) - HealthCare.gov Glossary. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.healthcare.gov/glossary/affordable-care-act/>

American Libertarianism vs. European Libertarianism. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://greyenlightenment.com/american-libertrianism-vs-european-libertarianism/>

Archibald, J. (2016, November 09). Klan will 'hold Trump's promises close;' drops fliers in Alabama. Retrieved from [https://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2016/11/klan\\_will\\_hold\\_trumps\\_promises.html](https://www.al.com/opinion/index.ssf/2016/11/klan_will_hold_trumps_promises.html)

Ayres, B. D., Jr. (1998, October 23). Political Briefing; Democrats Renew Push in New Mexico. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1998/10/23/us/political-briefing-democrats-renew-push-in-new-mexico.html>

Barrett, W. P. (n.d.). Governor Gary E. Johnson. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20090619091518/http://people.forbes.com/profile/governor-gary-e-johnson/3646>

Benedict, W. (2017, August 15). Libertarians condemn bigotry as irrational and repugnant.

Retrieved from <https://www.lp.org/libertarians-condemn-bigotry-irrational-repugnant/>

Blake, A. (2014, October 21). Ranking the media from liberal to conservative, based on

their-audiences. Retrieved from [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/10/21/lets-rank-the-media-from-liberal-to-conservative-based-on-their-audiences/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.db44efb40d8e)

[fix/wp/2014/10/21/lets-rank-the-media-from-liberal-to-conservative-based-on-their-audiences/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.db44efb40d8e](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-fix/wp/2014/10/21/lets-rank-the-media-from-liberal-to-conservative-based-on-their-audiences/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.db44efb40d8e)

Blumberg, Y. (2018, September 25). Trump's \$250 billion in China tariffs are now in

effect-here's what could get more expensive. Retrieved from

<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/09/25/with-trumps-250-billion-in-china-tariffs-heres-what-will-cost-more.html>

Bort, R. (2018, August 13). A Brief Overview of What Trump's Tariffs Have Wrought.

Retrieved from <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/trump-tariff-effects-708376/>

Blumberg, Y. (2018, September 25). Trump's \$250 billion in China tariffs are now in

effect-here's what could get more expensive. Retrieved from

<https://www.cnbc.com/2018/09/25/with-trumps-250-billion-in-china-tariffs-heres-what-will-cost-more.html>

Boaz, D. (2014, March 21). RIP Tonie Nathan, the First Woman to Receive an Electoral

Vote. Retrieved from <https://www.cato.org/blog/rip-tonie-nathan-first-woman-receive-electoral-vote>

Bort, R. (2018, August 13). A Brief Overview of What Trump's Tariffs Have Wrought.

Retrieved from <https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/politics-news/trump-tariff-effects-708376/>



- Burrus, T. (2015, April 29). Gay Marriage: A Victory for 'Radical' Libertarians.  
Retrieved from <https://www.cato.org/publications/commentary/gay-marriage-victory-radical-libertarians>
- Cameron, S. (2017, October 09). School district issues apology to KC school after incident during basketball game. Retrieved from <https://www.kmbc.com/article/school-district-issues-apology-to-kc-school-after-incident-during-basketball-game/8495660>
- Carnevale, F. (2018, November 29). Former Minn. governor, wrestler Jesse Ventura says he'd beat Trump in an election. Retrieved from <https://triblive.com/usworld/world/14350474-74/former-wrestler-and-minn-governor-jesse-ventura-says-hes-beat-trump-in>
- China plans tariffs on \$60 billion of US products. (2018, August 13). Retrieved from <https://money.cnn.com/2018/08/03/news/economy/china-us-tariffs-retaliation/index.html>
- CNN/ORC poll results: General election matchups. (2016, May 04). Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2016/05/04/politics/poll-results-general-election-matchup/index.html>
- Current third-party and independent state officeholders. (n.d.). Retrieved from [https://ballotpedia.org/Current\\_third-party\\_and\\_independent\\_state\\_officeholders](https://ballotpedia.org/Current_third-party_and_independent_state_officeholders)
- Elected Officials. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.lp.org/elected-officials-2/>
- Fischer, H. (2017, July 11). Law requiring more signatures for Libertarian candidates remains. Retrieved from [https://azdailysun.com/news/local/state-and-regional/law-requiring-more-signatures-for-libertarian-candidates-remains/article\\_120fabb8-5436-5d50-af33-80e99fb1a32f.html](https://azdailysun.com/news/local/state-and-regional/law-requiring-more-signatures-for-libertarian-candidates-remains/article_120fabb8-5436-5d50-af33-80e99fb1a32f.html)

Fischer, H. (2018, September 12). Libertarian candidates on sidelines in general election.

Retrieved from <https://azcapitoltimes.com/news/2018/09/11/arizona-libertarian-candidates-on-sidelines-in-general-election/>

Gary Johnson Wiki, Net Worth, Heart Attack, Tongue, Wife, Bio. (2018, January 24).

Retrieved from <https://heightline.com/gary-johnson-wiki-net-worth-heart-attack/>

Goldstein, A. (2019, March 05). ACA premiums rising beyond reach of older, middle-

class consumers. Retrieved from [science/aca-premiums-rising-beyond-reach-of-older-middle-class-consumers/2019/03/04/bdd07d9e-3e9a-11e9-922c](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191629X19300000)

[64d6b7840b82\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.780487d58e57](https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0191629X19300000)

Great American Families, Education, Healthcare, and Criminal Justice (2016).

Guzzon, J. (2016, October 20). Libertarians' Hope Gary Johnson Has Construction Roots.

Retrieved from <https://www.enr.com/articles/40631-libertarians-hope-gary-johnson-has-construction-roots>

Haltiwanger, J. (2017, September 27). Americans are desperate for a third major political

party in the Trump era. Retrieved from <https://www.newsweek.com/most-americans-desperate-third-major-political-party-trump-era-672540>

Harper, J. (2016, September 06). He gets 11 seconds in eight months: Gary Johnson receives

virtually no coverage from networks. Retrieved from

<https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2016/sep/6/gary-johnson-receives-little-coverage-from-news-ne/>

Individual Mandate Penalty You Pay If You Don't Have Health Insurance Coverage.

(n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.healthcare.gov/fees/fee-for-not-being-covered/>

Infosheet 22 - Political parties. (2014, January 29). Retrieved from

[https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/House\\_of\\_Representatives/Powers\\_practice\\_and\\_procedure/00\\_-\\_Infosheets/Infosheet\\_22\\_-\\_Political\\_parties](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/House_of_Representatives/Powers_practice_and_procedure/00_-_Infosheets/Infosheet_22_-_Political_parties)

Know Your Politics! (n.d.). Retrieved from [http://nolan.jimeyer.org/nolan\\_example.php](http://nolan.jimeyer.org/nolan_example.php)

Laissez-faire. (2018, April 13). Retrieved from <https://www.britannica.com/topic/laissez-faire>

Libertarians likely to break midterm-election record with candidates for partisan office on ballot in every state. (2018, August 31). Retrieved from <https://www.lp.org/libertarian-party-likely-break-midterm-election-record-candidate-partisan-office-ballot-every-state/>

Lizza, R. (2017, June 19). The Libertarians' Secret Weapon. Retrieved April 14, 2018, from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/07/25/gary-johnson-the-third-party-candidate>

Leip, D. (n.d.). 2016 Presidential General Election Results. Retrieved April 08, 2018, from <https://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/national.php>

Libertarians challenge GA ballot access law in federal court. (2017, December 02). Retrieved from <https://www.lp.org/libertarians-challenge-ga-ballot-access-law-federal-court/>

The Libertarian Party: A History from Hospers to Johnson · 71 Republic. (2018, November 11). Retrieved from <https://71republic.com/2018/11/11/the-libertarian-party-history/>

Lizza, R. (2017, June 19). The Libertarians' Secret Weapon. Retrieved April 14, 2018, from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/07/25/gary-johnson-the-third-party-candidate>

Lynch, M. W. (2001, January 01). America's Most Dangerous Politician. Retrieved from <http://reason.com/archives/2001/01/01/americas-most-dangerous-politi/singlepage>

Martin, M. (2012, June 21). Gary Johnson Offers Third Choice In 2012 Elections. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2012/06/21/155504668/gary-johnson-offers-third-choice-in-2012-elections>

McCluskey, M. (2018, October 23). Man Accused of Groping Woman on Flight: Trump 'Says It's OK'. Retrieved from <http://time.com/5431823/man-gropes-woman-on-flight/>

McDonald, M. P. (2018). 2016 November General Election Turnout Rates. Retrieved from <http://www.electproject.org/2016g>

Miller, M. (2000, August 20). He Just Said No to the Drug War. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2000/08/20/magazine/he-just-said-no-to-the-drug-war.html>

MyBio. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.normajeanalmodovar.com/mybio.html>

Ncsl.org. (2019). Straight Ticket Voting States. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncsl.org/research/elections-and-campaigns/straight-ticket-voting.aspx>

Nolan-Brown, E. (2019, February 25). 'No Allegations of Human Trafficking' and 'Women Could've Walked Out' In Florida Massage-Parlor Prostitution Stings. Retrieved from <https://reason.com/blog/2019/02/25/florida-massage-parlor-sex-stings>

The Origins of the United States Two-Party System. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.historyhit.com/the-origins-of-the-united-states-two-party-system/>

Party Platform. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://democrats.org/about/party-platform/>

The Political Compass. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.politicalcompass.org/>

Political parties in Parliament. (n.d.). Retrieved from

- <https://www.parliament.uk/about/mps-and-lords/members/parties/>
- President George Washington's Farewell Address (1796). (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=15>
- Rank, H. (1980). Analyzing Political Rhetoric. *The English Journal*, 69(9), 38-43.
- Religion in America: U.S. Religious Data, Demographics and Statistics | Pew Research Center. (2015, May 11). Retrieved from <http://www.pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study/party-affiliation/>
- Ross Perot Fast Facts. (2018, June 12). Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2013/06/10/us/ross-perot-fast-facts/index.html>
- Sack, K. (1994, April 24). With Eyes Open Wide, Libertarians Choose Stern. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1994/04/24/nyregion/with-eyes-open-wide-libertarians-choose-stern.html>
- Samuels, R. (2016, October 03). Years before 'Aleppo moment,' Gary Johnson showed little interest in details of governing. Retrieved [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/years-before-aleppo-moment-gary-johnson-showed-little-interest-in-details-of-governing/2016/10/03/f62a00fa-873d-11e6-92c2-14b64f3d453f\\_story.html?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.775fd7e140af](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/years-before-aleppo-moment-gary-johnson-showed-little-interest-in-details-of-governing/2016/10/03/f62a00fa-873d-11e6-92c2-14b64f3d453f_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.775fd7e140af)
- Sawhill, R. (2011, September 24). Black and right. Retrieved from [https://www.salon.com/1999/11/10/sowell\\_2/](https://www.salon.com/1999/11/10/sowell_2/)
- Short History of the Libertarian Party of North Carolina. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.lpnc.org/history>
- Skalka, L. (2018, July 23). After gaining ballot access, Libertarians flood races. Retrieved

from <https://www.toledoblade.com/Politics/2018/07/23/After-gaining-ballot-access-Libertarians-flood-races.html>

Stack, Liam. "Republican Candidate in Pennsylvania Threatens to 'Stomp All Over' Opponent's Face." *The New York Times*. October 12, 2018. Accessed October 31, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/12/us/politics/scott-wagner-video-tom-wolf.html>.

Stelloh, T. (2015, December 12). Ex-Georgia Deputy Acquitted After Flash Bang Grenade Injures Toddler. Retrieved from <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/ex-georgia-deputy-acquitted-after-flash-bang-grenade-hurts-toddler-n479361>

Suh, M. (2016, October 11). Political Polarization in the American Public. Retrieved from <http://www.people-press.org/2014/06/12/political-polarization-in-the-american-public/>

Taxes. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.lp.org/issues/taxes/>

Tuccille, J. (2012, November 07). Gary Johnson Pulls One Million Votes, One Percent. Retrieved from <http://reason.com/blog/2012/11/07/gary-johnson-pulls-one-million-votes-one>

Van Der Vossen, B. (2017). Libertarianism. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics*, 1-17. doi:10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.86

Winger, R. (2018, April 09). Tennessee Libertarians Try Something New to Publicize Absurdity of Ballot Access Law. Retrieved from <http://ballot-access.org/2018/04/09/tennessee-libertarian-try-something-new-to-publicize-absurdity-of-ballot-access-law/>

Winter, B. (2001, November 29). 1971-2001: The Libertarian Party's 30th Anniversary

Year Remembering the first three decades of America's "Party of Principle".

*Constitutional Patriots Opposing Prohibition.*

Winter, B. (2018, September 9). OPINION | Straight-party voting is bad move for state.

Retrieved from <https://www.abqjournal.com/1218630/straightparty-voting-is-bad-move-for-state.html>

## Appendix A. Supplementary Data File

**Description:**

These are the interviews and interview questions that made up the research portion of this thesis.

**Filename:**

Completed 582019.doc

Appendix.doc



Jonathan Blanks

Blanks: I grew up in Fort Wayne Indiana. My father is a retired, black police officer. My mother was a stay-at-home mom for a while after being a medical transcriptionist. She's pasty White Irish woman. I grew up, I saw a lot of white flight and I realized that well, I made the connection at a pretty young age the more the government had to do with your life, the worse off you were. And being inherently skeptical of government, I put it together that we should reduce government and be skeptical the size of the State generally speaking. I have changed my mind over time about like the cause and effect of that but I think that's the basis of where I got my politics from. Also, from reading the autobiography of Malcolm X, which I am doing a book club with the intern volunteers this month. So it will be interesting to see their perspective on that. But sort of small business, personal responsibility. The Constitution's great as long as it's not being like a giant hypocrisy as it was for black people for most of our country's history. As I got older my ideas became less dogmatic. The more I read, I went to college and you know, to be honest, I flunked out. Then went back to school a couple years later and finished on Dean's List. I was the token right-of-center guy on our school newspaper and my first off column was like "Angry, Black and Conservative. I still sort of identified with that but the concern at the time was the Republican Party. The Republican Revolution happened where they won the house for the first time in 40 years, the Contract with America was like one of those libertarian documents like as far as term limits, skepticism of government, low taxes and I'm like, "Oh I'm all about this." And I still identify to conserve in that way, but I always bracket it off, "I'm a Libertarian conservative" or something along those lines, but I still voted Republican as a general rule. But libertarian people always still had that hippie at the post office thing and that's not me. I still considered my politics to be libertarian but less about identifying with the GOP per se. But as I got older the GOP became the party in power and I'm just more disinfected with the politics. I was like very into George W. Bush's anti interventionist ideas. Now the funny thing was I was kind of hawkish on foreign policy, but I did like that we're not the world's policeman thing. It's like one of those contradictory things they hold your head at the same time and then he just became what he was. So that's like the second Bush term. I was like, I can't be a Republican anymore. It's just not going to happen. So as I moved on, you know, I was just sort of like the Republicans at least seemed like they cared about limited government. And but now they're just really about authority. I remember I took this US Congress class and a Republican representative came into my class and we all had to submit questions ahead of time. And again, I was one of the few it which is weird because this is when I come back to school and like when I first started in like 96, well the fall of 95. I took an intro to poli-sci class and most of them were still like a self-identified like they she took it like a hand raise your hand pull. Arrows like most of the people in that class were Republicans, a few Independents in like two or three Democrats. This is like a hundred and fifty people or something.

Fiest: This is still in the Midwest, right?

Blanks: Yeah.

Fiest: Well of course there were Republicans. See I live in El Paso, Texas. So for me, they're all Democrats.

Blanks: Oh, yeah. Wow, it's so but then our when I went back to school in the late 90s and early aughts. I ended up graduating in 2006 at the age of 29 that everything had changed. I don't know what happened but I went back in like it was all like everyone was like openly Democrat. I'm like, okay whatever. So I was the only write a guy like again as talking to the right of Center guy on the school newspaper the of the columnists anyway, and they got the Republican from Congress came in his name was John Hostutler and I got to ask the first question and I was like, "As a member of the Christian Coalition..." He's stopped me and he's like, "I'm not a member of the Christian Coalition." Okay, "As a member of Congress who votes 97% with the Christian Coalition, how do you bridge the gap between fiscal and social conservatives?" And he says, "Fiscal and social conservatives should agree on everything and everyone else can get out of the party". Little did I know that like this was really going to be how things would work out. So questions going around, and then I got asked a second question, and I was like, "As a member of the party of Lincoln what have you done to get blacks and other minorities into the party?" and he was like, "Well we in the Republican Party think black people are people too and we're going to do everything we can to get them off welfare." And I was like, "I'm never voting for you again." Like I don't think I voted for him the first time, but I'm never voting for you. And I was so done with the GOP at that point. I was. I mean, I know he wasn't the only one, but it's like there's other stuff that was going on. I was just like, "Hell no". But apparently John Hostetler was what the future of the Republican party. I just didn't want to realize that yet. So, I come to DC. I graduate in 2006. I look for some job opportunities and I get an internship at Cato, and I know they're libertarian-ish but I didn't know like huge libertarian they were. I didn't follow them that closely. I wasn't that into public policy is like, "I just want to do something." I don't know what I want to do. I thought about law school, journalism, not so much just like, okay. What do I do? So, ended up working there, then did a stint at Reason Magazine the following summer and then I got hired at Cato that summer and have been there ever since. I've been there 12 years. I'll be 12 years in August.

Fiest: What all do you write about at Cato?

Blanks: Mostly policing. Well, I got a new boss a year and a half ago and instead of being more reactive and just sort of like catching what comes we're being more proactive. So, I'm doing mostly policing but I've done white collar crime, gun rights, I do write about racial issues. There is a website called libertarianism.org. I've written for that. And let's see anything else I write about? Criminal justice policy, you know AG drug war, that sort of stuff.

Fiest: Okay, so you mentioned in the first part of your interview that your father is black and you look primarily white. I'm in the exact same boat as you. My grandfather was a Mexican national and my grandmother was a Ute Indian. My dad's family comes from the Balkan countries over in Europe...and naturally I am in the same boat as you. I'm in Texas but I'm in El Paso, Texas which is as I'm sure you know is like a Democrat bastion way on the west side of Texas and..

Blanks: That's Beto country, right?

Fiest: I'm sorry?

Blanks: That's Beto right?

Fiest: Yes. Beto is from here

Blanks: Yeah. Yeah. So one thing I can wield pretty well is one of my favorite quotes by Malcolm X. When I talked to the interns about race in libertarianism, and its very terrible history, there's a passage in the autobiography we've talked about, the most virulent anti-white diatribes I've ever heard of come from passing negroes. And that is like because they hear all the things that recognized negroes don't get to basically we know what white people think of them. And so that sort of thing I'm like, "No, I don't I don't say that I understand or that I am treated the same way". I understand that in a very real way that I have white privilege, right? And I can choose to pass if I want to. However, this is something that's very important to me and, for that reason, you know, I can tell you, "This is what's going on." "This is what white people say." And while I am not going to be a spokesman for anyone. I'm not trying to say that," Oh black people feel this." I'm there and say, "This is what people are experiencing." and I have this perspective which has value. I was on campus I was considered to be Republican, so they didn't like that that ended that had its own baggage, right? Making it clear, I'm not trying to replace anyone's voice. I'm not speaking for anyone who actually is going through the stuff that I get away with. I recognize the privileged position. As I tell the interns is like two things. One: I don't think converting people to libertarianism is probably the best idea. Like you put the stuff out there. If you can work on it as far individuals concern. But you can say, "Hey, I'm not an enemy," and maybe explain why that that is. And some people are going to be receptive to it and some people aren't. And a lot of people have good reason for not being receptive of Libertarians. But also, make it clear that, this isn't a replacement, or, "I know better than anyone else." and I'm just like "This is just from what I understand, and from my perspective, which Comes from my family, from my experience, and from the culture that I grew up in."

Fiest: I've tried very hard to separate libertarianism and Republicans. Because of think a lot of people view libertarianism as like Diet Republicanism. I watched the interview with Bill Weld who has now gone back to being a Republican and I'm just disappointed. I have talked to so many people who are Democrats or who don't claim a party but just believe whatever they believe who would not have to told me, "We would not have voted for Gary Johnson because he used to be a Republican." So when I'm talking to all these people about these issues and I'm like, "Okay as a Libertarian, I believe this..." and I think what they're hearing is, "As a Diet Republican this is what I feel.." Especially when it comes to race issues. I want things to get better okay. Well, I'm still working on it.

Blanks: Oh, yeah. I think there's a sort of a widespread libertarian failure to see what Trump was going to do. And you know, and I know there are a lot of people particularly at Reason who were like, "Oh Hillary is worse than Trump." I'm like, not on your life. Just no. Obviously Texas was going red. And obviously California is going blue. So it's like if you're in Los Angeles or El Paso or something like that and you decide to vote for you Gary Johnson, that's fine. And I voted for Gary Johnson. Hell, I voted for Bob Barr. I don't have a problem with libertarian voting but when I saw what Trump was going to be and what was going to happen, I voted for a Democrat for the first time in my life. Like the there was one time I voted for the former mayor of Alexandria who was running as an independent, but he had he had to run as an independent because he tried to take a vacated Congress seat. He couldn't be on the ballot twice and he lost the primary. So I voted for a guy who was it all for all intense purposes a Democrat.

But outside of that I voted for Hillary because I lived in Virginia at the time. I now live in DC proper, so it doesn't really matter because it's you know, I think what 96% for Obama or something like that. It was like insane. So, the election that matters in DC is the Democratic primary. So, I'm now a technically a registered Democrat, but if I didn't live in DC I probably would just maintain independent status. I don't really consider myself a Libertarian anymore. Still you know, I'm libertarian...

Fiest: So you're a lower case L libertarian.

Blanks: I've always been lower case L. But like now it's not even so much. I'm a Libertarian than I am libertarian-ish. I'm a policy guy. For example, libertarian policy is like... legalize marijuana and you don't really need to tax and regulate it. I mean I'm being very simplistic but insofar as "we're not trying to like tax and regulate it." I, on the other hand, I want this to pass. Therefore I'm going support taxation regulation. But as a libertarian and I'm supposed to hate taxation and regulation. Well I can talk about this and say, "Well you can't tax it too much because that's going to create a gray or black market." you know and all that sort of stuff.

Fiest: You sound like a libertarian who's living in the real world.

Blanks: Yeah, basically.

Fiest: One of the people who brought me in, he is an outright anarchist. And I know that every time someone proposes something to me, my head goes directly is to the anarchist way of thinking. But then I look and I happen to live in the real world and there's no way you can do that. And while we don't necessarily want to legalize things like marijuana or even prostitution and just leave it alone out to the free market continuously. You can, if you must, do good things with that.

Blanks: Yeah. Now were working with policing right? I'm dealing with a state function and so there's going to be money spent and it's a question of coming up with the best way to do that. I am against private policing. I'm against private prisons. I am very vocal in like the opposition to private prisons. Are they the problem with our carceral system? No. They're 10% of the facilities they hold six percent of the population. The problem is the supply. I mean the demand that is created by prosecutors.

Fiest: We have these private prisons and you want to keep them full.

Blanks: It's the amount of people they're sending there. The private prisons responded to a market demand. Obviously, I work at Cato, and people understand that Cato is a libertarian organization. I don't try to say, "As a Libertarian this.." or "As a Libertarian that..." because I when I first started going to criminal justice conferences and all that, they're like, "Oh he's from Cato...." I've had people say, "Why are you interested in this?" The idea that we're Republicans who do drugs is very, very prevalent.

Fiest: And we don't all do drugs anyway.

Blanks: I was able to make it clear that I am not trying to convert anyone. I think there are a lot of areas of agreement. Particularly criminal justice. I'm not coming at it from a Libertarian perspective necessarily. I'm coming at it from a civil rights perspective, which is very often the same thing. But where we will have differences is the amount of State involvement. In other issues, one of the big things in criminal justice is usually State based tools to address mental health issues, poverty, that sort of stuff. I just don't care at this point if there is a there is a state intervention that lowers crime. For example, the Richmond California thing. They were paying people not to commit murder. They understood that there was a handful of people who are responsible for an overwhelming number of their gun crimes. So they're like If we give them something to do and we give them jobs...when we subsidize them to make sure they keep on the straight and narrow...sure enough their gun crime plummeted. And now they're trying to do something like that here in DC. The problem is DC is a lot larger than that. I don't know how effective that's going to be. I think there's this unintended consequence of Federalism. You see it work one place and you try to replicate it all over the place. It's not necessarily going to work. There are parts of the legislation that's proposed here in DC that I very much support. But I just don't pick a fight where I think it's probably not going to go well. I just try not to pick fights I don't have to. And then dial back the libertarianness and just be very forward with the policy agreements.

Fiest: That's a little bit scary at first though. The thought of paying people to not commit murder. I'm a broke college student, pay me to not go rob a bank, right?

Blanks: Yea. Part of it is that's just sort of the way they're selling it. Right? So the idea is why are these people committing these crimes? And the issue is there on they're on the street all the time, they don't have anything to do, they can interact with other people. This is like their territory. They're like kids on the corner doing their shit. We believe that human beings need some sort of purpose in life and they need to do something, whether it's work or if it's self-respect. If you have made it very, very difficult for people to do that sort of thing, some way to make that happen is to basically give them a fake job or intervene. What does this person need? Instead of a disease filled rape cage going to be best for this guy? Or give them something to do?

Fiest: Oh, absolutely

Blanks: That's the approach. So it's not so much paying people not to commit murder. It's like intervening in a troubled kid's life before he does something ridiculously terrible. So if you look at it that way, it makes a lot more sense. But it's sort of like the ebonics thing back in the 90s, right? They're like, "Their teaching kids ebonics." It's like, "No. They they already know it." The whole point is trying to convert this, this is how you talk. It makes sense in the end. It's just all in how you sell it. But people who are skeptical of it are always going to caricature it to be something and it's not.

Fiest: I feel like if something like that is found to be working, that might be an example of something that you could you talk about. Taxing drugs and taxing prostitution and all those kind of things and kind of flowing the money into their that actually might be useful. The other thing is we could be doing more war we could be building more military bases and every country in the world and building more weapons. Sure.



Blanks: Yeah. Well, that's the thing. I'm just like, "Why is this?" "Oh, we just need to up the taxes on the rich!" Money has never been the problem. The problem is that this is what our government chooses to do with it. We could have a Norway style welfare structure here, which I really wouldn't care that much about, but the thing is we decided to bomb brown people Instead.

Fiest: Yes. We choose to go to Wars and have army bases. I once saw I'm afraid I don't remember how long ago it was. But I saw a news article were some Republicans were protesting a university getting \$6 million dollars to study the mating patterns of bears and I'm just like, okay. I'm not against this research at all. I mean, I spend a lot of time in the University. I'm very much for research, but how about private people funding that kind of stuff? I mean if you have people that are low income and certainly that is all over the place here in El Paso and they want financial help dealing with, you know, Healthcare or food or whatever that might be less of an issue. Except we are Sending money to so many other places where it's really not necessary or even really helpful. I mean people always want to talk about Obama like he never had any scandals and I'm like, okay, let's go ask all the people whose family he wiped out at a wedding party with a drone and then talk to me about Obama's scandals, right? You know, I totally agree with you money is not the problem.

Blanks: The military-industrial complex...their job is to kill people and break things. It's a "Limbaughism". I hate Rush Limbaugh, but there were nuggets of truth in what he was saying. The military's job is to kill people and break things. We don't build countries with it. We don't do all this stuff with it. It should be used sparingly, when it's in the national interest. Of course, he and I probably differ on what that national interest is at this point. Unfortunately, we have you know businesses that create weapons and they're very good at it. I live in DC and Cato's right by the convention center. And so you have a lot of car shows there and Comic-Con but they also have military fairs. So you have military from all over the world come in to show off and buy weapons. And you come out of the metro and you just see ads everywhere for new toys to blow up people all around the planet. It's just the most disgusting...if you go near the Pentagon because the Metro runs on the Pentagon you see that shit too. All over the place. Killing is their business and business is good. It's so disturbing and everyone just sort of takes it as like "Well, yeah, this is of course what we do." And the thing is voters just don't give a shit about foreign policy. I don't know how much is showing up on the TV but I'm wearing..

Fiest: Nationals Baseball.

Blanks: So I go to half the games every year. And every fourth inning they always have the salute to soldiers that are coming back and they do their waves and all that sort of stuff. The number of the guys that have PTSD and crippling injuries...and you see the Wounded Warrior Project. I'm like because we've been so good at keeping these guys alive...it's so it's virtue signaling to be like, "Oh yes, I support Wounded Warriors Project." How about, "We Wound Fewer Warriors Project".

Fiest: How about we keep them here?

Blanks: Yes, keep them here and give them other kind of jobs that don't require them getting blown up and blowing up other people.

Fiest: I want to go back to race for just a second, Race in the party, or in third parties, or small government. I consider myself a feminist. I consider myself a Libertarian feminist. The libertarian part is just as important as the feminist part. When I talk about that I get the collectivist label slapped on me. Do you get that when you talk about race issues?

Blanks: I gave a talk in Australia last year, at their Friedman conference...and it was funny because my partner works at VOX media she covers immigration and we were both asked to go. I'm pretty sure I was asked just because they wanted her there, but I was like I'm going regardless of whether or not she goes. And she's not particularly libertarian. I mean she believes in you know, obviously we don't disagree on a whole lot politically but like she understands public choice, for example and she's not a dedicated libertarian. I mean when she was in college, she was she started like the party of the left at her school, but she is not, you know, she's not like one of these like hardcore progressives. What was funny was we both presented at this conference. I gave two talks. The one where everyone kind of reacted poorly was "Hey, there's a reason why black people don't trust Libertarians. And you know, maybe if you start thinking about how they view people, and be nice to them, and start taking their perspective into account when you say things...you might actually get more people to respect you."...and they all thought I was a bleeding heart liberal, and she's the one who works at the liberal media website, and I'm just like, "Okay. Whatever."

Fiest: Elizabeth Nolan Brown posted something to her Twitter feed where a black libertarian spoke on an issue and some drug policy group retweeted it and said, "If you're not a real black person, you don't get to speak up on these issues." And I was like, this is a real black person that just happens to lean libertarian and all of a sudden they don't get to speak up on what they believe because they don't meet the criteria, I guess, for what a black person should be...? Yeah. There's a lot of complications that go along with that. I try not to get into it too much with the internship because our interns are mostly white, and it's really complicated. You've got issues of colorism. So that's like when for example for the entire history of black people on this continent, or for most of it anyway, that light-skinned blacks have been treated better. And so part of it is because people believe that the more white you are genetically the better you are. You've got family connections where there are a lot of people who are products of rape and then you have like different cultural things. So there is this tension between now within the black community. How we talk about race in this country is very fraught and doesn't make a lot of sense. There are things that are contradictory and while I can look at it and say I understand how it's coherent and all works together, it's difficult. You could teach an advanced college class on how this sociologically work. So when I talk about the black community, I do not believe that it is a monolithic like organization where they all like, "We all believe same thing" or that sort of thing, but generally speaking there are tensions within the black community about color. There are about what qualifies as Blackness what what is legitimate? What is you know? Oh God, what's the word? I always use authenticity. Like there's this authenticity thing. Part of that is used against black people from the outside . One thing I really hate about black conservatives is the sort of always talk about the Democrat Plantation and that inherent victimization that black liberal supposedly put forward. What's funny if you listened to enough black conservatives, I'm not painting them all this way, but certainly this is something that occurs, is that they talk about victimization of themselves. They're like, "I'm not I'm not viewed as authentically black and therefore it's these Democrat, brainwashed, plantation liberals that are they doing to me" and so it's just like this really weird active projection that I see and it's really annoying. But so yeah that

authenticity thing, I have a lot of black followers on Twitter, most of which are not remotely libertarian, and it's because people respect what I say and that they understand that I'm coming from a position of, "I care about black people in America." I have cultural competency. I grew up listening to the same music in black neighborhoods, I code-switch. If I'm hanging out with a bunch of black people I sound a lot different. I've written on racial issues as well. And I do so in a way that is both culturally competent but also addresses the issues that people care about. But that doesn't mean that everyone thinks that I'm black, and that's their problem. And as I say, I've written on this post before like if I'm black enough for Malcolm X, I'm pretty sure I'm black enough for you. If you don't like it, I don't care. You're always going to have people like that, from black and white, and it's a sort of like over indexing on that is dangerous. It doesn't mean that everyone feels that way and you can't pretend that everyone feels that way. Clarence Thomas did a lot to earn the reputation he has among black people. He can still write very eloquently. His concurrence in *McDonald vs Chicago*, the Chicago gun case, and talking about how second amendment rights were at the forefront of the framers of the Fourteenth Amendments minds when they when they were like, "We want Friedman to have the right to own guns." and that is something that is a core value and he wrote a beautiful concurrence about that. But at the same time he uses race basically only when it stays advantage and trying to make it as an argument for it. Then, of course, there are still tensions with marrying white people and that sort of thing. But, his wife is particularly terrible. There are a bunch of reasons why that goes on but the thing is every black person knows black conservatives. They're called "grandmothers". My dad was the only Republican in the family and he was a cop. My half-brother is an Evangelical Christian who goes to church probably three times a week. He's active in the church. I'm pretty sure he's a gun owner. I know his daughters talked about that he has owned guns. I don't talk to him about it. He is a conservative by every metric but he wouldn't vote Republican if you paid him. It's not the conservatism. It's very often how you're coming across, what you're saying, whether or not you're using race as a proxy for what it says about your politics, the politicians you support, the and the policies you support are different than whether or not you twitch little conservative in how you know, you run about your daily life.

Fiest: One of the things I wanted to ask you about kind of it falls into libertarianism, but it also goes into the alt right. There were some pretty well-known people that are now in the alt-right such as Molyneux and Cantwell, who did at one point in the last like five years or either had a home or claimed a home in the lower case L libertarian philosophy. I know that Cantwell even had a radio show on LRN, which is a libertarian radio network. He was pretty regularly a visiting cohost on Free Talk Live, which if you're not familiar is a Libertarian radio show. How did that happen? How did they get away with carrying that kind of hatred inside a philosophy that is supposed to be about respect for the individual?

Blanks: This does like touch on a lot of what I talked to interns about. If you look at the history of libertarian thought in this country, there is a very strong parallel with segregationists, lost causers, and white political grievance. Keep in mind part of the early school choice movement were segregation academies in the South. They're like, "I don't want to my child to go to school with black people. Therefore, we're going to keep them out of school for years or start these private schools where basically only white kids go." While Barry Goldwater was the most Libertarian major party candidate of the 20th century, part of him is like that pivot to the South. The southern strategy than what was reified under Nixon. But that sort of state's rights as



intellectual window dressing for support of segregation and the station of the power to do that. So, it's always been there. I'm not that familiar with the foundation of the LP and from what I understand that's not really connected. However, that's going to attract people who are there for that reason and so much of like the free speech debate is like the idea of, "I should have the free speech to be racist." Yes, you should. But that doesn't mean that it's like, "Oh that means that this is important because it's important to be racist," but it's going to attract that sort of thing. So, when you look at the way that government has been used...think of the welfare debate, right? The welfare queen trope of the 1980s, even though most people on welfare are white, the idea of a Welfare Queen is a poor black woman. She is black, has a bunch of kids and all that sort of thing and most of the people I know who abused welfare were actually white. But that's another story. And because America has been and continues to be a racist country. American libertarianism is so tightly held to the founding and the ideals, the racism came with it. It's not necessarily that it was intentional. It's not conscious. The reason why black people don't view the government with as much suspicion as other is white Libertarians do very often, it's not because they trust the police, to hell with that. Of course they don't. If you look at my parent's generation, my dad was born in 1928 in Indiana. He was he was a black cop. My Uncle Jim was the first black bus driver in my hometown, in the county, and it's first black county councilman. My Aunt Helen worked for the IRS. Yes, we desegregated. The Civil Rights Act banned discrimination in hiring and various other things have happened, But the people who most likely hired black people was the government. When you have anti-government rhetoric, black people in the government just go together, There's an unwillingness to recognize racism I think in libertarian circles and in just white circle. It's not something that's only on the right, but it's more problematic on the economic right. When I was growing up Robert Byrd was still a senator. I used to tell people, "Which filthy rich white man are you voting to solve your problems?" I didn't view either of the political parties as a venue for help. I always thought it was like which one is most likely going to get government out of the way. Whereas I think a lot of black people, who unlike me have to face the problems that the government presents, vote Democrat defensively, and with good reason. They saw what I didn't see for many years. I saw racism in both parties, but from a practical matter the racism in the Republican party has always been worse because they're more likely to implement it. The racism in the Democratic party is much more like the Bernie Sanders variety, "It's class, not race," and not seeing the problems for what they are. Where the Republicans are like "No, no. Really. Screw the black people." I had a colleague who said, we were talking about voting rights issues, "Well, you know, they're not doing it because they're black. They're doing it because they're Democrats". I was just like, "Come on, man." The belief that the racism is a problem because of racial animus and not because of the effect on black people or the effect on whatever ethnic group that's involved is a misunderstanding of American racism, why it's so prevalent and terrible for a lot of people. You can have a bunch of black cops implementing a policy that only affects black people or overwhelmingly affects black people. They may or may not have animus towards the people that they're working against, but you're getting treated differently because you're black, it doesn't matter what's in the cops heart. Provided, it's not like, beating you senseless or something along those lines.

Fiest: I've seen videos where black people are getting beaten down and there are black cops in the group. In some cases they just want to beat somebody. They don't care what the color. I'm not a Democrat. I've never been a Democrat but I've heard stories of racism within the Democratic

party. After Charlottesville, for example Christopher Cantwell, when that movie was made about him...I never liked him. I always saw something in him, the same thing I saw in Trump. There's something that I don't like. When you listen to his interview and you heard the animus that he had for people, I was like, for the first time, do I even belong in a capital L party, do I even belong in the lowercase L group, because clearly this guy had issues with blacks and Jews...and how did he get along along here? And for the first time, I thought maybe I don't belong here.

Blanks: That's why, after the election of Trump, I basically disavowed the libertarian term as a personal label. It's still describes my politics insofar as I'm skeptical of government. I think markets are better and free markets are the best way to empower the people who don't have the power now. So it's still there but it like as far as like identifying as a Libertarian, I just don't say that anymore. Part of it is because of that part of it was libertarian leadership that I see around here in DC that just don't see the difference in the parties. And while I am not in any way a proud Democrat, I'm a Democrat in registration only. The label is so less important to me. I am ideologically homeless in that respect. But because I'm with Cato I have that professional affiliation. I don't run from it. I don't always say, No. I'm not a libertarian." It's not worth it. But I try to say that's not me. I understand why you feel that way and that's not me. When I first got to DC so many people were here because of Ron Paul and his newsletters. I mean, "It's white resentment politics." I share a quote in the in the PowerPoint presentation I do with these kids that talk about how 95 percent of black males in the District of Columbia or criminals or criminal-esque, that only five percent of black people have reasonable views on liberty, which means small taxation anti-welfare, that sort of thing. And the explicit linking between criminality and believing in libertarian ideas, it's just so clearly racist, there's no getting around it. All American political philosophies or political parties have racist baggage. Some are better at dealing with and others. And too much of libertarianism is anti-left than it is pro liberty because they don't stop to think about what liberty means to other people who aren't white and privileged. They believe very much in liberty for me, privileged white guy. They're so absolutely convinced...they would never say democrat plantation, but they still think people have been brainwashed and don't understand. "Ron Paul has the racist newsletter, but he would still be better for black people if he got elected because he because he wants to get rid of the drug war." I'm just like, "The problem with the state goes well beyond the drug war. And presidents, when they come into power, always have to make compromises and throw people under the bus that supported them and guess who was always first in line for that?" The idealization of the colorblind society, that is complete bullshit, is something that I think Libertarians partially buy into. I used to tell people, "I wish libertarians would talk more about race," and now I've come to complete opposite conclusion of, "They need to shut up and listen about race."

Fiest: That's what I try to do. I don't know anything about race. I can just tell you what I've been told from people who have actually suffered through some problems. But there's not a whole lot of black Libertarians and I assume that there's a very good reason. The conservative side of things has always come around to hurt them. I've even heard capital L libertarians will say "Well, you know, I shouldn't be forced to live around people I don't want to. If there's a black family or a brown family living next to me, I shouldn't have to live next to the them. And I'm like, "Right. You should move. Your rights end at the end of your property. A brown family or a black family or a purple family have the right to live next to you if it's passed your property line. I don't understand the problem. You talked about, "If you want to be a racist, fine, be a racist."

It's about not wanting to have these people around at all. Like they can't even be neighbors. They don't understand where their rights end.

Blanks: That directly ties to the housing covenants, right? When segregation was banned a lot of real estate and neighborhood associations started putting clauses in their contracts, in the mortgages. You cannot sell to a black person. You basically have to get the housing communities permission which was effective segregation, but it didn't say, "Thou shalt not sell to a negro."

Fiest: But it was "the characterization of the neighborhood must be maintained" or something.

Blanks: Yeah, that that sort of thing. You see this today. I highly recommend following Nicole Hannah Jones on Twitter. She's an education reporter for New York Times and writing a book about it. She's pretty much anti school choice, but she is really good about the history of school choice and where that's come from. I'm still pro school choice, don't get me wrong. But the history is a problem. This is the thing that I don't understand. She lives in New York City, she's black, she had the opportunity to put her kid in an advanced school that wasn't in her neighborhood, but she thought that was contributing to the inequality behind it. She's trying to work within the school system to make the school system better instead of putting her kid in a better school...because that's a proxy. Now, keep in mind, in liberal New York City they're trying to integrate and desegregate the schools, and of course the white progressives are fighting them. And she writes about that. This is how racism still exists on the left. And I'm like, "Why do you want to use government to do this? It's not responsive. It's so slow. And even when it's trying to do the right thing, it fails miserably." And this goes into my whole thing with capitalism and race. Where people believe that, "Oh because American capitalism started in racism..." and it did. There's no really getting around that. And that racism was developed as a way to maintain southern like white supremacy. Now the idea is smash capitalism and everything's going to be okay. No. It's not going to work. It's much harder than both the left and the right. Libertarians and progressives know what to do with. They're like, "Oh, if we just get the right people in power it's going to be okay. If we just get rid of capitalism, it's going to be okay." No. Our country is infected with racism. And until you address that fact, whatever system you're going to have is going to reflect that. You can pit money versus government power. But if you give government all the power, you are fucked. I cannot tell what is worse. That's where I fight against the Socialists like hardcore. I'm just like "Y'all mean well, but no." I'm so scared and it's like I am not an Ann Rand, "Business people are heroes," thing. I met enough of these guys. I'm familiar with the donor class, like "no". But they are better than the alternative. Because libertarianism has been the intellectual window dressing for American racism and white supremacy, you're going to see a lot of bleeding into that and that's why people should be very skeptical of Libertarians who don't recognize racial problems. I had a guy I knew we're at retreat for work and I was talking about pre Civil Rights Act because there are still Libertarians who believe the Civil Rights Act infringes on the freedom of association by banning segregation in housing accommodations and in food service. It was like too much to give, why Barry Goldwater opposed it and I was just like, "Dude you understand that black people couldn't drive around this country and know that they had a place to stay. It's a restriction freedom of travel." He just looked at me, and this guy, he's younger than me. So he's like probably mid twenties at this point. It looks at me and he goes, "So?" I was just like, "You don't care about liberty. You care

about doing your own thing?” And there’s a major difference. I think there is a massive blind spot in libertarianism to stuff like that.

Fiest: I guess we should have specified, “We meant liberty for everyone.” Not you. Everyone.

Blanks: Understanding that what you believe everywhere else, is there are trade-offs. Sometimes we can't have nice things like unfettered federalism because slavery. You know? Federalism has been great in like legalizing marijuana and marriage equality, right? But libertarians are just like, when it comes to this, “Oh no, no no..” and they don't necessarily understand that they're always doing this against liberty for black people or liberty that could be vaguely associated with the left. They're still like “Well, yeah, I'm for individual liberty and all. I don't like either party but man, I hate the left. You know, that's so like “social justice warrior. They're just still like oh God in my head. You know, sometimes I actually have a point just because they're pretty obnoxious about it.” Sometimes I’m like, “So are libertarians.”

Fiest: So right and the things that you're saying actually kind of remind me of what I heard Matt Stone and Trey Parker saying, the creators of South Park at one point a few years ago they did come out as Libertarians and they were someone I actually tried to reach out to for my thesis. I was reading up on them and now they're kind of saying a different thing. They're saying, “We're concerned about liberty, but we're not so much libertarians.” And I was like, that is quite a change.

Blanks: I still don't know exactly what happened. They used to be Menken Fellows at Cato. We have this position, I don't think it's paid. But basically, if you're a humorist, and you're a libertarian we will give you this distinction. Like right now PJ O'Rourke is a Menken Fellow, Penn and Teller are Menken Fellows at Cato. They come and speak occasionally. Well, Penn does anyway. And they're open Libertarians and Matt and Trey used to be and now they’re not anymore. I never got a good explanations why they're not. I had heard it might have been the Catholic episode. I don't know exactly what did it, but that happened.

Fiest: What do you think the correlation between the libertarian....you're talking about Red-Hot Catholic Love right?

Blanks: I don't remember the name of the show. I remember that there was considerable backlash within Libertarians with that episode. Now, there aren't a whole lot of Catholic libertarians as far as I know but, I think there were some. Not all of our donors are like hardcore Libertarians. They give us money because they like our views on, say, trade or taxes but they're not necessarily on the whole civil liberties thing or a lot of them are Republicans. If you're going to have that you're probably going to have some people that are you know that have more traditional conservative values that may have to do with religion. there's again I have Now don't get me wrong. I haven't like asked hard about this. I decided I wanted to sort of bring it up like anyone ever know what happened with Matt and Trey and someone knows but I don't know.

Fiest: That was one reason I tried so hard to reach out to them. But they're very hard people get a hold of and after a while I just gave up. But that was one question I would want to ask because I really like the idea of Matt and Trey as Libertarians. They have such a beacon to get those kind

of thoughts out there. They did a gay marriage episode called, “Follow That Egg” and that was one of the ones where I realized that, “Oh my God, I think they might be libertarians.” and I went and looked it up, and sure enough they were. Then going back to the last election, if I'm remembering correctly, one of them said they voted for Gary Johnson and I was like, “...and you had this platform to put him up and you didn't.” And that's their choice. That's their thing to do with whatever they want. But I was so disappointed because we continue to make fun of Donald Trump to the point where they had to stop it because they were like, “It's just not funny anymore”, but they declined to give Gary Johnson what I think would have been a very deserved opportunity to get his message across because he spent so much the 2016 election trying to identify, “What is a libertarian?” that he never got a chance to get his policy out there too much.

Blanks: Well, there are there some campaign finance rules that might have prevented them from doing that. It's like the problem with the payments to Stormy Daniels and such. If it's an in-kind gift they have to claim that. So there have to be some coordination there. I think there are probably some FCC rules that might have prevented them from doing that. But I also, I am so much less concerned with libertarianism as a brand than improving liberty. Generally, what you call it is not really my concern. But again, I don't distance myself from the title in public. My friends know that I'm sort of registering my frustration with libertarian movement and their failure to sound the alarm on Trump. I don't think Malcolm X is a Libertarian and I always feel weird like putting labels on people who are dead. Some people like when I call Frederick Douglass a libertarian. Some want to call random other people libertarians. My issue is individual liberty, human liberty and flourishing and what you call it is so much less important to me than actually the policy to change it. So, I've never been an LP guy. I'm not against it. I've voted for libertarians. It's just the liberty is so much more important than the ideology and the propagation of the ideology. Cato is interested in trying to get more black people in the fold and I'm like “Well, okay. This is going to take a lot of work and it's going to take time and it's going to take a certain institutional change in a way you do things.” And that not just lip service. I didn't trust Democrats for a long time, and still don't, but they care about black people every four years when they're running for president, and that's it. Obama changed that a bit, but, outside of that, it's just sort of, “Oh here. Let some bring the black people up on stage and they might as well be wearing a wearing a purple shirt with a yellow “T” on it. It's that that sort of stuff and so I cautioned Cato against doing that. If what they want is black people to say what they want to hear, that's not going to work. There are more black libertarians out there for various reasons, but it's not like they are very divided on whether or not to talk about race. There's a difference between say me and Camille Foster. They want more Camilles and I'm like, ”You want a choir to preach to that's fine. But if you actually want to get liberals to under to understand and believe, and black people to understand and believe, that you actually have their best interests in mind... and you're not doing this just because you want more diversity, and you're embarrassed about being a privileged white male group, then you're going to have to work harder.” And there is less enthusiasm. Some people are on board with that. Some people are less on board with that and I think because too many Libertarians think that acknowledging race is engaging in identity politics. And I think that's wrong. Because again, we don't call it identity politics when farmers are out there trying to get Farm policy passed. We don't call it identity politics when senior citizens are trying to get Medicare bolstered or whatever. All politics are identity politics. Straight up. That's just truth and the fact of the matter.



Fiest: What do you think of the term “identity politics”.

Blanks: I think it's bullshit. I think it's a code for whiny minorities. There's every time almost every time I hear identity politics, or social justice warriors, if you can substitute, “I wish these cry baby minorities would shut up.” I think that says much more about the speaker. It's like the people who are like rugged individualist collectivizing these people in a way that they all believe the same thing, and they all do the same thing, is just like one of the most unintentionally ironic things that I think happens. There's a prominent libertarian that I went round and round with on Twitter some time ago about SJWs. I'm like, “Dude you sound like a damn bigot.” It was really disappointing because I thought he was pretty good on race issues, but he has such a blind spot for SJWs. You're on a college campus. I understand it gets really obnoxious. One of my favorite movies is PCU. I think it's great and hilarious and I get it. But just because people are obnoxious in college because no one else was. Like there aren't legitimate gripes there and understanding that the black experience in the United States is very different than the white experience United States means that there's probably something to it. Now, you can argue that, “Oh, I don't think your solutions work.” For example, I think it's absolutely right to challenge the erosion of due process from for men who are accused of sexual assault on campus. Again, you should not be moving that out of a criminal area. I understand it's complicated but, due process means something. And it should be there. It doesn't mean you just go along with whatever the SJWs say and I'm putting up air quotes every time I say “SJW”. But at the same time, it's very often an anti-left screed or it's just a euphemism for “Damn those lefties again. If they just understood that, you know in South thinking about themselves as women or blacks and just like they'll think of themselves as individuals...” and I think it's just a blind hypocrisy that that I think a lot of libertarians use and other people on the right, because they just think well, “They just don't see it my way.”

Fiest: Exactly. They're living the white experience and trying and saying, “Well we should all view each other as the same...” Because you've always been treated as the norm. You've always been treated as what's normal. Try talking to someone who's been treated as less than their whole life and then try to put your train of thought on it. It just doesn't work.

Blanks: Right

Fiest: If you're telling a woman who's been raped, and then going into a Planned Parenthood to get checked out, and people are screaming whore and slut you're going to hell and dying...then saying, “Well you should see the way things I do as a man, as a white man.” It doesn't work that way, right. So yeah just it makes me crazy. And I know there's a Mexican version of that and I have not talked too much to them about it, because I feel like there's some mistrust because I'm just a white lady coming to ask them questions and they just they don't they cannot even with me right now. But yeah, it's taking a white existence and trying to apply that as a broad brush to everybody and I'm afraid that's just not that's not going to make it. It's not true. It's not going to work.

Blanks: So when you're in these conversations and you're trying to be like, “Okay, I want to make libertarianism more palatable to people who don't look like me, don't come with me background I do or have extenuating circumstances.” on a one-on-one basis, that's just asking

questions. That's just like, "What do you think about this?" Be honest instead of like trying to be like, "Have you heard the good news about Ludwig Von Hayek," right? Like it's not sorry, Von Mises but you know I'm saying it is like..

Fiest: I figured. I heard, "Ludwig Von" and knew what you were talking about.

Blanks: I used to be interested in sort of like evangelical libertarianism. And I don't mean that in the religious, Christian sense, but in the sort of, "Let me tell you the good news..." and I lost interest in that and I think it's really more about policy for me now. I'm happy to help Cato trying to seem more palatable to black people and I say, "Okay, well, stop having all white, male panels. When you bring a black person in don't make them the foil. Actually talked about black issues. When you talk about school choice, talk about segregation academies and that you're not trying to support that sort of thing. Those are baby steps. I'm not going to say that you're going to, all of a sudden, get a flood of you know people from Howard coming in like, "Hi. We're Libertarians out now". It's not happening. But it at least shows that you're not the hostel, "I'm just in this for low taxes." Libertarians.

Fiest: Which I think that's a huge part of it. People just want low taxes. Screw everybody else. I just want low taxes.

Blanks: I knew Trump could possibly get elected when I realized that a lot of the donor class just didn't care. Like, "Oh shit." There's a great thing about Cato and why I've still been there after almost 12 years, is that no one tells me what I write or can't write. Sometimes we try to coordinate "What are we going to message on? What are we going to do here?" But it's not it's not like, "Oh you can't touch this," or "You can't touch this person or this group" or anything like that. We have given money back when, like, someone wrote against a corporation because they were arguing for unfair trade policy or some sort of unfair business practices with the government's help. That company had given us a lot of money and that company reached out to us. They're like, "Hey. You want to take that down?" and our powers that be were like, "No." And they gave the money back. We no longer get money from that company or I think we might have gotten it since then. It's just one of those things. And so obviously Trump is terrible on pretty much every libertarian position outside of the courts. So, you know deficits are up, trade's bad, civil liberties, you know? Across the board terrible...

Fiest: ...and I don't appreciate the wall in my backyard either.

Blanks: Eminent domain. Needless to say most Cato Scholars, not a big fan of Trump...putting it very mildly. We've lost donors over it. Donors have reached out to us and said, "Hey, can you take it a little easy on Trump?" and we're like, "Do you know what we do here?"

Fiest: And good for you. I'm very glad to know that Cato cannot be bought.

Blanks: And there are other places that have been less rigid and less principled. Certain places no longer have criminal justice jobs...because apparently, they only cared about criminal justice so long as Obama was in office, and that's really disappointing. But that's the way it is. So, we'll be nice to Trump when Trump does things worthy of it. The only the only thing that we've been told

is like keep it professional. Don't go ad hominem. On Twitter, you've probably seen me say some things, occasionally, a couple of my colleagues do too. But generally speaking, we keep it professional about our criticism of Trump. It's a problem for people, again, because our donors are of the economic right. That's just the way it is.

Fiest: And in a free market they can give you their money or not give you their money and that's their choice.

Blanks: And because of our views on various things, a lot of left-leaning organizations and funding people will not give us money. Even though you can earmark it and say, "This is just for the criminal justice project," or "This is just for immigration." They still won't do it and with good reason. Because again, we're always like, "Well money is fungible." That's a very real pressure.

Fiest: I know that open borders is one of those words that will get you some negative looks. Even people on the left. There's nothing in any of our founders documents that says, "These laws only apply to you, or these protections only apply to you, if you live in an imaginary line between Canada and Mexico. It says anyone created by God or if you don't believe in God, anyone who exists. What right does Trump have to build a wall to stop anyone from moving? And if they're going to, he should be probably asking California, New Mexico, Arizona and Texas to be putting up this money because I don't believe there's anything in the Constitution that gives the government at the federal government to act on immigration. I mean those people were immigrants.

Blanks: It is there. I mean, particularly within the Fourteenth Amendment, there's language in there, like, "the migration of such persons". It's like the Three-Fifths Clause. There's enough implicit there that, clearly there is something there that they can work with. Then, all legislative powers there in Article 1, but that's Congress. It's not Trump, it's Congress that has the power to do this. Certainly the government has the power to regulate this sort of stuff, but it's clear they're doing it way wrong, you know?

Fiest: Right. This will be my last question and I'll let you get back to your day. But I have one other hot-button word I want to throw at you or hot button phrase to throw at you and just let me just get your opinion on it: hate crime legislation.

Blanks: Hate crime legislation, I believe that the federal government has a role in protecting people's rights when the state is failing. I think hate crime legislation is symbolic and just opens the door for double jeopardy. Years ago, in my first couple years at Cato, my boss at the time testified before the House Judiciary Committee on hate crimes. They're trying to expand hate crimes to include gender identity, homosexuality and my boss was the one like, "No" and because this was when the Democrats held the house of time, so it was clearly, "We want to get this thing passed." You have like State AG's up there, even Republicans ones were up there saying "We want this legislation" because it was basically to give money to the states to enforce these laws and there's basically sentencing enhancement now. I don't necessarily have a problem with making it an aggravating factor. You get like longer time if you assault someone for race issues or hate crime in that sense. But that's just sort of like arguing on the margins. But whether



or not it should be a federal crime to bomb churches, for example. Because the states were so terrible about that in the 50s and 60s. That is something to protect your constitutional rights. Federal government can come in and do it. The problem is, the states are actually pretty good at like prosecuting these cases. Take the Dylann roof case. I've written about I wrote about the blog on this on the K2 blog about this. Dylann Roof was captured, prosecuted and convicted. There was a Manhunt for him and there was no question that, "South Carolina is going to prosecute you to the fullest". And dude is never walking free again. The federal government was like, "Oh we want to come in and we want to prosecute under federal hate crime law or federal civil rights law." Why? There's no reason for it. To go back to the case I was talking about a second ago with my boss was before Congress: He said that everyone that came up there, including a hate crime victim, a young hispanic kid was brutally attacked. He ended up committing suicide a few years later. But every single witness that they brought up and every case that they cited with someone who was prosecuted, and the offenders were thrown away forever. I don't see a need. It is interesting to me, and I would like to see data on this, is whether or not crimes against trans people are getting prosecuted. And if that is the case, then I might be more sympathetic to a federal role in prosecuting attacks against trans people and I think sex workers probably also fall into this category. If that's the case, then I'd probably be more sympathetic to it. Kamala Harris just put in the anti-lynching legislation. We don't really have a problem with it right now. It's a gesture and I don't think the criminal law shouldn't be used that way. You know, It just strikes me is usually duplicative and unnecessary and you can expose people to double jeopardy because it can be prosecuted at the state and federal level for the same crime, which should violate double jeopardy. But our jurisprudence right now is completely screwed up so that sometimes happens. I think it's possible that it can be used in a good way so I'm not like necessarily against it. However, generally speaking, I think more often than not they are completely unnecessary. And, if anything, just add time to a sentence that probably that may or may not actually warrant it.

Fiest: So, it's something that's done with good intention but can be abused at the hands of the government.

Blanks: As most things are so...

Fiest: I feel like I've heard this before.

Blanks: Yeah, right. One of the things that I really started realizing was happening was like, and I don't know that it's true, it's just because it happened. It's not something I'd be able to do a deep dive on. But it does seem that there's a lot of anti-trans violence. I don't know how well these things are being solved. Now that could be a reluctance of local law enforcement, because they're like, "Oh they're a sex worker anyway ..." Or something like that and they just don't give a shit. Or it could be, "We don't have the that the trust of that community. Therefore, we're not going to get cooperation which means we can't solve the case." Which is a lot of times what's going on in black communities. So, is this a failure of the state? And in the state, I mean local government, in protecting these people. Or is it just sort of emblematic of their issues with running their criminal justice system and whether or not that opens the door for federal intervention...is a really tricky question. And the really dangerous part is the expansion of thought crime. It's a sort of like...you're in a bar fight with a guy and you beat him senseless. It's a really vicious fight and the guy suffers really bad injuries.

Fiest: Oh, yeah, because that happens every time I get into a bar fight.

Blanks: That sort of thing could happen then if they're like, "Oh we want to throw a sentencing enhancement on you because he's gay, which you may or may not have known, and you said faggot 15 years ago..." Or something along those lines and trying to find that sort of thing. That's just one more weapon in the quiver of a prosecutor that can overcharge. I am fearful of that sort of thing happening also. My feelings about hate crime legislation is complicated in general. I would say generally against but I'm not against it under every circumstance and I could be persuaded that it might be useful. But, generally speaking, I think passing new criminal laws without showing a genuine need for it is just enhancing the power of the state unnecessarily.

Fiest: I think I might know someone who may be able to get you some of that data you're looking for she's a lady that I interviewed yesterday. She's a former sex worker who ran for lieutenant governor of California in 86. She kind of stepped out of the public eye, but she's very good about she does basically she gets the information and goes out much for the FBI is publishing a lot of information on these statistics. They just no one cares to go look for them and she actually does so he and she said some stuff to me. So I'll share with you and see if maybe we can get you that information from her because that's all I took a look at there's a lot of information that she has.

Blanks: I'm not trying to look for this sort of data because I'm trying to figure out what my next big project is going to be at work. But it's one of those things I'm interested in intellectually, sort of on the periphery. This something that we are systemically failing to do because sex work is one of those things. I've been very keyed in on minority issues for a while, but sex work is something that I don't think that libertarians do enough about. I'm trying to figure out a way that is useful. I mean obviously Liz Nolan Brown...she's the one who gave you my name, but we've been friends a long time. And her work has been invaluable and getting people to understand what's going on there. But my perspective as criminal justice guy, and police policy particularly, it's something that I'm interested in. And sex workers are like, "We don't want legalization. We want decriminalization." There is a difference there. I know from a drug perspective, we're for legalization as opposed to decrim. From most of the sex workers that I follow on Twitter, they like decrim not legalization. Which is an interesting dichotomy, but that's sort of on a tangent. It's one of those things where, it's the world's oldest profession and we still treat it like it's something we can eradicate. Like the drug war and its really really...

Fiest: Especially since a lot of the people who are fighting to have it or to keep it criminalized are usually the same ones who are partaking in it.

Blanks: Yeah, I mean the hypocrisy is always there. It's like, "Why do you care so much about this?" Like, "Why do you care about bathroom segregation so much? like great. I don't know.

Fiest: I cannot imagine getting so upset at seeing someone coming into the bathroom who's dressed like me but not my gender. I just can't see myself getting upset about that. Now. I'm not I'm not a conservative woman either who feels like I need to be protected from everything. So maybe that's why I'm like you just happen to have a penis. You need to pee, go right ahead. But yeah, I think so. I think sometimes I've just lost perspective from the way conservatives view the

world because I buried myself so much in libertarianism and all that. I think maybe I just don't get it anymore, but that's not necessarily a bad thing.

Blanks: I grew up in Indiana and twitch conservative still in certain respects. But not in any way that gets me to vote Republican for the foreseeable future.

Fiest: Now, I'm in the procedure of having a meltdown over Bob Barr going, I'm sorry, Bill Weld going back to being a republican. So I'm feeling a bit betrayed.

Blanks: Yeah..

Fiest: I mean I support it as fighting against Trump. I'm just like don't become a Republican for God sakes.

Blanks: Well, well the thing is, as a former state governor, it's going to be easier to like if he can get up on stage. But I think the primary system is so screwed and it what it's doing to our politics is just horrendous because now everyone's running to the left and the Democratic party. It's like we've got left versus right populism. And I'm like, this is a libertarian nightmare. Because, you know, I'm for democratization in a certain respect. I am a skeptic of Democracy in so far as that it in a culture as large as and dynamic is ours, it's too easy to go to the lowest common denominator and too much democratization invites the tyranny of the majority. As someone who, for the entire history of our country, has been in a part of a group that has been on the receiving end of that, and much to the detriment of black people, the idea that Democracy is going to solve our problems just sort of underestimates the sort of damage that it can do. Looking at the state of California and their referendums system, how getting a balanced budget is like basically impossible. You see stuff like Brexit...sometimes democracy isn't the best deliberative system. Very much the Democratic Republic is something much better where there should be a certain amount of expertise. Just riling up populist fervor is not the best way to get good public policy. So I hopefully that's a little more useful than

Fiest: What is there to be speculative of? You know, the two wolves into sheep deciding what's for dinner. Democracy is not always the best for everyone when you're black or gay and it's your rights up on the voting block. It's probably not so effective.

Blanks: The Bill of Rights is very important. The Constitution is very important. I think one of the strongest points of the Civil Rights Movement was their use of the system against the people who are welding power. Theoretically the 13th 14th and 15th amendments should have made the Civil Rights Act of 1964 not necessary. It nevertheless was. Being able to use the courts and the legal system against the segregationist and the racists was useful, but now we want more power. One of the things that libertarians tend to fight against, understanding the distinction between asking for too much radical economic power, like destroying capitalism, for example, like the democratic socialists want to do. That, "Hey you're going too far", is legitimate. But, too often, it's like, "Oh because things aren't good enough yet in black communities and what's going on..." which they are not... And libertarians look at that as sort of like the special privilege like, "Oh, black people. We gave them legal equality. What more do they want?" And not understanding that there are still legitimate problems there and that there's a real blind spot to

understanding that the legacy of segregation exists and has real economic problems for black people, educational problems, intergenerational wealth problems. They're policed differently. So much how black people exist in our society, our legacy is not just of slavery, but of segregation. Both personal and institutional racism and the system still needs to change more. But also society needs to change more and libertarians are like, "I should be able to believe whatever I want to believe and I don't want to listen to the SJWs..." Which is its own hindrance to making the country a better place, making the world a better place and not understanding those producers of racism, and how they affect a lot of people, they just think "Well, all we got to do is think is as individuals and instead of thinking of it as collective as being black or a woman or gay or whatever and things will get better". And it's like 400 years of history to the contrary notwithstanding. And I think that's like one of those major functional problems that I think I've talked to many people who have left libertarianism, not just like in the half-lapsed way that I've done it, that I just don't identify as a Libertarian anymore. But I still work at libertarian organization and criticize it very heavily because they still, you know, people are still like, "Yes in my backyard" And still believe in like libertarian principles like due process and the Constitution and are so critical of the movement because of these massive blind spots that they just don't feel comfortable identifying with anymore. And that's going to be a problem for libertarianism going forward.

Fiest: Yeah, I agree because it's like we need to stop identifying as all these separate things because if I'm forced to see you then I have to deal with what comes with you.

Blanks: Yea.

Elizabeth Nolan Brown (Note: There were some issues getting this interview transcribed. It's not quite as smooth).

Fiest: Racism, sexism, misogyny and all that and they don't want to deal with that. And since that's nothing that they've ever experienced, it's not a real issue and that drives me crazy. I know that when I talk about libertarian feminism and I'm talking to primarily the lower case of a libertarian, sometimes you do need to make that distinction. I get, "Oh that's collectivism and you can't be a libertarian feminist because the two things contradict each other. how do you how do you address that point?"

Brown: Yeah, that definitely happens. Also the opposite happens to which is that feminists are like, "You can't be a Libertarian." Libertarianism is much more open and we've had amazing responses in DC here. There's a big libertarian audience. I think the best sort of line is, you know, trying to talk to point out that there's nothing more collectivist than treating people as like a representative of their sex organ. You're being a collective is by saying like, "oh, women are like this. So men are like this then."

Fiest: I had a chance a few days ago to talk to Nick Sarwark, the chair of the LP and that was the same thing he said which made me feel better. I don't dislike a whole lot of you know, what they call the lowercase L libertarians, but the people who are always the biggest pain in my ass are lowercase L Libertarians. So to hear that we have the backing of the party that was good at least and he's been really good on these issues. Yeah. So I heard you mention feminist for Liberty. That was my one of my last questions, but I'm going ahead and bump it up tell me about this organization that you started in what you intend to do with it.

Brown: Yeah, so, it's me and Kat Murti. Kat works at the Cato Institute, and we've been together and we finally actually got Incorporated and started holding regular events. Our first one was really good, like we had a really good turnout and yeah, we're kind of about two things. We went to be sort of an online home for libertarian feminism. There's not really a place for that. You know the Association of Libertarian Feminists.

Fiest: Yes.

Brown: That's how I know you that Facebook group. Right when I when I first saw all that I was super excited and I would have just sort of been into like going along with their efforts but it's sort of dwindled, you know, like it's only Sharon Presley and she's not doing a lot and, I wanted to be more active and more focused on younger mediums because I think to a lot of what they did was still sort of focus on like, "We want to get a paper in this journal. We want to get a book published by Cato." We would have social media accounts and you know a website and we're still working on these things are not as robust, but we'd like to have a website that has like a lot more resources, sort of just history of individuals and libertarian feminism, our policy positions. Now people, you know blogging things like that. We are planning later this year is like wants a little YouTube series we want to do is sort of just like for episode batches, maybe twice a year. So not like a not a huge thing, but just to stop where we interview other other libertarian feminists. I've been told by the we really want to do is sort of to be a Clearinghouse for that like speak libertarian feminist speakers and voices and be able to sort of you know, like we would

have be a repository the media where it's like people are looking for these issues and what people think about them they can find us and through us they can find other people who are working at specific, you know areas, like, you know, I'm excited things are just different stuff. You know, that's our eventual goal. It's been sort of slogan there again, because it's just sort of our and I are both doing this in our spare time and have like full-time jobs and are involved in a thousand things, but I still think it's important because I mean we're going to keep going we're going to see it through no matter, you know, it might take it's taken us longer to me wanted to get more sort of and this is entirely through our lives like good interest and we just not been able to do as much as you want to get but I think it's important even just this party is yeah. Like I said, I mean we've had So many young women who have said to us like I got interested in libertarianism through I don't know through whatever different way and then I either went to my like student group like usually the Young Americans for Liberty Group or something on campus one of the sort of more conservative ones or I went like online and available with Harry Facebook groups and stuff and they'll like it everybody was terrible and sexist that I hate everyone thought I was a Libertarian and they're like, it's twisting like some of you guys has stopped at other people that in they've been like I've been like, oh my gosh, like there's actually is like a liberté doesn't that isn't just like horrible sexist all the time. So, I don't know so I think at least at the very least like it's good to be that place for Libertarians and then just you know, we wouldn't I have to focus on what we want to be for the rotarians. We also sort of want to do me Outreach, you know, any like cat and I both do a fair amount of our own sort of media just through a few of our other jobs, but you know, we always put them this for Liberty on there and said to you we've actually like to make voting more other speakers aside from ourselves and just sort of getting when there's an issue. It's like important libertarian Central. There's a feminism is sort of central to it. Then instead of just letting like the right argue like this moving like the left. Are you just like to get our voices in there and sort of try to get us on TV or radio or quoted in the press something like that? Okay. Yeah, I'll be talking to Kat on Saturday. Oh, yeah, finally got that set up with her today. So so you see it like as a process a recruiting tool something you can bring in for more people who you know, maybe who have strong opinions but don't have quite the outlet that you an can have and maybe they could speak and I mean some of them so my men just don't know how how capable they are. Yeah. Yes. Yeah, and there's also a lot of women doing really a Libertarian women doing really interesting work who just aren't who are like economists or lawyers or whatever who aren't necessarily in the like public-facing. So they're not out there promoting themselves and people don't think of them when they're like thinking of who's you know, in a Libertarian movement, but I think that it'd be good to get sort of more of those places. Like people do not work behind the scenes out. There is bright and I think that that's crucial having that place with people like you and Kat because a lot of the men that as we have discussed don't exactly make it. Appealing to be out there, but you know, right and so having that place where you know, you can support them. We can support each other would I think would bring a lot of women that we don't even know about yet out of the trenches and into this. I mean, it does have to even be in the spotlight but maybe a woman can take pictures and photographs weight or just to know that I mean, yeah, like and of what you're going to do something DC right now, but it's been nice to have it but I like salon and social events coming up soon, but it's just like get together. Yeah, like know that there are people doing this. Okay, thank you. And that's interesting. I'm looking forward to looking into that more. I want to touch on an issue that I am pretty sure, you know a lot about that. I'm wanting it on paper and that is prostitution and legalization decriminalization. I know that this is something that a lot of women are starting to come together our Turtles this



whole situation is bullshit. But a lot of women do not understand a lot of people frankly that talk to you do not understand the difference between The station and decriminalization and the differences between these two. So I wonder if you could explain to us the difference between the two and what do you support? Yeah, so we will talk about analysis sort of different than one in terms of marijuana but inside so people talk about legalization. It's you know, there would be a certain sort of government permitted way to do sex work to do prostitution to have sex with you know, and that would be you know, I could take different forms. I'll be either, you know, there's a specific red light district and you can work across those there or you have to get a City license or state license or something like that. And that would be sort of legalization you could do you could be involved in prostitution if you were and you could buy our paint part 2 if you any specific sort of wings, I mean that's Obviously good that a better than our current system because you know, yeah, it's better than our current system. But I think that the preferred way, I mean that I think in a lot of sex workers doing Libertarians most flexible An elevation which would just be to remove all criminal penalties for best teaching so it's not at all. The you know the objections you get a lot of times on that front are like oh but isn't it safer for either women or for the people who are visiting them or not? Obviously not just women are psychos, but you know what, so it isn't it? So it's the safer for sex workers or for the people who are visiting them. If you know, it's through some sort of State station system or if it's through at least, you know through brought those or whatever and the answer is like often. Yes, and that's great and we should encourage those systems to exist right? Like you can still have some sort of state license if people wanted to get it you can still have these brothels where people have to do whatever and then people who want to work in that capacity can and people who want to you know have that reassurance and feel like that's something they you know, then they can do that and I might be largely the system that would exist and that would be fine. But I think that you know, the reason it's important to still have decriminalization though is because we don't have it then cops are still sort of going after people who are Working is very specific ways and you're repeating all of the harms of a black market and it criminalizes the many ways because we still have people trying to evade law enforcement because they were you know, working on the radar you still stings yourself just all the stuff. So I think the ideal way would be at like decriminalized and move us criminal penalties and they're going to be sort of involuntary systems on top of that that are better additional. That's great. Yeah you would have or you would not have cops having sex with sex workers and then arresting them, right? That's that's yeah. Exactly. That's that's that's one of the most important things. I have found found about Eliza way. I heard of legalization and I'm just or and I'm just like yeah, that's a problem. I mean there's there's already problems with them busting drug dealers and taking drugs and then arresting them it seems like as long as this black market exists, they're always getting in and get away with that. And yeah, that's so you were looking at either something like what's going on in Nevada versus Just a sex worker and their their calendar on their phone making appointments wait, because you know in about it. Yeah, like there's still a lot of facilities stupid police things or being arrested if they're just you know, yeah, there's someone just put in and out on you know and add up or and seam lines on their own like they can be rescued. They're not working with your ones bottles. Please are still very active in doing that sort of thing busting consensual adults for doing for, you know engaging these Outsiders. So yeah, it's an obviously under just I always going to say this but just obviously under a you know, decriminalization system things like involving force and coercion in Miners and all that would still be illegal. Like they were still be how these Flats up stuff but I'm just a little powders for sex between consenting adults. Have you heard a lot of people who

are frankly Republicans or Trump supporters using the idea of human trafficking as an excuse to stop migration from coming here that oh, if you the coyotes are going to be raping the women and raping the children and all that. So, oh my God, we have to stop it. And I know you I know that the idea that human trafficking is just blown out of proportion to something that clearly is very passionate something for you. How often do you hear that? And do you buy that I mean, yeah, that's that's that related a big thing going from spin say it's so it's so it's bending sort of conservative talking when I'm in there. Yeah. I just usually try to point out that like actually like to the extent that it does exist. And you know, we don't exactly know major Black Market because it said that this is happening like all the evidence. We do have voiced the fact that If women are being sexually exploited or radiant as they're trying to get into America, it's usually because they're forcing these two some because we're not letting them apply for sound are not leaving every year. So it's actually Trump's policies that are creating the problems that he talks about but they are our drug war. Yeah, exactly and it's you know, and they also use a lot of this to wear a lot of times you see ice and a table security investigation appointed immigrant communities, especially right now massage parlors is the big one and under the guise of stopping you attract me, but really it's were just sitting Ovation chat with the thing too is, you know, a lot of times and I've even started sort of emphasizing the trunk element and a because it is worse on her trunk. Like it's definitely worth under chomping has jumped on this way should have these very vindictive. Yeah and your son's anti-immigrant policies. But in that that when you bring that up people, you know are more receptive, LOL liberalism or you know receptive to it but like was definitely happening under Obama's here in the same way almost like Definitely using my job being a sex trafficking as a pretense to send them a vision in places like you was in the way that like Obama Loretta Lynch and wouldn't talk about and they'd be like, oh like its modern slavery and both I mean they talked about it in almost as dramatic terms As Trump does so we just think it's interesting. They used it for slightly different ends before that bush. He's at or slightly different ends. But so that's sort of really request our toes under Bush but like you've seen throughout the three presidencies people use this for their own sort of political. So yeah Trump has just started now putting his own son. Right and eat the irony is you know being someone who I don't know if you're aware, but I live in El Paso. I am I'm surrounded by this all the time and I'm watching this and I'm hearing, you know, everything from Trump and from the on pants other conservatives and I'm like, okay, but when they get into your facilities and then usually run by contractors and then the contractor employees start raping these kids which we have heard is happening all of a sudden it's not an issue anymore and you don't care. So how about we just kind of start telling the truth about where we are and what we're worried about and it's just another way to keep people who are hurting because of our policies out of our country and I'm just and you know, I mean my mom's side of the family is Mexican four years. My family has been tracked here. And so I've kind of I have my own emotional attachment to this and maybe that's making me more aggressively just be like, I don't want to hear it. But yeah, it's completely hypocritical. And it seems like the drug war starting to pan down people are starting to understand it doesn't work and they need another crisis to a moral crisis to obsess over and unfortunately now, it's it's human trafficking. Okay. See I have you seen that else is here. What is your opinion? How many women I mean like I'm not asking for a number but does the libertarian philosophy do we have a woman problem a race problem a young person problem because you go to a show to see speakers and it's usually a face of a sea of white men on the panel and in the ceiling, how do you think we can do you think that we have? in problem and if you So you just cut out there? Yeah. Okay. So just you said you think we have on the net? Okay. So we when



you go to like for example a Libertarian panel to hear speakers, usually when you look at the panel and you look at the audience, it is just white dudes. Why do Dwight new Dwight dude everywhere? And I mean, I know hey, we want everyone to be libertarian including white dudes. But you know, we want to try to bring in other people and from my previous interviews. I've gotten some mixed signals some people think that we have a race problem and some people think we have a race perception problem the same with women. We have a women problem and a woman a lack of perception problem. So, where do you think we are on this and if you think we have a problem, what can we do to bring in more of these groups? No, I think there's a lot of encouraging signs from and seeing you know, the rotarians just how much how much they were like zero wouldn't I mean when and you know 0 non-white people and a lot of friends that you know, especially to talk about like student conferences or things that are just attracting more younger the rotarians. It's changed like a lot. There's definitely like always a growing number of women there. She's always be growing a growing number of people of color and I think they it is expanding its expanding slowly and if you know part of it is that just like generally political space has a lot of Open Spaces are dominated by Whitman's you still and especially just by men in general, you know, like there's always a skewer women involved in this with of things. So I don't think it's a unique problems us, but you know, yeah, it's It's been a promise ortley. It's getting better. It's still a problem. I don't know. I don't know exactly how we fix it. I think it's important that there are you know spaces that are yelling welcoming or different kinds of voices. I think that I think those are seen a lot of good stuff from like you said like Nikolas already the libertarian party from different like organizations like he to Institute and reason and like, you know, I just think we are seeing more changes. I think we're seeing more women in charge which is always helpful like just it's amazing just how I think having a woman inside a certain things, but they don't even think people didn't think about before like reason didn't have a I guess. I got a maternity or paternity leave policy until Catherine Angela got pregnant because they just never have a dog reproductive age woman working there. So, you know, but like now we do in like both men women if they get and stuff so I just think yeah, I I don't know. I think it's changed. I think part of the one of the few positive things. I guess we can do is just Be open to a wider range of subjects to you know, like you just start here to sort of hearts on the same sorts of things and there are so many issues that are like we should be talking about them. And this is again where sometimes people want to see it. It's like oh like feminists are done with that issue. So like whatever this is done without that address later like, you know, Liberals are done that issue generally and we're not the only dressing and instead like we have any we're not the people that they want to make us be Liberties are not getting what they want to make us beyond amazing to me when it comes to race or criminal justice or women in his own and stuff. And it's like we have any we were we were fighting for marriage equality and abortion rights and censored criminalization. Like Reese has been those things since the 60s and 70s like a Libertarian party's for that long before Democrats were on that evening. So it's like we just can't let them see that to them and it's like but for then I think for a couple I don't know how long but you know, it feels like a few decades we did and people just sort of really just puzzling guns. Monetary policy and stuff. So I think you know accepting that a lot of these issues that like justice before. I'm just any sort of issues that women's group were talking about like those are issues that we should weigh in on and let people know that we offer our own version of solutions. We're not just like you're done for bringing this up because often this Mission they bring up our dominance like yes, but is dumb but we can just stop there. It's kind of like you got to be like here's what we want to do with how we think that should be addressed. Okay last question, it does lean a little bit economic

when I was doing my research for my thesis proposal. I found on the LPS website that there are roughly a hundred and seventy-seven Libertarians holding some sort of public office in the United States be either elected or appointed but it's really kind of small local stuff. It's your school board's your utility boards things like that. And of course notably, you know the higher up the chain and we go higher towards governorship State offices Congress and all that. Obviously, we're not doing too. Well. There's two Independence and zero Libertarians, so I kind of wanted to find out why do you think they seem to like us close? But not seem to like us the higher up we go. I think two things. I mean you out. Well, it's sort of function the same thing which is that you have a very engraved to brighten Monopoly and they work at all levels to keep protect out. I really don't think it's that and no evidence really says that it's Libertarians are like so unpopular and the same necessary that we could win anything or that we even have anything close to a majority, you know, at least not at this point, but like we haven't, you know, we're not only getting one percent because that's all of our ideas and feel to it when you actually pull people on different issues. Like we're very close to a lot of Center Solutions and you know all sorts of areas. So I think when you have both at the national level anytime there's any sort of significant libertarian candidate or sort of idea on movement rising of both Democrats and Republicans to sort of mocking them in whatever form they can like put their media mocking them. They're sort of people say that they're going to you know, throw the race and sort of blaming the driver things. You just have some sort of and it's not coordinated but you know, it feels like it because it's just like all sides. Bleep on that with us just get them out and then the local level you actually people doing little structural things to keep them out. Like it's so hard. It's so nice base to get ballot access and there's always food, you know specific rules that make it so that third parties and not just Libertarians. This was a good prices that are just you know, so fucking disadvantage and can't really ever win and there's even been like in Ohio where I'm from there's even like dirty tricks on both sides to especially heat them out. So I mean both the things that are set out in the where you see local parties going order to keep libertarian candidates off the ballot and off of getting or being part of debates any like, you know, we're never get me never to be part of debate and everything to be part of any of the things I would actually get our message out there. So yeah. Yeah, it's unfortunate. I was talking to a guy who's part of the lp and Kentucky and he dropped something like fourteen thousand dollars of his own money. Yeah. Just dealing with trying to gather signatures and then Hat either he wrote it or he hates someone to write software to use in order to verify the signatures to make sure that they don't get them to be counted and then some Republican, you know, this is attorney general or something has them thrown out because yeah, it's that same thing in Ohio. Yeah. It was just like, yeah and and I know that you're from Ohio and I am as well. And so I have the part. That's all I have. I'm sorry. What part of all are you from I was born in Columbus and was raised right outside Columbus in a very very little little city called, Marysville. Yeah, and so when I heard that was going on there that was particularly sad and I'm looking at after graduation to you know, probably won't be in El Paso too much longer because the job market here, I mean all the jobs are government jobs here. So there's no new money coming in. So it was just for recycled me all the time and all the time. So I'm just like I can't not with this place. So I was thinking about moving back home and I was like, but I was like, maybe I should go because maybe I should be the one related to actually start doing something done for us in Ohio. But we do seem to have I'm either does seem to be people actively working against us their bases in some of the things that I've read. That's crazy. Do you not know he's a kid Mayor of Bexley like a long time ago and then has been like a Libertarian in the residents cop and he's gotten a lot of like attention for weird things just because he's very

charismatic and I'm not getting a lot of votes but he's really been sort of trying to revive. Yeah good libertarian stuff in Columbus. So if you are back there, you should look him up right? He's not going to do anything like run as a Republican or something. Is he? No, no, he's like 100 percent committed sin. Yeah, just like everything he recognition for the libertarian party and sort of Yeah, because that's been my pet peeve to other people that I'm interviewing did that they you know, lifeless both of them. I met through being Libertarians and then when they ran for office - Republicans and I was just like, why would you do that? Why would you do that? Especially when especially when one of them was Glenn Jacobs, are you familiar with one Jacobs know he's he was he wrestled in the WWE for like 25 years as Kane. He was very well known everyone that was a fan of his knew that he was a Libertarian because I was a fan of his I mean, I'm sorry, he's he's like six foot ten and three hundred pounds of muscle. He's the most gorgeous man I have ever seen in so yes, I literally had my eyes on him. And then when I when I found out that he was a Libertarian I was like, oh my God because I found out yeah, I found out about him being a Libertarian like a few months into after discovering it myself and so a mutual friend introduced us and it was really cool and we got to be friends and then I was He was having a press conference and I could not watch it on TV because I was in a meeting and so my friend is feeding me was going on dot dot he's running as a Republican and I was like, I know I was like just because you're seven feet tall doesn't mean I will strangle you. Oh my God, so I reached out to him and he was one of the first things I did and I was like, why would you do this? Why would you do this and it was and it was the same answer basically that I expected from him and the one I'm expecting to get from the other girl was it's a lack of ballot access its you know, and and that guess you have forgiven them like about it. It's easier to just say because the Republican Party the way it's supposed to be there is a lot of alignment with the libertarian party. The problem is it's just not that way anymore, but he was in order to avoid the ballot access strand, you know the signatures. And all the hullabaloo they went with that he was he was willing to run as a Republican and as sad as it is, I'm kind of feeling like if we have too many more Republican. I don't want any more public Republican presidents like Trump, but I feel like if we do get a few more we might as well use that to our advantage and you know bringing people to our side. It's definitely a lost. Yeah like a lost. I mean it's crazy because it used to be like Libertarians agreed with Republican. Delete at least made Republicans on free trade and things like that. At least you have the rolls on free speech and civil liberties and things like that and it's like not even totally reversed because it's just like we have neither of them on night of those things anymore. The kids are not with us on free trade and free markets and things for the most part the Liberals are all terribly anti speech and like Pro, you know, so that's really really disappointing but I think like you said like It's a good opportunity because I also talked to so many people especially older like old Democrats like there's such a market for us. I think an old Democrats like okay, if you're above like it's or especially like six years ago like they're so pissed off at what the like Liberal Party. I mean, it's Democrat to become like they're like, we are pro speech like we are pro. I mean, I don't know they're just yeah, they're really sort of mad that like the party is giving up on civil liberties. Mostly they're largely not super socialist, you know, so I think that there's both amongst the yapping like pro-free trade, right and the like oh, so where has left like rubriz to grab people if we could only get on balancing things, I guess. Well, I will keep working on them because one of the things that does kind of annoy me is that we do we do pull a lot from the right because of the the fiscal agreement. I'm like, there's a whole group of other people here. Like you said like the Democrats that do believe in more social Freedom that are getting to a point now where they probably would appreciate A little lesson in taxes. Yeah, you know that we could

fully take advantage of and bring them over and then we also have you know the ability for them to bring others with them and that was really one of my big things and like I totally understand why we pulled from the right and we totally should pull from the right, but I was and I've had two other interviews say that we are missing a huge opportunity there my voiding the laughed. Yeah, and we Harry group and it always seems to me that as soon as I invite someone in the group somebody will get in there and it's unfortunately it's always a guy. I feel like we'll go in and post something about liking the fact that he has to pay taxes to send other people's kids to school to rape and I like there's always one of them right when I start inviting people. I don't know because like there's these people in every slide right like comments or whatever and is good. Only Republicans, but they're all terrible. Like if you get any of them stick very well, but like there's still that were so much less prevalent that people expect all of us to be representatives of things. Yeah, just like you're like it's like it's like apologizing for your crazy relative. You know, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. There's nothing I can do about them. Yeah reason that I guess like a huge influx, you know during the Obama years and during Ron Paul of people who were like tea party like who like yeah. I'm a Libertarian because of this or that you know, but then they didn't really do. And what it meant a lot and then like suddenly like, you know pro-immigration and stop and they'd be like what you guys have changed. This is like no, but I think yeah you get so many who think their livers and he's fun like one thing and then they start that's what most part of it when they start like spouting off and I was like, how dare you like and dislike this is what libertarian has always been about like sorry that you like right? I got a lot of people come in thinking we're like Diet Republicans. Yeah. It's a something but yeah, like right and more free speech and pro-pot Republicans or something. Yeah. Yeah, and that's always what I kind of try to tell people it's it's government out of the picture entirely government out socially and fiscally, it's like it's not just you know, like small low taxes and that's it because no because then we would be repulsed diet Republicans most like imagine imagine getting the government out of your wallet and out of your bedroom and out of your public bathrooms, and you know, your business is and all that and that's what I To push but for some reason I think they have a hard time processing processing this it's always been hard to I think for like it was gonna sell ideas that are economic that people usually do is you know, like like occupational licensing is suffering. Like that's what an area where I think we're doing good, right? There's so many things like that like stupid food laws for like small businesses. There's so much stuff where it's like the average person is just like hates those things. If you could just see a sort of connect that with like to this government regulation and stuff. I think we have a good you know, I local levels politicians, but Right, and and now the other thing where I really try to push it is important is if there are some people and I've met some of them here who grew up very very poor. I mean keeping in mind. I'm in El Paso. They're afraid of giving up things like the Affordable Care Act. They don't want to give that up because they just think they could not afford health insurance without it and I'm like, okay so you don't want to give this up and I respect where you're coming from so this but this needs to be funded. So let's talk about things that we could get rid of like the TSA like do we need do we need a military base in every fucking country on the planet? You know, do we need 10,000 of these big huge bombs like the ones that we dropped because we're the only ones who drop bombs on nuclear bombs on Japan, you know, okay, we're going to provide this for you. I could not tell you I think it's a good idea for the government to provide it. But if you must have it, let's get rid of all this other Stuff that we don't need I think that's so smart because that too many times people this will argue like this super supposed. It's like look, you don't need to sell everyone because it's never going to fucking happen right now, you know

on this perfect libertarian ideal like stop are you know, how people like about these basic things like Social Security and Medicare or whatever all the time like because there's so many areas we could have talked to people here. The van was just like just let them get exactly let them feel like if we have a perfect libertarian world and then we have to address those like great but it's just like good fun. You know, finally, let's not touch whatever whoever's like pet issue is no matter what it is. Like let's not let's talk about the areas where we agree because usually yet people can find a lot of Errors. They do agree about cutting down the biggest house on that. They don't it's like that's fine. You don't even go to be on board of those about like literally everything in order to work with them, which is I think a problem that Libertarians Yeah, we yeah, that's one thing. I think most I was talking to some people in libertarian group and I was like, we are just kind of in a place where people have become so used to having the government in their lives that the idea of it not being there. They can't get rid of it. So like you look at there's been some stories in the news the last few weeks about this one person stole a \$40,000 prescription off of someone's doorstep for their kid who had cancer and so when we when they ask us, okay, what would we do and they and a Libertarian at least most Libertarians? I've talked to would come back with well if the FDA wasn't making it so hard to blahblahblah and I'm like, okay, but here's the problem. This person needs their \$40,000 prescription now and so all of your blah blah blah about the FDA and all that while I agree with you is not helping this person. Right? Right right right now, And people are more in fatik about when it's their kids then when it's done. So, you know that is not going to help us change Minds right now. Maybe you know when your grandkids are our age and maybe we'll be where we need to be but right now let's deal with the right now exactly.



Carla Gericke

Fiest: First question would have to be if you are okay with my using your name in this thesis?

Gerick: Yes

Fiest: Early on, what prompted interest in first politics and then libertarianism?

Gerick It would be fair to say, I was always a bit of a rebel. My father was a South African diplomat, so I was raised in a home where current affairs was always a topic. I first got involved in politics as a small-time anti-apartheid activist, mostly through creative endeavors like writing articles critical of the regime for an underground newspaper I founded with some friends at University, and writing and performing in a play at the Grahamstown Arts Festival, the largest arts festival in the Southern Hemisphere. I did attend some marches, and was present at Nelson Mandela's historic inauguration in 1994. While I was completing my law articleship--a 2 year "intern" requirement after you finish your law degree to be admitted to the South African Bar--I also started taking Legal Aid Board cases, representing underprivileged defendants in townships around Pretoria. I was shocked by how cruel the system was, and that has always influenced my libertarian views on criminal justice. After winning a green card in the lottery and immigrating to America, my husband and I settled in Silicon Valley, and after the Internet Bubble burst, and we both lost our jobs, I was forced to explore why this had happen (like, WTF???) and studied theories about how the economic bubble had started and why it crashed and burned... and this led me deep into libertarian thought and Austrian economics (the rabbit-hole of the Internet was new and minty-fresh back then in 2000), which in turn led me to the Free State Project, and the rest, as they say, is history... I was a staunch Ron Paul supporter in 2008 and 2012, and here in NH, he came second in both the Republican and Democrat primaries both times (double check this, but I think it's accurate). Libertarianism, simply put, makes sense to me. It is the only rational, logical explanation I have found for the best way to organize society, with the non-aggression principle playing the core part for me.

I believe we are the neo-peace movement. Government is the world's biggest bully, and we have a duty to stop the violence. That is what I am dedicating my life to.

Fiest: What made you want to run for office? Had you run for any local or state offices before running for senate?

Gericke: I'm a strong supporter of states' rights, and would likely never run for federal office. I ran in 2016 and 2018 for NH State Senate in District 20 as a Republican against a now 11 term, 80 year old Democratic incumbent. I hadn't run for any political office before.

Fiest: I know that you're very involved with your local libertarian community. I'm familiar with your battle all the way to the 1st Circuit Court of Appeals on the right to film police. And your entanglement with the Concord, NH police of their attempting to buy a Bearcat saying libertarians were domestic terrorists. I truly believe that you walk the walk when it comes to being a libertarian. What prompted you to run as a Republican despite this? Did running as a Democrat ever enter your mind?

Gericke: I ran as a Republican because I wanted to win. The duopoly, and the corruption that goes with it, is too strong to win as a Libertarian candidate. The NHGOP's platform is fairly old-school Republican, so is still fairly libertarian (although there are some dumb stuff on there too). Many Free Staters and prestaters in NH identify as Republican, and we're building a strong liberty caucus within the party. I would not be surprised if the NHGOP becomes the most libertarian GOP in the US (if it isn't already).

Running as a Democrat is something I vaguely considered but decided against... mostly because in NH, the Democrats vote party-line, with very little deviance or independency, and while my principles align with them on a lot of issues, like criminal justice reform, drug policy reform, ending the death penalty, anti-crony-capitalism, etc., I don't agree with them on economic policy at all (taxation IS theft!), and the NH Democrats HATE free staters, so I doubt I'd be welcomed. My district is strange in that it encompasses a big part of Manchester, our largest city, which swings heavily left, and Goffstown, which is rural and +8 Republican. In this 2018 race, my district had a swing of 10-15% to the left, but, despite this, I increased my take by 2%, which to me means my message must have resonated with some of the voters, regardless of their party affiliation.

My opponent can't live forever, I don't have a strong sense of "party affiliation" (being a libertarian immigrant), and I may either run again as a Republican, switch to Democrat if it makes sense, or, most likely, run as an Independent in the future. Most Granite Staters are Independents, and as the two party system continues its death swirl around the swamp drain, more opportunities will present themselves for people to take new and perhaps radical approaches.

Fiest: How did you plan to apply your libertarian principles in your role as senator of NH?

Fiest: Principles means sticking to what you believe, so I would have voted to shrink the size and scope of government, and to increase personal liberty. In NH, we have an organization called the NH Liberty Alliance that was started by free staters and philosophically aligned locals who provide a weekly "Gold Standard" to advise pro-liberty legislators how to vote on upcoming bills. I would have used that as baseline guidance.

Being a state senator also provides a more legitimate platform to spread the ideas of liberty and individualism. I was looking forward to being that voice!

Fiest: Can you tell us about your time as president of the Free State Project and what this project is about?

"NH Magazine, May 2011

She traveled the world as the daughter of diplomats and went on to practice law in South Africa and California, but Carla Gericke's life changed when she heard the call of the Free State Movement for like-minded people to flock to N.H. and promote greater liberty and less government. She helped organize two recent Porcupine Festivals - the Free State equivalent of an Old Home Day - even earning the title "The Quill Queen" (note quill crown, left), and was just

chosen as the movement's new leader. In this exclusive interview, we found her not to be at all prickly.

How does one become the leader of the Free State Movement? Are fisticuffs involved? Duel at dawn, actually. I'm afraid the truth is rather more mundane: the Free State Project's board votes on candidates and someone wins.

What do you think is your primary qualification for the post? My royal lineage, replete with quill crown. The porcupine is our mascot - porcupines are peaceful creatures you want to leave alone - and after I organized the last two Porcupine Freedom Festivals in Lancaster, I received the moniker of "Queen Quill." As the first queen of the movement, I was the perfect candidate to take over. More seriously, in a decentralized organization like ours, you have to be able to balance folks' differing viewpoints and strong personalities, fondly referred to as "herding cats." Iz good catz herder.

Since the Free State movement is not political, does that mean you always get to give straight answers? Er, em, uh, yes.

So give it to me straight. How's the movement going? This is an exciting time for us. We have crossed the halfway mark to recruiting 20,000 liberty lovers to pledge to move to New Hampshire to create a more free society. I appreciate this sounds scary to some, but think of us as localization on steroids, as wanting to create an even more prosperous state than New Hampshire already is--a Yankee Hong Kong, if you will. More than 800 activists have already moved, and we are hard at work in our communities to create a society based on voluntary exchange, free from state coercion. As government grows and becomes more intrusive, I believe we will continue to gain momentum. We also have strong local support, with Friends of the Free State signing up all the time.

Any particular high and low points over the past few years? As an organization, the Free State Project does not take positions on what participants do once they get here. It's more the vehicle, the "bus" to convince liberty-leaning individuals to move. Once in New Hampshire, people exercise individual activism in different ways. They run for office--twelve participants are now state reps--they do localized outreach like volunteering at fire departments, they form non-profits like the New Hampshire Liberty Alliance that rates representatives according to their voting records, they manage successful businesses, and they practice civil disobedience in the spirit of Gandhi and Martin Luther King. The media tends to focus on the latter because it is by its very nature more controversial, but rest assured Free Staters are good neighbors who like ice-cream too.

Any second thoughts about choosing New Hampshire as the Free State? Absolutely not. I have lived all over the world, and I love it here. New Hampshire has so much to offer: a ready-built individualist culture--Live Free or Die, Baby!--and it is consistently named one of the best places in America to live. With its low crime rate, favorable gun laws, healthy living, buoyant economy, low taxes and no personal state income tax (which I view as a form of slavery), it is the perfect place for productive people to settle



Seems like the Free State Movement could use an anthem. Is there a song that you always play at rallies? We've played the Super Secret Project's "Granite State of Mind" at functions and it always goes over well. How can you not love lyrics like: "I'm the new Salinger/Cuz I could live anywhere/But I choose to live here." This really resonates with me."

I'm being lazy, but here's a good resource about the FSP (from 2014, so probably a bit out of date, but should be good starting point for you):

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xw38VQu6oE1syZiItPfMa\\_cPft3gPOXln\\_OgMq6k5No/e/dit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1xw38VQu6oE1syZiItPfMa_cPft3gPOXln_OgMq6k5No/e/dit?usp=sharing)

Fiest: Why do you think they are so few women in libertarian politics? What do you think we can do to bring in more?

Gericke: I will answer more comprehensively in a sec, but when a reporter from the New York Times asked me something similar, I retorted: "Well, you are asking an IMMIGRANT WOMAN who is running a 20K strong libertarian organization made up mostly of men that...maybe we should just start by acknowledging \*I\* exist, and that it's not such a big deal one way or the other?"

Libertarianism appeals to logical, rational people. Few men, and, frankly, fewer women, are logical and rational. So that's one (BIG) hurdle. Also, maleducation is now built into statist, government-run schools, so less people can think critically, which makes our jobs harder. In a speech in NYC years ago, I explained the M/F composition this way: "We have a lot of Spocks, we need more Captain Kirks."

I am both of these things, but definitely more fly-by-the-seat-of-my-pants-it-will-all-work-out Kirk. We need to make our messaging less Spock-like, less about "being right" (logical and rational) and more about feelings and emotions... YES, we need to learn to appeal to emotion (without fraud, of course), because we can actually win this way. For example: An average mom might actually like the message of libertarianism if it's explained in a way that makes it clear the government is bad, and personal choice is good... through something like food freedom... like how bad the Standard American diet is, and through explaining the distortion of ingredients in our food (making them less healthy) because of sugar and corn subsidies... At the heart, it's an economic argument, but you can make it without sounding like a Nobel Prize winning economist, yanno?

Women may traditionally also be less good at self-promotion or less comfortable in a public role. Certainly for me, I had no idea how toxic the online asshole libertarian environment could be. E..g. We banned Chris Cantwell in Fall 2013--years before he became "the crying Nazi"--and \*I\* took the flak, \*I\* was the problem, even though \*I\* was right, and I'm still waiting for someone to be like, Good fucking call, Carla. :P

We need more women thought-leaders to step up. We need more women role models. We need to celebrate and encourage the ones who put themselves out there. We need to be pushier about getting speaking slots. We need to demand equal treatment and perks on the speaking circuit. I LOVE IT when new women movers come to NH, and tell me I inspired them to move. I need to finish my goddamn book. :P

<https://www.nhmagazine.com/2014/04/16/remarkable-women-2014-game-changers/#carla>

Fiest: Another person I'm interviewing has talked a bit about steps that some Democrats and Republicans have taken to keep libertarians off the ballot in the state of Arizona. Having to obtain ungodly amounts of signatures, and things along those lines. Were you met with any of these roadblocks, and, if so, how would you have handled this?

Gericke: The NH Libertarian Party regained ballot access in 2016 for the 2018 election... and then lost it again. In NH, you have to get 4% of the governor's race to retain ballot access.

Unfortunately, in 2018, the LPNH didn't do the work, or field feasible candidates. They failed to fundraise in any significant way (which, sadly, is an important metric). The person who worked the hardest in 2016 to get ballot access, Max Abrahamson, switched back to Republican in 2018, which certainly couldn't have helped. Until the LPNH becomes more professional in their operations and takes themselves more seriously, it's going to be an uphill slog.

Fiest: According to the LP website, there are 177 Libertarians (or small government conservatives, if you wish) holding some kind of public office in the U.S., but they are all local positions. Various school boards, utility boards...but very little at the state level and there are currently no Libertarians in Congress. Why do you think that is?

Gericke: The Leviathan hates freedom, grows and thrives under socialism like the parasite it is, and they will do everything in their power to stop our message of individual liberty. It's that simple. Unless there is a radical overhaul of how the system works (and there are some interesting things cropping up, look at this, fyi:

<https://www.facebook.com/RepresentUs/videos/410253132875542/>), only efforts like the FSP will be viable. Most of us have already given up on the federal government, and we're here to make a difference on a state level. I serve as president of the Foundation for NH Independence, a 501c3 nonprofit that educates Granite Staters on the benefits of more independence from the federal government. As I have been saying for years: Make America States Again! It's for the children! :P

## Barry Hess

Fiest: I know you I know you're not shy about talking about these things. That's one reason why I came to you so I was researching some of the laws that I happen to come across while I was you know coming across what I wanted to talk about for my thesis and I saw quite a bit of stories that mentioned your name. You have dealt quite a bit with some of these things and they have affected your ability to campaign in some way. So since you have such you know, such experience apparently done with this. I wanted to talk to you about it.

Hess: Sure. Are you sure we're talking about the election law changes?

Fiest: Those kind of changes and then you know, when you want to put a third party candidate on the ballot or something, you need 500 million signatures notarized and you know ungodly amount of money. I've interviewed people who dropped amounts like I think it was \$14,000. Just trying to obtain signatures to get on the ballot and then when you get on the ballot, it's just completely screwed up and obviously very geared towards the two big parties.

Hess: No question about it. They're trying to block people out of the Arena completely and pretend that they're the only two teams that are there and psychologically I think that Americans have this idea of we love team sports. We love competition. There's always two teams. There's good and bad or you know, and...I think that kind of mentality plays into the game that the Republican and Democrat teams want and that's what they use through their propaganda mill, which is clearly the old media the network media is so totally contained in controlled and distorted each reflecting a political ideal. It's shameful. There's there is very little journalism left because of it.

Fiest: Now take I know that you've been running an Arizona politics for quite a long time. I think you started running and what mm or previous to that.

Hess: Oh, yeah, 2002 was the first time I ran in oh, no, wait a minute. They did put me on as a placeholder for the US Senate in 2000.

Fiest: Okay, and give me an idea like the hurdles that you faced at that time versus like the last election where I understand you only got to be on as a write-in candidate due to everything you were dealing with.

Hess: Well just to be clear. I run in every gubernatorial race since 2002 that would be five total and always got such great response. And when we did our poles which were very, very simple I the rules were that you couldn't wear the poll takers could not wear any kind of clothing or pins or anything to give away where they were from and you know anything about that and very simple questions, you know, if the election were held today who of these candidates would you vote for for governor? Well, I was regularly coming up between 17 and 23%. I mean and those were just people are stopped on the street. Are you a voter they're very, very controlled circumstance. So I was appalled when I saw the media's polls coming out at you know, two percent three percent. I think the highest they ever let me get was 7% and people just don't seem to understand that polls are not going to reflect the will and intentions of the people. They are a

marketing tool. That's all they are. There are sales tools and most people don't realize it because we tend to be fairly trusting. Thankfully that is a very, very quickly changing as we find out about what we find out about all these corrupt things that our favorite politicians were up to, you know behind closed doors even down into insidious stuff but the game goes back to if they can convince people. There are only two teams now understanding this, I believe their last time I checked there were 71 individual political parties registered right here in America and most people have no idea. They think there's only two well, I was in the thick of it. I was a die-hard, you know Republican. No question about it. Whatever the party said. I know they were always the good guys. Well, then I started working with a president who was a Republican and I started to see the inside, not of that man. He was an incredible man, and I'm talking about Reagan lest there be any question, right? But I really I thought the world of him. He's the one who made me a Libertarian, but unfortunately my popularity in that area I got invited to all of the parties. The cocktail parties, the social gatherings and I started to see what was really going on was it was just a big horse trade for personal profit of the people who are in office. I saw them working. I was there I heard the conversations of them saying things to the extent of I will vote for those two bills that you've signed on to but you need to give me these three over here and it didn't matter what the bills were. That was the key. They didn't care and so it was a swap and trade for votes is all. Well I got disgusted. Reagan and actually was the one who identified me as a Libertarian later told one of his colleagues because I heard it from him that he recounted that specific incident and he said that was the highest political compliment he had ever paid anyone. That was pretty interesting. He fancied himself a Libertarian but also a practical politician. And, you know, I can't say I enjoyed everything that he did. But, as a man, I certainly think his integrity was intact and he got duped by that awful vice president of his. But anyway, you got me off track there, Jackie. Back to it here. In Arizona, it is wild west politics. The Republicans have at different elections offered me a bunch of money. They were going to stick into my campaign chest if I would run as a Republican. Said I wouldn't have to change my positions any because that's what they wanted in a candidate, but I got to become a Republican to get that million plus by the way, we're talking money, and I declined. I said, you know, what point would my credibility be if I had to sneak in the office? And they said, "Oh you can change back to libertarian once you get in..." But I thought, "Wow. What a petty, pissant attitude these people had." Well as I started getting involved in politics and I've been very involved in the politics and different events and all the vote fraud. We've had six cases on the vote counting fraud here in Arizona. Won all of them. Didn't change a thing. It's that's it's so deeply embedded that the legislature started getting nervous because after a few races people come to know my story doesn't change and, who I am, and I think they trust me. Actually, according to polls, at one point I had the highest confidence rate of any politician in Arizona except for Sheriff Joe Arpaio. He was it 94%, and I was at 89%. Everybody else was in the 40 percents by the way. But these guys have a team mentality. And what happened Jackie was they said, you know, these guys are getting too doggone close to the apple core. They're upset and races. And in fact, I've been blamed for Janet Napolitano getting in by Matt Salmon who was running at the time.

Fiest: It was your fault!

Hess: It was my fault. Of course it was. You know, these liberals. And what was fascinating was, I was invited to all of them. I have actually spoken at probably more tea parties than any tea party member I know except the local group leader. I think I mean, I just like a hundred and

sixty-eight talks and I would tell every single one, "I am not a member of this club, because I don't know what it is." You know, there are three different factions of them and I started to see these deep divisions. But then this almost religious affinity for a political party. You know? It's okay, whatever, whoever that guy is as long as he's in my club. Wow that kind of mind-boggling. And I realized why Reagan had actually brought up some points that later became relevant. One of them was on straight ticket voting. He said it would be the destruction of America. And to test it out.. I was speaking it a lot of, especially Republican, but actually a lot of democrat functions as well. I was invited more enthusiastically from the Republicans because they thought I was one of them. And it was kind of interesting when you start to see the mentality of these people. It is a religious fervor. And I would ask people, I'd say, "how many people here voted straight ticket?" And, of course, all the idiots would raise their hands and I'd say Okay. Well we want to get clean up This Republican party is what you're always talking about. Let's get on with that. "Does anybody know what a RINO is?" And the crowd would all laugh. You know, I knew the response they would laugh and go yeah and they'd start yelling out names. You know, John McCain was a favorite name to throw up there, but they're there were a whole ton of them. And I said, "Okay, now, how many people, would you raise your hands again, voted for those people?" Well, very few put their hands up and I said, "Okay, let's try this again, how many people voted straight ticket?" and they raised their hands again. And I said now look around. Think about this. You're the ones electing these morons. And people actually gave me a lot of grief after that. It was usually one of the last parts of my talk because it did get me cut off on a couple of occasions because I was just too close. It's like asking one of those vaccinations people, you know, if a vaccination doesn't protect you from all exposure. Why are you calling it a vaccination? Yeah, it's just one of those questions. You can't answer or ask a socialist. You know, how much of what I earn is your fair share and those are questions that you just you don't even bother you because unless you're ready to get into it, but here in Arizona. We had a unique situation where we were getting too close. The Republicans were blaming us for their losses and a few Democrats too to be fair, but not many. One of the representatives named J.D. Mesnard made the comment late at night, barely a quorum. I'm talking 11 o'clock at night, on a Saturday, no it might have been a Friday. They ended up passing this bill with 30 members of the legislature 16 to 14 is what I came out to. I think there were 30 but and it passed, but it had failed on its first time they tried it that evening, about eight o'clock, and it had failed boom gone and it was 16/14. I believe was the vote. Then an hour later. They recalled the final read which is what the first one was. It was called a final read. They're not supposed to be read again, but an hour or so later it is read again and JD gets to get up and say we have got to pass this to get those Libertarians off the ballot. Now you don't get a much more , much clearer intentions then that would that pretty clear statement. Is it not?

Fiest: Yeah.

Hess: Well they passed this thing and it was atrocious and what was really interesting I would the bill it was a 2305 I believe was the name. Senate bill. And so I started getting I know what it amounted to was pushing everybody else off of the ballot and it was aimed at Libertarians. But it also affected the Greens and everybody else. And I ended up being able to get people so incensed that we put together the largest coalition in Arizona's political history. We put everybody together. We had everybody on the far left as they call it to the far right. Everybody agreed, you cannot limit our choices.



Fiest: Right

Bess: We did there had been since I've been here there was a governor named Evan Mecham. That was the last time a citizen's referendum made it to the ballot ,because they kept raising the signatures. We had to get like 478,000 signatures or some ungodly number. And it was really crazy. Well, I'll tell you what these people we organized. We got it. It was the first successful referendum in over 30 years and over thirty five tries and we were there. Well what happened we verified all of our signatures before we got there. We actually had almost twice the number and they were all verified because we anticipated the games. What was fascinating is we were going to drop them at the Secretary of State's office on the 10th of September and which was kind of interesting but then one of my Republican friends called and said, "Hey Barry, they're going to go up the Republicans are going to deliberately tie up the Secretary's desk so you won't be able to submit your petitions, because you had to give him by five o'clock." I mean, this is how petty they get.

Fiest: Oh, I believe it.

Hess: That was what it was. It was on the 12th. I called the group and said, "Hey now, let's be cool. We're going to drop them a day early." And even I only then realized what an excellent opportunity on September 11th to turn them in and we took advantage of it. We got it there. It was going to the ballot. We had the integrity of those 16 Shady Republicans...their integrity was going to be on the ballot. But, guess what happened? Those same 16 Republicans voted to repeal the law. They had just told us a month and a half earlier, "We absolutely have to have this law." And they repealed it so that it would not appear on the ballot. That was in 2015. Well 2016 rolls around they are still like a little "it's somebody else's fault" they lost. Not the lack of any philosophy or integrity, you know? They don't even think about that nonsense. But what happened was they vary suddenly put them back in and that's when you know Doucey in the whole group, but they just keep reaffirming this stuff and what it did was it increased the signature requirements now, we have we had at that time twenty six thousand registered Libertarians scattered all over Arizona, mostly in the backwoods country, but Libertarians tend to like to just be left alone. And so we're talking enormous difficulty in getting the signatures. Now previously, the party secured ballot status. We have access we have a seat on the ballot is how it's supposed to work, the libertarian party, and then then it's there but the candidates had to get to get on the ballot would have to get a percentage just like the Republicans and the Democrats like one percent or something like that. So they were jealous that our numbers because we only have 26,000 members and they have a million members so they didn't think that that was fair because they're one percent was bigger than our percent or at least that's what they sold the truth was. We were getting too strong and their poles were not fooling anybody anymore. We saw Hillary Clinton that nonsense with the polls. I think people wised up but as the they so what ended up happening was they were pushing the candidates off the ballot because now we didn't need 260 we needed 3500. We actually have have to get about 5,000 to make sure that all of them were, you know enough good ones because they do random tests. And so it made it almost impossible and if you think about just on the sheer Burrs if we could get every single libertarian every single one of them we can only have a very limited field of candidates is craziness and that's what they did. And in this time. They pulled it off but we did we did have some fun because I contacted all of the Republicans. I knew and I said look your party the party

officials the corrupt creeps. They want this McSally gal in the senate seat. I'm going to urge you to vote for anybody but McSally and that got around and McSally did lose that race by the way, not that I wasn't suggesting that anybody support Kyrsten Sinema, but I happen to know Kirsten a have for 20 years nearly. She's a lot smarter and a lot less radical than what the news presents. I mean, you know, I there is we don't agree politically on a lot of things but I do have to respect her intelligence.

Fiest: Oh good.

Hess: And in any event, that's where they left us. And that's where we are. And these insidious laws have been going on. It's not just Arizona. It is all over the country systematically every single election time because they believe and well its somehow evident in their minds that we steal their votes, right? We're vote thieves. Because obviously, you know, we can't do anything with them, you know, and it's like well we can determine who wins and that was we were we are too close to the kingmaker seat. Kingmaker may not win but they can decide the winner and that's what they're afraid of. They call them spoilers because they're a bunch of little sissies and just they just can't put together a better message than everybody else.

Fiest: That's my thing.

Hess: They to try to control it. It's sort of like, you know, I used to say that you know, they don't care which horse wins as long as they own all the horses at the race.

Fiest: Right.

Hess: That's what they're doing. And so that we have one party that is you know, well, it's not even one part. They're there two scrimmage teams that are playing for the same owners and it's all choreographed. You know, why is Hillary not in jail? Why is you know, what's his name still out walking around? Jesse Jackson. It's just mind-boggling that you see that our country is easily become as corrupt as the old Soviet Union and that was my specialty. I do have some insight. The only difference is our stuff is shinier. But we don't even have a political spectrum anymore. We have a bunch of thugs trying to hold on to power no matter what.

Fiest: Right? Exactly. And that's what that's what's so frustrating when I hear about all these laws trying to keep people off the ballot. I'm like, "Is this really how out of shape and out of touch your party has become? That you literally have to pull this kind of garbage to keep us off the ballot. What are you so afraid of?"

Hess: Yeah, they want to win by exclusion.

Fiest: There you go.

Hess: Not on merit. And that's really you know, where we are. And like it or not, when you have the old media, you know drilling all this nonsense through the news and making it look if you ever saw the there's an interesting YouTube compendium on the bias against Ron Paul. It's

incredible, you know, just see how they shape that. How the winner of most polls was being pushed back in ignored as if he didn't exist at all. Didn't even mention him.

Fiest: Right. Glenn and I were talking about that this weekend.

Hess: Oh, yeah. Well and Glenn is somebody else I really am in awe of I really admire his ability to think things through. So I think the people of Tennessee, Knox, down there, are very, very lucky to have him in the mayor's seat.

Fiest: Me too. I agree. Just about every answer of every political question of out of his mouth was, "...and I can turn that to be good for my constituents in this way." And I was like, okay.

Hess; Yeah. He's a good guy and that's what you find. You know, I recently said look, we just got to throw out all the Republicans and Democrats and do not elect any of them. Just get rid of the power monsters. And of course, you know, and I was more figurative than literal I suppose. But the whole idea a guy comes in and says, "Well, you know Libertarians are human beings and they're going to you know, they'll be as corrupt as the last guys because it's there." And I said, "here's the difference. I don't know of a Libertarian who is not committed to cutting the legs of power out from under the very office that they hold."

Fiest: Right. I talked to two people in the last few days who ran for office with the intention of getting rid of the office.

Hess: Wow, that's pretty extreme. I do remember a former governor coming to me at a social gathering, and a little tiny lady, real sweet, but she came up to me and said, "Let me get this straight. Mr. Hess; you want to become governor of the state of Arizona so that you can cut the legs (she's the one who coined the phrase for me) so you can cut the legs of power out from under the very office that you hold?" And I knew it was important not to hesitate. So I said, "Why yes, ma'am." And then she shook her head and said, "You Libertarians. You just want to rock the boat.." And I said, "No ma'am. This time. I brought a drill." And she huffed off. She actually harrumphed me. I had never been harrumphed before so I kind of chased her down and I said, "Jane! Jane! Would you harrumph me again? That was fun." And oh, you should have seen the scowl. But these people don't understand it.

Fiest: That's just that's hilarious.

Hess: Well, yeah, they just don't understand that people are in it without a personal ulterior motive other than to leave a better legacy to the next generation. And regardless of all the wackiness that it gets into, and the individuality of libertarianism, that is something we all agree on. There are basic principles none of us want to violate. And I think that's so cool because you couldn't say the same thing about a Republican or a Democrat. They have literally switched sides on so many issues in the past 20 years, it's not even funny. I mean Hillary and all of the notable Democrats; Schumer, Pelosi.. the whole kit and caboodle. They all have voted for this border wall many times and they have argued with it. And now there are compendiums of them making the argument for the wall Yet today, purely because of politics and power, purely there is clearly



no other reason because nothing changed. They have reversed themselves completely and that is disheartening as an American.

Fiest: Right. If the border wall was right or wrong. It should have been right or wrong consistently.

Hess: Right?

Fiest: You know me. I live in El Paso and I'm not a fan of the idea of a border wall. But I would have been saying the same thing all the way through. It wouldn't be right or wrong based on political expediency.

Hess: Right? And that's what they're doing. That's and that's part of the game is to get people who are not educated enough, but they will vote for whoever says they're going to give them more money. So that's why we have more votes than we've got voters. And I think if you're going to participate there is a fair expectation that your identity is revealed. So that you can't if for no other reason that you can't vote twice. I think I think it's more than reasonable, but I don't like some of the plans I've seen for it because they always get really crazy rather than just, you know, "Show me some ID or picture ID or something." They get really crazy and that's why with so many bills you get a lot of grandstanding but nothing happens. You'll hear a politician saying, "Oh I just wrote this bill, and by golly, we're going to turn America back into America again, and we're going to go onto it..." and they scream and everybody goes, "Yay for you." He knows darn well that things going to get killed in committee. It's never going to see the light of day and poof. Yeah, but he got points from his constituents. He's a good guy. He tried. Well, I'm kind of fed up with these politicians who try. I want to see a politician do. I want to see something finished. You got a problem with education. Let's fix it and not fix it by giving people more money. I'm thinking cut it down to manageable size would be the most reasonable thing to do and say let's cut off all the periphery and then work on it from the inside out after we strengthen the inner core. Because it's just crazy.

Fiest: Maybe let's start with getting rid of the Department of Education and putting education down at the state and local level.

Hess: Amen. There's no reason the Feds shouldn't be involved in it. Their argument, you know, what that whole common core nonsense was about now that it's pretty much been abandoned, was the argument was that it would make all the kids know the same stuff so they could communicate on the same level. Well, that's the exact opposite of what education is. That is schooling. When you're told what to think, and what to know, that schooling. When you're taught how to think and how to analyze and how to be critical in your thought, that is education. And these people have forgotten that. They want little automaton kids. So give them *some* drugs, you know. But they shouldn't use drugs. They should only take drugs but they shouldn't, you know, this whole schizophrenia nonsense. They're telling kids that taking drugs is normal and you should gobble these. That's why it's the war *on some drugs*. The ones produced by people who aren't political contributors. That's the ones that are illegal. Those are them.

Fiest: You're right and that's one of the things that's so frustrating is you hear all these things, you know, the need for drugs of public schools and global warming is another big one. But

everyone that has something to say about it is always attached to one side or the other right one candidate wants so much funding for a university in his state or his section of the state to study it. It's not so much that I believe in or I don't believe in it. But when every "expert" who talks about it is attached to someone who has a political agenda at least enough to make you wonder.

Hess: I remember when Ron Paul that right there in Texas when he would he'd be signing on to bills and right and bills to get his people goodies, goodies, goodies. He's and then of course when they showed up on the floor he voted against him. But he had to and he did in every single case and the people loved him for it. They've elected him, how many times? Fifteen times? In a previously Democrat district, by the way. Which is kind of interesting. I mean, yeah, we'll let the new guy run, you know, because no Republicans going to win there anyway, and then he did it. Kind of blew their minds. But they're clearly afraid of the whole liberty movement and they see it going on worldwide. Libertarians are not a local team. It's a worldwide movement and you see it with the yellow vests. They're coming, adjusting the metamorphosis of that whole thing as they start to congeal into a continent, you know, the wide situation is what I am seeing is metamorphosis. They started out by saying, you know, "give me more". They wanted more from government. And now they're thinking they want less government. And it's really interesting.

Fiest: Why don't we have a yellow vest movement here?

Hess: Oh, no, we do. It's you're not being told. It's it hasn't grown anywhere near but in Canada, it is also getting bigger and bigger and bigger. Because people are emboldened when they see Spain and France and Portugal and Belgium. This is happening. And I don't think there's gonna there's no way to stop it. That's why if Macron cared about France at all. He would have resigned a week ago. Yeah, but he doesn't he wants to hold on to power. We'll probably find out how many of the confiscated guns in France were tucked away. I guarantee you there were a lot.

Fiest: Oh, yeah. Because you don't want you don't want an angry populace armed.

Hess: Yeah, they turned in some of their guns, but they didn't turn in all of their guns. It'll be interesting to see what comes with it all but I do I do see it erupting into a very, very violent situation. There will be bloodshed and you'll see defections. We've seen the fire departments in France, I think it was, stood the police down. One agency against another of government. Isn't that interesting? So we're near a boiling point.

Fiest: Oh, I know it's been interesting to watch. You see someone walking down the street and one of those yellow vests that people generally construction wear and you wonder if a fight is going to break out.

Hess: They all are supposed to be trying to be completely nonviolent. But the police and the provocateurs are who are stirring up violence, giving the police force an excuse to descend on them. It's age old trick and they do it all the time. They did it there in Houston and it was really tragic. But when we get back in, you know back to the point of the politics and the trying to ice us out. Well they can do what they want. But the interesting thing is that if they thought a bunch of people who became Libertarians specifically because we are interested in politics because our parents, there were no Libertarians to have as parents. They just fall into Republican or

Democrat like I did just because my family everybody I knew was? You know? So, yeah, I'll sign up in a club and they were the good guys automatically. And I'm sure that's true of the Democrats as well. They thought that it was innocent enough in that regard. But then when you realize how much of a pawn you've become... I would rather see everybody registered Independent and have just candidates have to define themselves. Wouldn't that make it easy? I mean then then yeah.

Fiest: It also kind of feels like an attempt to, and this might be my libertarian way of thinking, but it almost kind of feels like a way, just like everything else, to put us into a group. What group do you belong to? We can put this label on you. If you're a Republican we may be able to get a little more money out of you than if you were Democrat. And certainly if you were a Libertarian. It just it's another another label to slap on us and in another way, unfortunately.

Hess: Well, that's the bread and butter of politics. To divide people up into groups, pit them against each other, usually for funding, and then offered a referee. It's a beautiful scam and that's what they do. They get people all riled up because somebody used the n-word or said something hateful 30 years ago and suddenly that is their whole career to these people who have given up thinking for themselves. You know, I think it's tragic. There's been a lot of careers destroyed that probably shouldn't have been destroyed, but they are. I mean don't you feel bad at least a little bit for Monica Lewinsky?

Fiest: Yeah. I saw her Ted Talk. It was really unfortunate.

Hess: Yeah. That poor girl. You know it yet. It's funny, ha-ha, but in all that, horrible, embarrassing and that but it ruined her life. Yeah, and that's not fair. I'd like to see a return to the truth in advertising laws many people don't realize they were substantially altered as the outcome of a political question what they called puffery and the question it was constituents who had brought suit against an elected official for not keeping to their campaign promises and the Court ruled in such a way as to allow they can say anything they want they can promise you anything, and they owe you nothing. You know, it's pathetic. Whereas I would like to see truth in advertising laws that whereas if you saw a commercial as just a regular citizen, you're watching your TV and you see a commercial that is a blatant lie is spreading false information and you know it that you can file suit and if you Prevail you get the money. Wouldn't that shut it down pretty seriously? If you can't defend what you say to the in the public then then you should be held liable for it and you'd have automatic standing. That would shut a lot of this crap that we see on TV up. It probably shut down all of the network news stations because they just don't know how to operate on honesty.

Fiest: I saw a lawsuit where of all things a guy sued, I don't remember which one, but he sued a beer manufacturer because the commercial said that if you bought and drink this beer you'd have all these gorgeous women at your house all over you.

Hess: And you do!

Fiest: And he won!

Hess: No. He won?

Fiest: He won. He won that's gonna have to look it up and send you the link. But I remember talking about that in one of the classes I took during my undergrad.

Hess: That's funny. I didn't expect that he would have won but I think it's cute that he did if those are the rough facts. I'm good with that. I think that's cute. There's why it's like the people who flew over to Upstate New York to pick up their Publishers Clearing House checks. All these old people were showing up. I think there are four or five and then of course Publishers Clearing House is, "No, no. It didn't it doesn't say you won." "This is my name's on the printed on the check!" You know, there's these big checks and stuff. And I think that the old people lost but there were settlements involved that they actually did have to pay money because their come ons in their advertising's were so strong it made people honestly believe they were going to win if they just push this button right here.

Fiest: Right. Yeah, but and that's it's a scam. It's an outright game. Absolutely. It's I mean good for them that they sued and I'm glad some of them one and some ways I'm glad Mr. Beer Guy won. I mean on one hand, I want to say, "Did you really think, you know, that buying a beverage would cause this to happen? Where's your common sense? But on the other hand, I mean, it's like you said, truth in advertising. And, do we really want them to be able to go and say anything they want or do we want some level of responsibility?

Hess: Well, I would have to say I think it's funny then all those cases and yeah, they got some money out of the big bad guys, but I think all of them should have been thrown out of court with a big laugh just because we all have a responsibility to know something we can't just turn off our intellect and that's what these people essentially are arguing as well, "I was too stupid to know so give me some millions of dollars."

Fiest: And that's what happens. There's no reason to believe that is going to bring all these bikini-clad women to your house. I mean, I mean like on one hand. I want to be happy for someone and be like good for you. But what is your life going to be if you're really that gullible?

Hess: Yeah, then what if you drink a case what you'd be in the middle of a beauty pageant somewhere. Like show me what drink I need to be to find myself in a room with a million hot guys and I promise you I will go I will go buy some. But, there's that and there's reality.

Hess: And drink enough of it depending on what it is, you might just be able to concoct that in your own head? Right there behind the pink elephant.

Fiest : Right, you're just it's amazing the things that you see when you're under the influence of a whole lot of alcohol.

Hess: Yeah, you know and me pretty much an non drinker. I'll have a drink here and there but I just have never been taken by drink. And you know, so I never go out to, well, I have gone out, we'd say to the bar and have drinks, you know? Like in college we go have, I might be the guy sipping the same beer all night, you know?

Fiest: Yeah.

Hess: But I because I just didn't care. And the few times, probably two or three times I ever got drunk, and sick, I didn't want to do it again.

Fiest: And there were no bikini-clad women everywhere, right?

Hess: Well in the situation I'm actually thinking of it happened in Fort Lauderdale during spring break. So as luck would have it, yes, in that case there are lots of gorgeous young women offering assistance in bikini. So I was kind of funny..

Fiest: ....but if it was picking you up off the floor, I don't think it was quite what the beer commercial had him buying.

Hess Oh no, no, no. No, it wasn't that. It wasn't that at all. But, you know just the same it's we all have a responsibility because you know, it's was a PT Barnum said it's better take a fool's money or something, you know, than to leave them to do bad things with it. And I think there's a little more depth. I forgot the exact quote. He was a lot more eloquent than I just was. But the meaning is obvious, you know, I understand the scent. I don't agree with it. But I can't stand his sentiment was you know, it's sort of like the people who say give him a gun and they'll just shoot themselves. Well, why do you think that? They never answer that question, but that's another one of those mysteries right? But getting back to it. Boy I tell you what. Brevity is not a word found in the libertarian dictionary. We do to digress exceedingly, but getting back to what you wanted to talk about. Did we give you enough of what you need?

Fiest: I do have a few other questions.

Hess: Oh get on with it.

Hess: Yeah, but you did answer a lot of... not only the fact that this is happening, but why it's happening and that's one of the most important things. When you were dealing with all these you know, lawsuits and ungodly amounts of signatures and everything you had to do to get on the ballot. Did you ever get any assistance from the Arizona LP or the national LP or anything like that?

Hess: Yes we did get some from the local LP but I don't think...no I don't think we got anything from the national LP. We actually did get some from some contributors and we got something over, I think it was, ninety three thousand dollars from contributors. But the interesting thing was many of those contributors were usually fairly consistent Democrat contributors as well. So it's kind of a double burn to the Republicans who were trying to screw us. In this case. the Democrats had split off here locally to say, "No, we don't want to compete in a fixed race." And it was that was pretty much the sentiment, you know, we didn't necessarily like each other or agree with each other politically, but we all did agree we all have should have access to the soapbox.

Fiest: Right. Have you yourself ever taken any legal action?

Hess: Illegal action?

Fiest: No. Legal action.

Hess: On what?

Fiest: Trying to fight back against the amount of signatures you would have to collect or the hoops that you would have to jump through.

Hess: Yeah. I was a plaintiff on several of those lawsuits. Because every time I run a Republican, some throw away, they will have them challenge my signatures. It's a legal proceeding and I've won all of them. But they just keep coming back, you know, and it's almost like school children. He already knew what they're going to do, you know, because we all were there. And because they're so sophomoric. It's the equivalent of telling you know, a dirty joke, you know, two white horses fell in the mud. Whoa. Yeah. What level are we? You know and that's sometimes how I feel. That we are and I'm talking to full-grown adults, people on the national stage, that I know I could bury with some of the stuff that they've told me. But they tell me in confidence because they know it's in confidence, or else nobody else would tell me. But it's after I die, if they're dead, I've made them all agree I'm going to reveal everything.

Fiest: There you go. Yeah, I don't disagree with that at all. I think one of the reasons why these things continue to happen because people don't know that it happens.

Hess: Oh, it's amazing what's happened. There are incidents in history that have been so strangely misshaped and fixed to look better or to look in a particular way. It's just crazy because some of the incidents that we thought we knew about we find out later. Okay, here's a good one. Roosevelt knew two hours before they were coming to bomb Pearl Harbor. Whoops. Yeah, don't tell anybody and that that's one of those things that you go, "Well, you got a telephone and a radio. Those travel pretty fast. You could kind of get ready for them, wouldn't you?" But nope. It was that was to make sure that we had a reason to get into a war.

Fiest: Oh, that's so unfortunate. Especially when you look at the loss of lives and everything.

Hess: Oh my God half a million.

Jackie: So yeah, and I think there's also a reason though to, as you say, let people know what's going on. Because I have found that people who have been through the political process want it to be fair. I was talking to one of my interviewees yesterday, or Sunday, who was telling me how they felt sorry for Bernie Sanders for what the DNC it did to him. And you know who that was? That was Glenn Jacobs. You wouldn't expect someone like him to have sympathy for Bernie Sanders but look at how they screwed him over.

Hess: No. Yeah. Yeah. He was just talking about the procedural manipulation and against this man and they did everything they could. But he sucked it up. He made a deal. He got a little sports car, \$700,000 sports car. It doesn't matter, you know, and what a beach house. There's so much of your money in Washington that if it's better to make somebody go away they will.



Whether it's by buying them off, go buy a house in the country and shut up, sit down and don't let us hear from you again, except maybe your Memoirs. That's kind of the rule.

Fiest: Right. Yeah. I have a feeling he's not hurting and he's running for president again, so he'll get his second shot. So some people such as the aforementioned Glenn Jacobs have found some success running for office as a Republican. Is that something you've ever considered?

Hess: No.

Fiest: I read an article one time where you were being interviewed about these kind of situations and you said that if the Republicans kept doing this to you that you, well not you, but the local Libertarians might consider running as Democrats. Have you ever considered that?

Hess: No.

Fiest: Okay, and I didn't think you would.

Hess: It's not about me getting into office. It's about me inspiring people to get into office. And if I happen to get into office, yay team, but it's bigger than that. It's really not only about me. I'm not looking for a political career. I just trust myself to go do what has to be done and leave it in such a shape in such a short time that the rest of the nation will have to look at us and say we want to be like them. And if I could, you know resign early, I think that'd be great. And a former governor, governor Evan Mecham, I knew him. We had talked and he said, "Barry if you get to be governor, they're going to impeach you." and I said, "Well Governor, as I've learned in your case, they have to wait six months in order to do that." He said that's true. And I said, "To me that just means I have to work fast." And he laughed, but I really mean that. I don't care. If I get into office I'm going to do what I know is right. I'm going to instantly try to make those changes that are really need to be addressed. One of them is taxation, of course. And guns. I think that people could rest assured not infringed means not infringed. All gun laws in Arizona should be gone. See you later. Now wait a minute. In terms of the ATF, because there is some legitimacy in terms of people running guns specifically for things. I wouldn't have a problem with okay, you have that one, but the rest of the laws should be shaken off. And part of this is like in the Old West, if you ever see like Old Tucson, you'll see a cowboy and a little guy he's got his arm looped with some gal with little parasol and you can kind of picture him walking. As every man approaches them, there is something that they do. Do, you know what it is?

Fiest: Usually they put their hand near their hip for their gun.

Hess: No. No. They tip their hat to the lady. And the reason was because the little guy had a gun on his hip and he was just as big as they were, and they used it as an equalizer. But it's the same idea but that is what they do. And if you look at it is historically accurate, you did not disrespect the lady and that was part of it. And so, people knew how to contain themselves. You wouldn't see some of these little twits who I've seen these videos of him getting right in people's faces and spitting at them and stuff as they're talking. I'da smack that person out of my face in a heartbeat. I mean, it wouldn't even take me a few seconds. But that's how I was brought up. I don't start anything, but I'm here to finish if that's what it's going to be.

Fiest: Yeah. That's pretty much my worldview, you know trouble is trouble. You don't want too much of it, but you don't want to be disrespected in general.

Hess: No. I mean they can't hurt my feelings and most people that who have hurled insults, I'd have to care about their opinion for it to make any difference at all. And it doesn't. Because they're kind of fun and some of them get clever. I think I like some of the memes that I saw one point of me and you know, they were funny. They weren't truthful, but they were funny right now. I have to laugh.

Fiest: Well, we've been Libertarians for a long time. So we're pretty accustomed to being told that we're irrelevant and we don't matter and our point of view will never get us anywhere...

Hess: We just wrote the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, and most of the Constitution they all say they revere but we're bad guys. This is a schizophrenia that goes on people don't understand that our principles are laid out very clearly in the Declaration of Independence. Which is interesting, you know where that came from. I mean a large body of it came from was the Iroquois Indians. They that was actually their Declaration of appreciation and respect for others. And I didn't realize that until after a I saw it show up in a couple of research attempts that I was doing and just happen to come across it going, "Wow. That's kind of cool."

Fiest: That's interesting. I didn't know that either.

So we've made our way down to our final question and this one I'm particularly interested in your opinion on..

Hess: I can't marry you. I'm already married. What?

Fiest: Okay, I'm sorry the second to last question. Okay, so I did some research on the website of the LP and it's said that there are roughly about a 177 Libertarians right now holding some kind of office, either appointed or elected in the United States, but they're all pretty much local level positions. Were talking about school boards and utility boards and things along those lines. So people seem to like to have Libertarians on hand locally, but the higher up we go not so much. I mean, there's two Independents in Congress but no Libertarians. So why do they like us close but not like us federally or state wise?

Hess: They try to glom on to our integrity. They say things and virtually every president since Reagan has uttered the words I lean libertarian." Well, right that shows a mental incompetence because you can't lean libertarian. You're either in or you're out. You either believe in honesty and truth or you don't, you know? Or some gradation thereof, but that's the difference, as you know, that's why they say things like Libertarians, you know, "You can tell a Libertarian because they say all of our freedoms all of the time..." and it's not followed by a but.

Fiest: What do you think they're afraid of about having us at a higher level? I just assumed they'd like us at a small level because you want a small government first thing, For example on your local utility board, so your local taxes will be lower or your bills will be lower. But you're still



going to be paying out a whole lot more in federal taxes if you keep electing these big government people to office.

Hess: Well now keep in mind as you go up in the office as you're facing stiffer and stiffer competition and more and more outside interests who are secretly funding activities and it goes on all the time all the time.

Fiest: So, you think so you think it's not so much that people don't like Libertarians at that level. It's just harder for us to get to that level?

Hess: Because the higher ups than in the nationals, there are people there who are trying to influence any race of significance that's got their attention. That's exactly why and they don't want Libertarians because what we'll do is put him out of work. They won't have the chance to steal. They don't want to draw too bright.

Fiest: They don't want another Dr. Paul. Another Dr. No in office. It's going to just be like no, no, no, no, no, no to everything that they want to spend way too much money on.

Hess: Well, but he was too well spoken or at least he's probably not a really good speaker in technical terms, but he gets his point across better than almost anybody since Billy Graham for crying out loud. You know? And I said to him we were at Aaron Russo's Funeral over at Dan Aykroyd's.... The Blues Brothers bar or something and I my assignment was to keep the flies off of Dr. Paul. So he and I were talking and I said, "You know, I so appreciate your patience with these guys. If you only get like a minute and they get an hour and a half," And he goes, "Well, all I need is a minute." That quiet confidence. It was one of the enduring things about Ron. I think the guy is absolutely real. I've known him for almost 30 years and he's been everything he's always said he was. That's so freaking rare. And no scandals, no credible accusations and no serious accusations in any event. He is clearly a political anomaly and shame on every single American who didn't support him when they had that chance.

Fiest: Right. Yeah. That's a shame. I will always regret that he didn't get a chance to become president because he would have gotten rid of so much garbage. El Paso, even though we're in Texas, we are a largely Democratic area. I hear a lot around here from people who are, and I'm sympathetic to what they're going through because a lot of people here are very poor, I hear from them about these various programs that can help them stay afloat. And I'm like look, I don't know a lot of Libertarians that don't want to help people. So, I think that we could have a discussion about these programs, but we also do need to look at where we can trim the fat and maybe we don't need hundreds of billions of dollars in our military. Maybe we don't need to have a military base in every country in the world. You know, how can we bring some of this money and some of our loved ones back home. We probably don't need this drug war. We probably don't need the TSA. We probably don't need the Department of Homeland Security. I don't think there's anyone that doesn't understand what it's like to fall on hard times and need help. If we put more money to helping people in that regard, I don't know whole lot, I'm not going to say none, but I don't know a whole lot of Libertarians that would object to that. But let's look at cutting back instead of just spending and spending and spending.

Hess: Right do they keep wanting to make poor people more comfortable. Now remember they're exchanging it for their vote because they're the ones making the bigger promises to those very same people. So that they're kind of in a trap, you know, "I want as much as I can get kind of attitude." It is pretty prevalent. So, they're literally buying a vote by taking care of them. But if they honestly cared about poverty, and people, they would look at ending the poverty, not making people comfortable in it. Because they give you enough to get by, but never enough to get up. It hurts people and or at the very least delays them being productive in society. And of course, in this day and age, when you're not allowed to be competitive, when you're not allowed to do anything, you know to upset somebody's self-esteem. I mean good god, look there's no hope for this. There's going to be a whole generation of just absolute do-nothings, and I shouldn't be so general, but there's going to be such a significant number of this specific generation is going to come up, they just don't know anything. And they don't know that they don't know. And they don't know enough to care that they don't know and so, you know, it's whose fault is I don't know. Let's fix that problem. Make it easy. But stop giving so much because that's what keeps it going. The key to success would be, how many people did you get off of welfare? Not how many more did you include on welfare. Obama used to brag on that, "Oh, we've doubled the rolls." Well hell, yeah. And if the Socialist have their way you're going to double them again, and again, and again until it consumes the entire population. They are all going to be sitting there looking for a handout, but you're not going to have anything so we get to starve like the people in Venezuela. And now the house cat starting to look like the Sunday dinner. It's pathetic, but that's how socialism always works. There's not even a chance that it could work. It's not even a chance and yet these people want to keep going on what they think socialism is. Everybody gets stuck.

Fiest: And no one pays attention to history. Look at what happened with the Soviet Union.

Hess: Yep, that's exactly what happened. They collapsed on themselves and there is just nothing anybody could do so they quietly shut the doors and went away. It wasn't a big deal. There weren't bombs going off or anything. They just didn't show up for work tomorrow.

Fiest: Right. And the most common answer is, "Well, that wasn't real socialism." Well, you can't try it here. You just can't I'm sorry. We don't have enough money to try it here.

Hess: That it's even a conversation point is kind of scary and that little wackadoodle from New York, my gosh. I mean wow the some of the things that come out of her mouth and now she wants now she wants to kill all the cows. You can't have your cows. And you know what the irony is? Of all the global pollution and stuff all of it the U.S. contributes less than 1% So if we cleaned up all of ours, poof, nothing no difference. It's craziness and that's kind of the silliness of saying "Let's spend some trillions of dollars. Let's just why don't we just write Al Gore a check for crying out loud and get on with something serious?"

Fiest: Yeah, yeah, exactly and he's in that whole thing. I remember he was giving up the name of this program where you could donate money for the carbon credits? Do you remember the carbon credits?

Hess: Oh, he's made he's made two billion dollars off of creating that.

Fiest: ...and people had no idea that this company that he was pushing and telling people to give their money to come buy carbon credits, was his company.

Hess: That snake oil.

Fiest: You know, one thing that we learned as Libertarians very quickly is that we're gonna disagree with everyone seemingly about half the time. So I'm accustomed to disagreeing with people. But do your research.

Hess: Yeah. I try to give props when Trump does something good I give him points, but I take points away when he does something stupid. And, in the end, he's becoming one of the more humorous presidents we've had since Bill Clinton used to be you know, just a jumble of laughs. But we really haven't had a funny president to this level. So, you know, it is what it is. And if the guy won, he won. I'm not one of those who gets upset that my team didn't win because we all agreed, you know, we're in America and that's just how it goes sometimes right?

Glenn Jacobs

Fiest: Okay. So I guess the first thing I want to tell you to kind of lead in the my questions is that your situation when you ran for office was actually the primer for the basis of my entire thesis. When you announced that you were running for mayor, I didn't actually get to watch a press conference because I was in a big customer meeting, but I had a friend feeding me what was going on. When they said that you were planning to run as a Republican, I wasn't like upset or anything, but I was like...because of your time with the WWE everyone knew who you were. And from the fan side everyone knew you were a Libertarian. Taker raised money for you, Show raise money for you. You had so much support and you were still not comfortable running as a libertarian. I'm not asking you so much to explain to me how you got to the idea to run as a Republican. But what made you uncomfortable running as a Libertarian?

Jacobs: You know, frankly, parties are parties. If you look at the Republican party, you have people like Rand Paul and Thomas Massie and Justin Amash, who in many ways are more libertarian than libertarian party people are. Especially as we have Ron Paul running for president. And libertarianism is... and of course, we're talking about philosophy, you know, and it's kind of a spectrum. The small government and keeping government out of and how far you go down with that. Anyway, Dr. Paul was much more of the libertarian philosophy. Then when he ran as a Republican for president, then the libertarians who opposed him, especially when Bob Barr ran as a Libertarian candidate for president. So that's the thing as political parties, there's some philosophy behind it, in a lot of ways, it's an organization. And I'm comfortable running as a Republican because if you look at the national platform of the Republican Party, most of the things I agree with. There's going to be some disagreements. Most of the stuff, I do agree with. It's a small government platform. They often lose that when Republicans get into office and it's the same with Democrats. When you're looking at the various parties, you're looking at the philosophy and also the organization the party. My goal as a Republican is actually what Ron Paul did and what Rand Paul is doing...to try to push the Republican party in an even more small government way, and to grow the party among non-traditional Republicans. Among women, minorities and young people. Because I think the message of freedom should resonate with everybody. It isn't articulated very well and, frankly, it's not articulated very well by the libertarian party either in many cases. So the real reason is, you're looking insane and do I do I mostly agree with whomever and then, you know, do they have the organization necessary to win? Because when you run for political office, sometimes people do run to make a statement. but you're running to win. And if you don't do that, I mean a lot of people put resources and energy and money into a campaign, not just the candidate. If you're not running to win you need to make that known up front...

Fiest: Did you feel like there was a strong enough Libertarian organization in Knox County for you to be able to run as a Libertarian?

Jacobs: The organization is small, but they're very passionate. The lot of the problem is just the you know, when you look at the overall election laws, they do not favor the third parties, you know that. And whether it's the libertarian party, whether it's the green party, whether it's the Constitution party... whoever. They spend most of their time to trying to get ballot access and I'm not interested in that. I actually I want to I want to get into office and be able to influence policy.

And there's room in the Republican party. A lot of my libertarian people, my friends in the libertarian party are very much, you know, "It's Libertarian Party all the way." And I'm like, "Guys that's not the point of this." The point is the message. It doesn't matter to me if it's Libertarian Party or the Republican party. It's whatever vehicle that I can get the message out better though.

Fiest: Right, right, and that certainly is important. I've interviewed a few people over the last few days and that's what they talk about. It's been about gathering signatures. One guy spent \$14,000 collecting signatures to get on the ballot and certainly that would not have helped you very much.

Jacobs: And frankly now, I'm in a pretty influential position within the local Republican Party. And I agree with Republicans on a lot of things it's not like it's not like I just abandon all my principles to do that. You know, I'm just trying to pull a little more my way in some instances, but I think everybody does that.

Fiest: Right and there certainly are a lot of times when people get into office, and of course this might be more state or federal office, and then have to negotiate more and lose some of their platform. But I don't necessarily know that mayor puts you in quite the same position.

Jacobs: Not really. It's a little odd because you know, there are different ways of looking at everything and as someone who took an oath, and I seriously took an oath to uphold the US Constitution, the Tenth Amendment says that the state and locality should be doing a lot of things that the federal government is doing. Even though I don't necessarily believe hey, you know in some cases, "Hey, we don't need to be doing that." It still is under the purview of the local government. And if I was a congressperson I'd be like, "Look, the US government should not be doing this at all." You know. My goal is to encourage the community to become involved in things and to quit spending taxpayer money where we don't have to.

Fiest: I agree. I don't feel like the federal government can dictate education in the way that the people who were close to the problem can.

Jacobs: Exactly. If you look at Tennessee, I don't know how it is with you guys, but in Tennessee education system is controlled mostly by the state. We have a local school board, but the state sets a lot of the criteria and determines a lot of the funding amounts and that sort of thing. One of the biggest mistakes ever made in education was the Department of Education. I talk about this all the time. For years the emphasis was everybody has to go to college. College is the correct choice for some people, not for everybody. But because we've pushed four-year traditional universities, we're having a hard time with skilled trades, and that's unfortunate. Not only from the aspect of the individual who doesn't make it through college, they just went to college. They don't know what they want to do. They just got a degree and a lot of student debt... But it also hurts society because, as a homeowner I can't find a plumber. I mean seriously, you need an electrician. And those are those are really good jobs and they're honorable jobs as well. That's what happens when we have a one-size-fits-all policy that doesn't work. It really hurts the entire system. Whereas when we have competing policies we can see which ones work and which ones don't work. And that's a much better way. That's what the Tenth

Amendment is all about. Thomas Jefferson talked about laboratories of democracy. That's what the states were supposed to be. Things are going to be different in every state now because so much of power centralizing in Washington DC, there's a lot of things that are not much different when you go across the country.

Fiest: And I think a lot of the universities are actually starting to see what you're talking about as far as, and I agree with you, not every person needs to have a college degree. I mean this master's degrees has been the biggest pain in my butt that I've ever dealt with and I questioned a lot of time whether it was really necessary. I was looking through a brochure for a separate department in the university from mine that offered certifications in certain things. I remember seeing paralegal in there and there were a few others. They are seeing that sometimes you do just need a certification to do something like a plumber or a paralegal. Now they're trying to get themselves into that market as well it seems.

Jacobs: We were seeing it here in Knoxville. The University of Tennessee is located here and we're seeing that their construction science people are actually starting to partner with the two-year colleges and encouraging high school kids to look at the trades. They can't people into their master's degree programs in construction sciences because no one's getting in the trades and that's actually hurting them. So, it does resonate throughout the entire system.

Fiest: One other question. I was looking at the LPs website and they were saying that there was something like a hundred and seventy-ish Libertarians at some level holding office in the United States, but they're all very local kind of level things like utility board's school boards. It's that reflective in your area in Tennessee. Have you seen that?

Jacobs: I can't speak to that. What I can say is there are a lot of Republicans who come up to me and these are elected officials who come up to me, you know, "Hey. I'm just like, you know." So there I think the Republican party here in Tennessee is much more liberty oriented than it might be in other places.

Fiest: Do you see any correlation between what is a Republican is like in your area..

Jacobs: Yes

Fiest: ...versus what you'd see in Washington DC? Big government people?

Jacobs: Yes, I do. The outgoing the congressman from our area who just retired, Jimmy Duncan, was very much a small government conservative. My predecessor who is now a congressperson, who took Congressman Duncan's place, he just voted against the budget, you know, which public and budget. He was against it because of all of the waste in it. So, you do see that here. I think the Republican Party here is a little different. It's not the what we see in some other places, you know? As far as just you know the big government Republicans. They're not here. They are the small government people. And you the governor of Tennessee, I'm extremely excited because that's exactly where he's at. I think here again can't really speak that much to the rest of the country. But just from what I see going on. I think that our people here are much more liberty oriented than they might be in other places, which is a good thing of course.



Fiest: Is this what made you want to run for mayor? You see all these people around you that that agreed with you and you want to be a part of that.

Jacobs: Well, I figured I could win because Tim Burchett, who was my predecessor, he was extremely popular. And we're very much of the same mind on things. So for that reason I was like, I could probably win. If I were to look at other places around the country there's no way I can win because people think that this stuff that I talk about is crazy. But here people like the message of small government.

Fiest: That's great. That's awesome. Because I can tell you we are not getting that here in here in El Paso at all. I'm almost positive I'm going to be out of here after graduation because I cannot deal. Earlier in the conversation you mentioned, "If I was running for congress...." Is that something you're considering?

Jacobs: No.

Fiest: Okay. Well you threw it out there. So I just had to ask.

Jacobs: No I'm not. Well first of all, you should never use anything as a stepping stone. Being mayor is a very important job. And part of the reason I ran for mayor to is because you can actually do things and you can actually have a huge influence in your community. You can't do that as a congressperson. It's simply impossible. You're one of 435 people if you're in the House. You're 1% If you're in the Senate. The other thing is I think that a lot can be accomplished at the state and local levels. We all look at Washington because they're all celebrities. That's what dominates the news. But state and local, you know, there's a lot of things that can be done for the positive, and unfortunately for the negative sometimes. So, I'm not one of those people that looks and says, "Oh gosh, higher office." you know, it doesn't mean anything to me. You can accomplish things even if you're on the school board or even if you're on the utility district, there's some stuff that you can actually do that can have a positive impact in your community.

Fiest: I agree. One of the things that, aside from Republicans and Libertarians and all that. The one thing that really surprised me when I heard that you were running for office, and I guess I would preface my question by saying that...I remember when you said, and obviously this was a long time ago, when you said that you likened the political process to looking into a sewer.

Jacobs: Yep.

Fiest: When Melinda comes to me and says, "Glenn is running for mayor..." I came out with egg on my face, because I told everyone, "Glenn's never gonna run for office, because he said this..." So I'm kind of curious as to what changed your mind.

Jacobs: Because you can stand outside and criticize all day long and you're not going to change anything.

Fiest: There you go. Okay

Jacobs: I had a conversation with a friend of mine and I was done with politics because some of the things that I'd seen. And what's that really going to accomplish, you know? I mean, if you're done with politics you almost have to become apolitical, you know and just wash my hands of it you can't do that. You know, if you're someone like me. And I was thinking "Man, you just want to do this or that." But, that's the person I am. I do care about this stuff and I felt that standing on the outside, again, you can criticize, and no one's going to listen to you frankly. But if you if you get into the game, you can you can change the score. Whereas if you're a spectator you can't.

Fiest: Why just stand around and complain when you can do something and make it right?

Jacobs: Right, right and people idealistically think, "We need to snap his fingers make something happen." And you can't. So, it is a challenging process because you see a lot of good people that get into politics and they either just burn our out or they get corrupted. So, you have to be very cognizant of that and realize that every decision you make, and everything you do, you have to be introspective and make sure that you're doing what you think is the right thing. And it's going to be hard because there's a lot of gray. Not everything is black and white all the time. You have to make the decision for the right reasons and that's it. Even at a local level, and this may sound weird coming from me, but there are really great people in the county government. I mean they really are. And there are people that are very, very conscientious and they work very hard. Life is the Pareto Principle. You know? It's 20% of people cause 80% of the problems and 20% of people get 80% of the results. I'd say it's more like 90/10. But I see the bad stuff and I'm going, "Man, we're dealing with money here..." But it's millions of dollars, not trillions like they are at a federal level. And people have certain ways and do things and I scratch my head because there's nothing in it for them other than it's an ego thing. I can't imagine what it's like in Washington DC, you know? And how utterly messed up it must be. And you really do have to have really good people there because otherwise it would be very bad.

Fiest: I'd imagine you were probably going to be held much more accountable for your actions as a mayor then you would be as a senator, because you have to face your constituents every day. You live amongst them.

Jacobs: That's the great thing about this position. You're in a position where you can get things done, where you can influence policy and you can actually talk to people. And frankly I've had a lot of fun. I really have. And this has been the funnest thing I've ever done in my entire life. You know me and you wouldn't think that I'd say that but it is.

Fiest: I believe you. I'm sure you know the work that you did with the WWE was a lot of fun. I'm sure it was also very tiring especially writing all those checks to the to the IRS.

Jacobs: This is different but it's it is it's a lot of fun.

Fiest: When you were working as an independent contractor and you're cutting all those checks to the IRS directly for your own taxes, is that what created kind of that person that just wanted to stand by and criticize? Were you just angry?

Jacobs: No. What did it to me was in 2012 when I was a big supporter of Ron Paul, he was basically shut out of the Republican National Convention, and very unfairly. Everybody knew he



wasn't going to win anyway, you had people who were much less influential than he was who weren't going to get any traction, on how the media treating them as well. If he came in second in a straw poll they would say so-and-so came in first and this guy did third. They would never talk about Dr. Paul. Or if he won they would question the validity of the straw poll. The system treated him so unfairly and the people that support him. All you want is a fair shake. At least it let him do a speech at the convention and at least let his delegates into to the convention, which they didn't allow to happen. I thought that was terrible. But it backfired because eventually it got me motivated to run for office.

Fiest: He was raising the kind of money and he still had a hard time getting a minimum amount of respect from the media.

Jacobs: Yes. Yes. And that's not America. I don't I don't agree with Bernie Sanders, but I think what the Democrat Party did to him was terrible. They broke the rules and that's not how this thing is supposed to work. You set out certain rules and you're supposed to abide by those. Frankly, that's what happened with him, and with all the other stuff now we've kind of forgotten about. That was wrong and I think I that's why we have a lot of young people on the on the liberal side have really swung much more to the left. Because they don't trust the establishment Democrats anymore because of what happened Bernie. That stuff does all come around in the end. It just takes a while but it does.

Fiest: I think it's also about honesty. If you guys really want to run Hillary, for whatever reason, just say so. People poured all kinds of money into Bernie Sanders when he never stood a chance anyway. He's a left-wing version of Ron Paul.

Jacobs: Yeah, he was he was. Now, I think the establish Democratic Party, I think that played into Hillary's defeat as well. Because people that maybe would have turned out otherwise just sat at home because they were disgusted.

Fiest: Right. Yeah. I think it's kind of reflective of the federal government. They're going to do whatever they want to do. Whatever we think is relevant is unimportant. And that's one reason I think ultimately mayor is probably better than Congressman because you're actually reflecting what your citizenry want and that becomes less important the higher up you go.

Jacobs: It does, unfortunately. I think you do become less representative. Do you know what the term with means in the parties? The whip is the person that tells everybody how they're supposed to vote. And it's called whip because they whip people into line and if you don't vote according to what the party higher up say, there are repercussions for that. In Congress the committee's is where it's at as far as power. That's true of any legislative body. It's my understanding that if you want to be on a certain committee you're expected to raise so much money for the party. That just shows you that at some point it becomes about the parties and not about the people, and that's unfortunate. No matter what party it is and that's my issue when we talk about the libertarian party. The libertarian party is certainly by no stretch of imagination immune from any of that. I mean in the end it's a political party as well.

Fiest: When I first became a Libertarian I was very hesitant to support the Libertarian Party for that reason. But at a higher government level, these people care about themselves and getting elected. That is the only thing that they care about. If you were to take that position not only would you be out of a job in, what, two years...they probably know how to show up right on your doorstep.

Jacobs: Yeah.

Fiest: And I would be horrified to hear that they carry Glenn off because he wasn't listening.

Jacobs: I don't think it's quite that bad.

Fiest: I first heard you ran and got elected, I started reading just to see how things are going for you and I've not read anything that indicated that there's any major problems with you. They're so good for you. I mean the most important thing is that you're listening to your constituents and that's that's what you should be doing. You're not worried about raising money for the Republican or libertarian Party. Do you think that there's no chance of a Libertarian party making it in your area? because you seem to be doing okay with Republic the Republican Party.

Jacobs: I think so. There is a there's a group here, the East Tennessee LP, and they do a great job. They have they have some young energetic leadership and they're doing a tremendous job. People like me who are liberty oriented, we can be Republicans here and we can work within the Republican party. In fact, I would like to see those walls drop. Some of these folks that are, "Well, we're libertarians!" Well so am I so, so are some of these people in the State House. You guys are spinning your wheels and wasting money. Why don't you just come with us and instead of instead of trying to get ballot access you can actually influence policy. But I don't think that's going to happen in our area because you know, yeah, we have a pretty strong liberty Republican party here.

Fiest: Is there any infighting amongst the Republicans as far as specific social issues?

Jacobs: Yeah. I mean yes, there is. And I think unfortunately it's always going to be the case. In Tennessee, we have we have a strong supermajority in the Republican party, but the demographics are not in our favor. Just you look a little bit at the 2016 presidential election...how young people voted and that vote is getting bigger and bigger more numerous. They voted Democrat, a lot of them, and that's problematic and they're not interested in social issues. I think the I think the fiscal issues resonate with everybody. The low taxes, more money in your pocket, good jobs. That resonates with everybody. It's just one of those deals. Everybody kind of gets it. It's actual tolerance and what I mean by tolerance is, "I don't care what you do. Just don't push it on me." And I think more of the old Republicans need to understand that. It's not about saying, "You can do whatever you want." It's about saying that the government shouldn't be regulating these things. Because that's what's going to happen. The government can turn the other way and say, "Well that's fine. You have to do it now." And I think a lot of younger people understand that. I wouldn't say it's huge here because most people are generally socially conservative. I am in my own my own personal life. But I don't think that's as big as an issue in my area. We're a little more rural here. But when we get in the urban areas it is yeah.

Fiest: And that's when you say "in your area" You're talking about in Knoxville.

Jacobs: Yeah. Yeah, Knoxville. Knox County. Throughout the state of Tennessee the urban centers look like doughnuts. The urban centers blue and then the outside's red and that's all across the state. The problem is that, through the perspective of the Republican Party, those blue centers are growing. The red outsides are shrinking. The center of the donuts getting bigger and that's what's problematic and that's even true in Knox County.

Fiest; So, how are you as a leader of the Republican party in your area dealing with this?

Jacobs: If we're going to grow the Republican party, you have to grow it among young people. You have to go among non-traditional groups and it all goes back to what is government's proper role in society. Is it to regulate those things? I don't believe that it is. And if you're a small government conservative, you shouldn't believe that it is either. When I look at the general assembly, which is our legislature, there's some people over there that that believe that as well. and you know, so Tennessee is not overall. Sometimes, in the rest of the country, we get this reputation of being a hardcore conservative, social conservative area. It's really not. For the most part, I think people here are of the live-and-let-live mindset. Overall Jackie, it's gonna be really hard for any third party to break through. The Democrats or Republicans write the laws and that makes it very difficult. Look at the media. It's somewhat controlled by the parties as well. Any ideas that aren't mainstream, that most people don't agree with it, at one point most people didn't agree that the Earth was round. What does that have to do with anything? And then now of course with the media, it's so much the Republicans and Democrats. So much tribalism and fighting, people are driven into those camps almost out of, "I'm not a huge Republican supporter and the Democrats are going to overrun me." We have 20 trillion dollars in debt, at some point none of that is sustainable. Also, we look at the states. What happens when California goes begging the federal government for a trillion-dollar bailout because their pension system is bankrupt. In Tennessee we have no debt at all at a state level and we're going to just sit there and go, "Okay. Yeah, give them a trillion dollars...it's going to come out of our pocket." I think over the next couple decades there's going to be some real regional friction because of things like that. I mean, New York with Cortez. I mean people down here just don't like her and you can just see it more and more. It's almost like back in right before the Civil War where you're seeing this real strong regional strife. So my worry is you know, who picks it up? I also I think it's important, you know for people like Rand Paul to be there because he's a person that's saying, "These things are problems." I don't see that a third party is going to break through for a long, long, long time. I might be wrong again. You go back to the 1800s the Republican Party replaced the Whigs and no one saw that coming, you knows?

Fiest: It sounds like what you've been able to do, as it relates to the Republican party, is take it and use it. There's obviously some things between, libertarians and Republicans, that we agree on. Like fiscal issues and things like that. But you're also clearly saying there are some social issues that some Republicans need to work on. So it's sounding like you're trying to take what is there, and turn it into what you want to accomplish, which is freedom for those who want the fiscal freedom and social freedom to do whatever they're doing as long as they're not harming anyone else. And as far as my view, this is, as a libertarian, exactly what I'm trying to accomplish. So good for you.

Jacobs: Well, thanks. That's the problem. Instead of, as a country, instead of talking about the things that unite us, we start with what divides us. I look at Reagan and I'm like, "There it is." And, at some point, the Republican party moved move pretty far away from that. And there are people here who are Reagan Republicans and that's a place that we definitely share. If you're going to say I'm a neocon well, you know, not so much. I just think overall, when I look at the libertarian party, just start with what we agree on and once you build that rapport, then we can start talking about some other things, in good faith, and not feel like we're attacking or being attacked.

Ken Moellman

Fiest: Please tell me about yourself, how did you find libertarianism and what prompted you to run for office.

Moellman: When I was in high school I was in debate and I was interested in politics. We had a debate viewing party in 1992 and it was the debate that they let Perot into. We agreed that Bush had one on issues, that Clinton was awful because he was a deer in the headlights and Perot had won the popular side, people that weren't in to debate issues. Perot was definitely the salesman of the bunch. We fast forward to 1996 and we've kind of got a rerun. We've got Perot again, we've Clinton again and Bob Dole. and I really wanted to vote for Perot. People around me were saying, "Oh he can't win. You're just throwing your vote away. We need to stop Clinton." blah blah blah

Fiest: The same story you hear now, unfortunately.

Moellman: What's that?

Fiest: The same things we here now.

Moellman: ...and that's exactly correct. This is not a new song. The chorus is exactly the same every four years. So, I ended up voting for Dole and in Kentucky we had the big electronic machines that look like they were straight out of Star Wars. That giant glowing button. And as soon as I hit the big green glowing vote button, which commits your vote, I regretted it. I decided at that point I was no longer going to vote for someone just because someone told me I needed to. That then came along with the Republicans backing off on the Contract with America. The Contract with America was the idea that they were going to push more the responsibilities back down from the federal government back to the States. They gave us speed limits back, which I certainly do appreciate that we're allowed to do more than 55 miles an hour. Which is nice. Every day I appreciate that but there's a lot more that they had promised and didn't deliver on. So in 1998 a friend of mine suggested that I check out the Libertarian Party. So I did, liked what I saw, I re-registered to vote because in Kentucky we have voter registration by party. I re-registered in 1998 somewhere. I forget exactly when. Harry Brown actually came to Kentucky in 1999 to gear up for his 2000 campaign. At that point I was hooked. I took a break from politics generally in early 2001 because Harry got slaughtered in 2000. And like many activists that come and go, you know, you get under this mistaken impression that all well my guys going to have a real shot and when they don't it's a bit heartbreaking, and people leave. That is one key reason for our revolving door of people. Then of course 9/11 happened, all that's going on and around 2004 I kind of woke back up from the post 9/11 stuff. In 2005 the Kelo decision happens. Are you familiar with the Kelo decision in the Supreme Court?

Fiest: No.

Moellman: There's a really good movie about it. It's a Little Pink House. Basically the city of New London, Connecticut decided that they were going to seize people's homes by eminent domain and give the property to a developer. They justified it using eminent domain saying,

“Well, it'll increase the tax base.” This went all the way to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court sided with the city saying, “Well if it increases the tax base, then the city can take your house.” That made me very angry and got me very much back involved. There's a group here in Kentucky called the Bluegrass Institute for Public Policy Solutions or BIPPS for short. They were a conservative think-tank type group. They brought Ron Paul in to speak about the Kelo decision. My father got invited had no idea what was going on. I saw the invitation. He's like you want it? I'm like, “Yea, I want it.” I went to that, met some of the people from the Libertarian Party of Kentucky at that event. Then in February of 2006 there was an email from the state chair that said, “Who wants to run for Congress?” Just a mass, blast email to everybody in the state of Kentucky that was a member and I'm like, “Okay.” Which, looking back on that, that is the worst way to do that. But I said okay and myself and another person were the only two from the 4th congressional district, which runs from Louisville along the river up to Cincinnati area and then back down towards Ashland. It's kind of this big long strip that runs along the north side of the state. This guy and myself were the only two that responded, we went to the meeting and long story short, he became the candidate. I became a campaign manager and after that figured out there was no infrastructure to support a candidate. And so that's when I became chair and that's my history with the party. I've done a lot of different things, but I've been very focused on growing the infrastructure trying to build the party so that our candidates aren't left to twist in the wind. I think that's an imperative of ours to grow the infrastructure and have a base of support that when someone does step up, someone credible, that poor guy isn't left like, “Well, I have exactly zero contacts in every county, zero mechanisms to raise money and zero contacts to raise money and zero everything.” We did really well considering we spent \$750 on that campaign total.

Fiest: Wow....

Moellman: Yep in real dollars. And, we got 4.91 percent of the vote. The other two, we had the incumbent and we have the immediate previous incumbent. So as a Democrat versus Republican the Democrat had stepped down after doing three terms, then his replacement got shellacked by the Republican. I mean just destroyed.

Fiest; Well, that makes sense. I'm from Ohio. I can't see a Democrat doing the real well in that area.

Moellman: No. Well, in Kentucky this is the end of Dixiecrat era, right. So the end of the 90s beginning of the 2000s, there were still a lot of Dixiecrats out about in the South and the former incumbent was actually a Democrat. The current incumbent was a Republican ideologically they were almost identical. That's the reason it got really personal because there wasn't really any policy difference. They both supported going into Iraq, they both supported the war continuing they both. It was all the same stuff. This story is great. There were three debates. We were only included in one. They really didn't know how to handle us at all, which is hilarious, and we had done a ton of research. We looked at probably a decade or more worth of debates. It happened in the fourth district, prepping for all the types of questions we might get asked and the one that we were really happy with the answer was the one about the Iraq War. And the Republicans we're trying to say stay the course, and they were accusing the Democrats of cut and run and all that going on. And Brian was asked the question, “What would you do?” and he said, “Look I was



against the war. I wouldn't have gone. I wouldn't have voted to go in but were there now, so we need to define what a win is, help the military achieve that win and bring the troops home.” And they went through all the others and they went back around again, and he said, “So again, there's no definition of what a win even is. We have no mission and if there's no mission, then it's like going cross on a cross-country trip to Vegas with 435 mother-in-law's in the back seat.” Which everybody laughed and he's like, “We genuinely need to you know, define what a win is and get out of the military's way, let them win and bring the troops home.” This was by far our best line probably in the entire debate. The day after the election on the local conservative radio that Congressman was on and literally quoted almost verbatim what Brian said.

Fiest: Are you serious?

Moellman: “Well, we need to define what a victory is, get the politicians out of the way, and let the military win and bring the troops home.”

Fiest: Oh my God, that's horrible. I mean, I believe you but that's horrible.

Moellman: Actually, it would have been an awesome thing if we had 434 other guys stay in the same thing. The downside of running as a libertarian is your chances of winning are pretty slim, especially at anything above a county level. We have some people elected around the country. We have four or five of them in Kentucky. Partisan elected Libertarians at the county level. But when you're running for US Congress you can't win. The Democrat and Republican combined in that race spent ten million dollars. We spent \$750 bucks. That's what we have. We had we had no support, we had no big donors. Now we have some larger donors. We have a base network of people to reach out to campaigns that have a shot. You've got really good campaign managers out there. Boomer Shannon is amazing. I did work with him with the Hewitt campaign. There are some actual resources out there and we're more connected than we've ever been. But, we're still not at a level where we're going to raise ten million dollars and our big donors aren't dumb enough to dump a million dollars into a race that can't win. That said there are times when big donors will put decent sized money into those races because they think it'll help get the message out. Politics is chaos right now make no mistake. So we probably have a better chance than ever because things are so crazy. But the reality is we're not going to be raising two billion dollars, but we still have an effect. We still have good things happening at the local level where people do get elected. I was just talking to a guy last night from Arizona. He was on the local fire board and he was keeping their taxes low. Then the fire board organized a coup as it were and he didn't win re-election. Since he left they've been jacking up taxes and spending money like a drunken sailor. That's why Libertarians need to win. Because it only takes one or two of us on something like a fire board to say, “Whoa. Do we need this brand-new truck? Can we afford ten percent pay increases for everybody? No, we can't.” So it just takes that one voice often, but it is hard to be that one voice.” Talk to some of the elected libertarians and it's like, “I lose every vote six to one.” I think you know my answer to that is well, how many bad votes do you prevent by raising your hand and saying, “Stop. It's wasteful.”

Fiest: Let me ask you this: I went on the website of the LP and it does mention that there are 177 libertarians elected to local level, but as you said, we have a really hard time anything above that. Why is that? Everyone likes us close but no one likes us in Washington.

Moellman: Well, there's a handful of reasons for that. In the local election, you have the ability to overcome the financial disparity. I can go out and organize a team and knock on 20,000 doors in a campaign. I cannot organize a campaign that can go out and reach 750,000 people on a volunteer basis. The order of magnitude is enormous and you basically have to have in, a U.S. congressional race, you would have to have a local group in every single county who then could knock on all the doors in their county. That's been my goal since that race in 2006. To build an organization that builds those county parties that will go out and knock doors for our candidates in every county. Also keeping track of what events are going on. Another big issue you run for congress, especially where I'm at with you, which is a suburban / urban district, I have no idea what's going on on the western side or the eastern side of my own congressional district. It's an hour and a half drive each way. I don't know what's going on over there. How would I know? I don't live there. It's a different media market. I have no idea what's going on. That was kind of the premise behind, you know, trying to build out the infrastructure. Some folks at the national level adopted some of our new initiatives and projects that are focused on building out the local parties. Because that's where we know we can win. Once we get past the local level. This is where things and in some ways its why Jeff Hewitt's race is so special. Hewitt was a big race. Now, it was not a partisan race. That does change the formula a little bit. But most of the time libertarians when they run for local office and win, they try to take that step up and they lose. Even with that base of support. Now part of that is because we don't have the big support. We don't have the automatic, "Well, my daddy was a Republican, my granddaddy, was a Republican, my great granddaddy was a Republican, so I vote Republican." Even though I don't know what that means, we don't have that base of support really. I will tell you we do have some second now third generation libertarians that are of that mindset, but libertarians generally are a little smarter than that. They don't blindly trust anything. That's a big part of what we are. As a result, our candidates have to work harder even to get our own base. That is a legitimate issue from a political standpoint. You have to sell your own people first. Whereas the Democrats and Republicans don't care. It can be Hitler, but at least it's not a Democrat, right? It could be Stalin, but at least it's not a Republican. They don't care right and that's literally were the old parties have gotten to. It's 100% team politics now.

Fiest: I agree. This has gotten to a point where it's not that we're voting for anyone anymore, we're voting against somebody now.

Moellman: Correct.

Fiest: That's what got me into libertarianism specifically as it relates to the elections. You're not voting for a principle. You're not putting any part of yourself out there. You're just trying to keep someone else out of office. How do we continue to function like that? And how long can we function like that?

Moellman: It will not last long because basically a big motivating factor of this is voting out of fear, right? It's the vote for Republicans because they're going to take away this. You can't vote for Democrats because they're going to take away that. When we get to a point where it's all voting out of 100% fear. Make no mistake. They do that because it's extremely powerful. I mean, the survival Instinct is a primal instinct. The Democrats say Trump is Hitler, he's not. He's just Trump. When you go to Pure populism based in fear and anger, you are setting the stage for that



type of leadership. That's how Hitler rose to power, fear and anger. That's where we're heading. I personally believe the way this gets stopped now is with instant runoff voting or ranked choice voting. It's the same basic thing. Being able to vote for one person as your number one choice, your second and whatnot. I just finished managing a campaign in Ohio for governor. Infuriatingly, the number of emails that came in the day before and on election day saying, "I wanted to vote for your guy, but I had a vote for X to stop Y." First of all, why are you sending this email? You're a jerk. You're trying to ease your conscience from doing what you know is right. And sending me, "Sorry I'm doing the wrong thing letter." All that doesn't make me want to punch you, but cool. And you know, I think we saw that in a lot of the electoral results this year. I mean our results were down in 2018 from where they've been. We've been growing. I've been involved since 2006. I went back and studied things going back even further because as a political person you've got to know what's going on and what leads to everything. We got bad results in 2018 and I'm a little bit worried that maybe it's just going to be this way for a little bit. People are scared, they're being told we need to vote against X and the only way to break that cycle I think is to put instant runoff in which lets you vote for your favorite first, and then you could vote against whoever second or third. However, you want to do it. That way you can still keep that, "Oh, well, I have to vote against X," but you have the opportunity to vote for someone first. Not to say it's perfect. Not to say it's a silver bullet. It is not in any way shape or form. People sometimes, "We'll put instant runoff and Libertarians will win." That's just as delusional as saying that we're going to win now. All it does is take the lesser of two evils thing away and frees people up to say, "I really like what this person over here has to say, but I'm also still scared of that other person over here. I'm going to put my favorite is number one. I'm going to put the guy that stopping the other person at number two. I'm not going to vote for any others." That is in my mind one piece of the puzzle.

Fiest: Do you think we should get rid of the Electoral College go to a popular vote?

Moellman: I do not, actually. I say that as a person who lives in a tiny little state that has a voice. I think the problem with the Electoral College goes back to what happened in 1912 when they capped the US House of Representatives. There was approximately 1 rep for every hundred thousand people. Prior to that, when the country first started, there was about one rep for every 33,000 people, with an asterisk because of the Three-Fifths clause. Congress was becoming a little less representative overtime, but it wasn't terrible. From 1912 when we had approximately a hundred thousand people per U.S. congressman. They changed it and kept the US House at 435 people. We're now at about 725,000 to 750,000 thousand people per U.S. rep, which means that approximately 7.5 times less represented than we were then. I think you keep the Electoral College, you make the House actually representative again, and it takes care of almost all of the issues. Okay, California has 54 times the representation that what is the smallest state? Wyoming has 577,737 people. If you make it so that every 577,737 get a U.S. rep, that means Wyoming gets one rep that is actual complete. That would mean that California is going to get 75-ish U.S. Reps based on that map. That would be equal because that's by population and then they get two more for their Senators. Wyoming we get two more for their Senators. This is where the national popular vote people complain. But, the Senate was always supposed to be a republican form, not a democratic form. The 17th Amendment shot part of that away. But I think that helps equalize everything. The other thing that that does: Instead of me having to reach 725,000 people, now I only have to reach 577,000 people. That's still a lot, but it makes the race more attainable by

regular people. That makes sense because a big part of this is the size of the race. So, that's the big part of it, too. If the races are smaller, they're more attainable by regular People, right? That's where this is taking us full circle back to where I was trying to go. The smaller the race, the more reasonable it is for a regular person to knock on every door, look every voter in the eye, shake every voters hand, tell them what they're about what they want to do. Why their plan is better. That equalizes the field from big-money races. As long as you're able to take that time knock the doors and look voters in the eye, it really does equalize races where you might be getting out spent five to one. And, depending on the message, up to 10 to 1. If you're getting blown up by ten to one, you're done. If you're getting blown out by five to one, you better have a really good message monetarily. But you can do that. You can shake people's hands, have a good message. Also, it doesn't hurt if you've already been doing stuff in the community. That's another problem with libertarians generally. We like to leave people alone, which means we hide in our homes and don't do a lot in the community. Having a reputation in the community helps. That's what the Bethany Baldes' advantage was. She almost won a state house race in Wyoming in the past year. That's why we're able to do stuff at the local level because you can actually reach someone, shake their hand, look him in the eye tell them what you're about. People have a pretty good feel if people are telling the truth or not, and most of our people are genuine. At the local level we can have success.

Fiest: Tell me a little bit about what happened when you almost got knocked out of your race.

Moellman: In Kentucky Democrats and Republicans need two signatures. Right now, because we have ballot access, we only need two signatures per race. At the time I ran we needed five thousand signatures to run per candidate. There is no party process in Kentucky. I was the first executive branch candidate in Kentucky for the LP, I got 5,000 signatures minimum. The number of signatures I had was eight thousand two hundred and change. I forget what it was. The way this really works: Any good candidate can get about 1,000 raw signatures themselves. People, friends, family, neighbors anybody you run into that likes you. Most of our candidates at myself included have a full-time job and we're trying to run a campaign, and we're trying to do all this stuff. We don't have the time to get the signatures. What you end up doing is you hire professional signature gatherers. We typically try to use actual libertarians to do that from the libertarian side. I paid approximately \$14,500 for signatures in that race. I was running for State Treasurer on the platform of getting rid of the office because it's useless It is. The state treasurer's office had a salary at the time of \$108,000 dollars a year, had five constitutional duties total, one of which was getting elected. It's signing checks and an annual report or quarterly report or something like that with the Secretary of State's office. Minor duties. Little things and they get paid \$108,000 a year, their assistant gets \$10,000 a year, the executive director gets \$90-something thousand dollars a year, the main manager gets \$65,000 a year and then it was a staff like seven people. And it was just top-heavy and silly and like get rid of this office. That was my campaign. My campaign slogan was, "Update. Automate. Eliminate". Update the procedures, automate everything and get rid of the office, split the duties. I had a whole plan. The Republicans had run on this basic platform, but without the detail four years prior. The Democrats had run on that platform about 12 years prior. Both sides have run to get rid of this dumb office. The Republicans felt like I was hurting them more than the Democrat. The Democrat was the incumbent, the Republican was a challenger and I was a challenge. So, the Republican women's group down in Lexington decided they were going to sue me off the ballot.

They were going to challenge my signatures. That's our process in Kentucky, we are a challenge state. The Secretary of State does with known as a facial check, which is just states have month, day, year. There's a name signature and the signature box and every address has a street address, city, state and zip. That's it. They don't do any validation beyond that. They decide to sue, they goof it because part of the suit has to be, "What signatures are you challenging?" They didn't do that. They sued right before the debates about to happen that I'm actually included in and they're leaning on the organizer to kick me out of the debate based on their lawsuit. I'm still on the ballot and on Friday. They dropped the lawsuit Monday morning and it was basically just they didn't do it. And I was serious I wasn't going to stop campaigning I don't care.

Fiest: How do you hear about that happening? Where there are libertarians being challenged for their signatures or for some other reason?

Moellman: Absolutely. We've built some software to help us do validation. We now don't guess. In the past, we'd do random sampling. We'd guess that two thirds are valid because that's typical. There was a lot of guesswork involved. We now leverage technology. This goes back to my infrastructure stuff. One of the things we've got is a program that we call "The Validator" that helps us validate signatures in a very quick manner. Essentially you just type in the house number and part of the street name. It either matches or it doesn't. You can blow through signatures very quickly. It's a weird thing, but if you live at 1444 Main Street. There's not going to be a lot of 1444 Main Streets in your entire state. As long as you have 1444 Main Street, it shows me every single one of them. I can type in 1444 Main, it'll show me everything that matches 1444 Main throughout the whole state. Even on ones where we don't have a printed name just a crazy signature. It's like, "Well I can make out that's a 'C'". I can make out that's an 'H'. Do any of these match?" So, we're able to do validation at a very rapid pace, we're able to do it very well and now we're doing somewhere in the neighborhood of 80 percent to a 100 percent validation. The margin of our error shrinks from less than a percent to zero as we get closer to a hundred percent validation and that's what we've had to do. It takes it's an immense amount of work. It's insane. In the Ohio petition drive, we use the same technology to put Ohio back on the ballot. I can't even tell you how many hours, it was thousands of hours spent validating. I mean overall is tens of thousands just validating signatures.

Fiest: What would cause a signature to be invalid besides just a mismatching an address?

Moellman: All these walls are different in different states. So, what's valid and what's not literally is different state to state. So much fun when you're trying to run a national party. In Ohio they applied a very strict standard. There have been a few other states that applied stricter standards but they typically gets struck down. All dates must have a month a day and the year. You got to have a year on there. Whatever month/day/year must have month/day/year. Then after month/day/year you have a signature and some states will actually try to make you match the actual signature that's on a voter registration card. Somebody might have registered to vote 25 years ago and your signature changes a little bit over time. You know, I'm Ken right? I might have sign my form, because I'm doing a legal form, Kenneth. That's not my signature, but let's say I did that for my legal form. I signed the petition Ken, some states kick you out on that even though that's your legal signature. It's s legally binding to sign things that way. One of the states had a middle initial rule where you had to have the middle initial. There's all these crazy rules in

all these states. In Kentucky, the one that got people the most is actually a fail in the form. The end of the form is city, then they use an ampersand and then state, so they're asking for city and state. Kentucky is not really known for its education level. Okay? People read that as City / State like city or state not city and zip code. So what you end up with is people that are volunteers helping get signatures and aren't watching very closely is a bunch of signatures that only have a city or only have a zip code. Then there's this thing we call "monkey see, monkey do" or "the waterfall effect" where once somebody screws it up everyone who signs the afterwards signs the exact same way as the person before. You end up with a sheet full of broken signatures because somebody didn't read city and zip. You end up with lots of weird issues like that. In the end, the reality is you shouldn't have to put all that paperwork. A petition is supposed to be about saying there are X number of people out here who think this guy, or this group, should have the right to be on the ballot. That's the legal premise behind it. Your signature is your mark. Everything else is about validating whether or not that signature is valid. So as long as enough information is given that says, "Yeah, that's city, that state, that house number, that street address." As long as I've got some combination that I can validate that yes, that is that person, that should be enough right? It shouldn't be anything other than that. And, of course, they always have the voter registration cards. They can always go back to for a signature sample. So, the extra stuff is all just nonsense. It's just extra busy work for no reason. In Kentucky, to do a petition, we have very limited initiative and referendum rights. But, if you want to do a petition to stop a tax increase, they make you sort the signatures by precinct. Each person has to sign on the one that's for their Precinct. Who knows what they're voting precinct it? I am big into politics. I don't know what my precinct number is. I know where I vote, but they have these combined precincts now with five or six different places that vote in the same place. I don't know which one is mine. I had to look at my voting record their precinct number. Nobody knows their precincts. Fiest: Is this the Republicans writing these? Are the Democrats writing these? Who is writing these?

Moellman: At the end of the day it's whoever's in power is writing these.

Fiest: So, in Kentucky, who would it be?

Moellman: In the past. It would have been Democrats and House Republicans. And a lot of times it's the same people that switch teams when it became the right time to switch teams. Kentucky has another disadvantage. We're one of the eight states that still has a stupid straight party ticket button. There are so many elections decided by straight ticket. In states like Kentucky the local strategy is significantly hampered because Come out and are like, "I'm just voting Republican. Stop the Democrats." And you end up with that but then it trickles all the way down to the bottom of the ballot. What does Donald Trump have to do with the county election? Nothing. Other than you're getting these Trump or anti-Trump votes at the top and straight ticket booths affect the bottom and so people just switch parties to basically say, "Okay. As long as I can get through the primer, I'm going to win because all the people here vote straight Republican," and it's a huge percentage. It's like 75 to 80 percent of people use the straight ticket button. So, you're already basically losing by not running as a D or R in states with straight party ticket and you're fighting an uphill battle even more so than normal.

Fiest: Going back to your signatures, how long does that take you to get?

Moellman: Oh my gosh. We started in the first weekend of February 2017 and we finished on July 30th, 2018.

Fiest: Oh, my goodness. It appears you're getting a headache just thinking about that.

Moellman: Yes, and all the times I drove to Columbus, Ohio to help. and you know, I mean I was driving it from the LMC side of things the National Party. And it was I can't remember we figured out how many times I drove up there. It was like 60 or something like that. I lived like two and a half hours each way. So, it's a five-hour round trip every time I go there. So that's 300 hours of my life. We're eating in the car driving to and from Columbus, then the validation. We'd be up there for 12 hours.

Fiest: Was this something you did on like Saturday/Sunday?

Moellman: Yeah. Most of the time. Every once in a while it would be during the week when I had nothing going on at work at all. I work in IT. The point is that it's a phenomenal effort and the Republicans tried to sue me off the ballot and its whatever side perceives you as a threat. And that's just a really crappy way. Right? I mean in reality everything should be equal. Everybody should have the same requirements. No party should get an advantage over another just because, "Oh well last time we did well, so this time we don't we get an even better running start this time." That doesn't even make any sense. It should be flip-flopped

Fiest: Do you know if your state LP or the national LP have done anything like brought any lawsuits or anything to try to deal with some of these levels?

Moellman: We have. The phrase you will want for your paper is the phrase, "modicum of support". Modicum of support is the legal standard that upholds all of these ballot access laws. The ideas that ballot access laws are legal because they prevent ballot crowding, ballot confusion and frivolous candidates. So, the courts use the word so that a candidate can be required to show that they have a modicum of support. The old parties, because they have a base of 40 or 50 percent of the population as a base, they have that modicum. We haven't proven that we have that modicum. So, in Arkansas, they just increase the number of signatures to be 3% of the number of votes for governor in the last election. So, with that ballot access drive, its going from literally a \$30,000 drive to \$110,000 drive based on fair market value of signatures. It's going from 10,000 signatures required minimum to 27,000 and that's already been thrown out by the court as excessive. So, it's just going to end up in a lawsuit. They've been told this they're going forward with it. I hope they sue them and get additional damages for being punitive. The point is that what's a modicum of support? In Kentucky, we don't have a party petition process, which is a problem in my mind because it basically treats anybody who's not a Democrat or Republican as an independent. And that is, by the way, in a not published State Court of Appeals ruling. Because if it was, it would have totally been appealable to the federal level. That's literally what they said is that in Kentucky, if you don't have ballot access you're treated as an independent. That's illegal under Supreme Court precedent.

Fiest: Are you going to court and pushing this? That it is unconstitutional?



Moellman: We can't because of the way it was done. We were very young and naive back then. That was 2008 or 10. I can't remember. I was State chair and I didn't know what was going on. I was trying to help, we didn't have any real legal help at the time. Kentucky is this tiny little state. When it comes to it, why does LP National care what's going on in Kentucky? We've never had anything spectacular happen here and not a lot of money comes out of here. We're not a rich state. So, you know, we're kind of left on our own. You know looking back if it were to happen again. Yeah, absolutely. I know how I would do it differently and I know how I would challenge it differently. But I think that the broader point is that the system because of that modicum of support thing, that's how things get rigged against us. The idea that the Democrats and Republicans have already shown that modicum. So, they don't have to reprove that. I think the real solution to a bunch of this is initiatives in states where they allow initiatives and lower the petitioning threshold to something quite reasonable.

Fiest: What do you think is fair like if you could set the way.

Moellman: Well in Kentucky for instance a statewide race, a thousand signatures is doable if you're not a wackadoo, right? If you're a wackadoo you're going to have trouble getting a thousand plus signatures. When I ran in 2011, I ran on the legitimate platform. I went out and talked to lots of groups for four months or so. I topped out at just shy of 1,100 signatures raw. And I think that's pretty fair honestly. If you do the math on that Kentucky has... Well our voter registrations all jacked up, so let's not use that. We will use the population, 4.4 million people. We have 3.3 million people registered to vote even though we only have 4.4 million people. There's no way we have 75% registered because more than 25% are kids. Your database might be jacked more voters than there are potential voters. I think they said we're at 110 percent registration now. The software will be helpful in the future.

Fiest: You'll at least have that to your advantage.

Moellman: The software helps us determine so we don't have to go so far over as far as what's valid. What's not right. When we know that we hit the threshold we know we hit 10 percent over the threshold we can stop. We don't have to keep going. "Oh, well, let's just get more just in case." We don't have to do that, which is good. I am trying to think but back.

Fiest: Yeah, I got you.

Moellman: The software doesn't actually help you get the signatures. It just helps when to stop. It'll actually help increase productivity, keep every track of everything. Basically, it's going to put us in a place where we'll be unchallengeable unless there's something like ridiculous. And it can always happen. They have made this process too hard for the Everyman to use. They've made this too difficult for regular people to do. I mean politics was never supposed to be about an elite class of people that get in there. The Senate was always supposed to be the statesman chosen by each state and that's fine. But the US House was supposed to be like the British House of Commons, right? Regular people. Our state legislators were supposed to be regular people. County governments are supposed to be regular people. We've seen, you know, both legislatively, both directly and indirectly, that our government has gotten further and further away from regular people. In some ways the people themselves have driven that. You look at the

way that the presidency is almost treated like royalty, and people accept that. But at the same time, you have these laws that they've tried to pass to give special protections to elected officials. When did you become a new class of person? I'm pretty sure you're supposed to be a regular person like me. You see the laws that that are keeping people off ballots and that's not just the signature stuff. Another interesting thing in Kentucky, we used to have lay judges until 1978. I could have run for judge. I'm not a lawyer, could have been a judge. Well, that did cause some problems, but it also meant that the people were in control of that branch of government. Now, because they made it that you have to be a bar licensed attorney. Well who controls that? The bar right? So, you have an entire branch of government now entirely controlled by one private group that has no responsibility, no accountability to the people.

Kat Murti

Fiest: Have you always followed libertarian principles? And if not, how did you discover it?

Murti: I think I've always been a libertarian but I obviously didn't always know what libertarianism was. I feel like a lot of my life was a series of expiry of finding out certain things where illegal. Consensual, voluntary things were illegal and then being shocked and upset that someone would settle law like that. I actually find out I was libertarian till I was 15 years old. I was on a message board online and we're actually debating marijuana legalization. I was in there and I was saying, "You know, of course, I think the drug war is terrible and you have a human right to decide what you want to consume and all of that but I'm a little bit worried about in a legalized Market how taxation and regulation is going to affect marijuana." So someone there who I think was actually from the Free State Project before they were in New Hampshire, because they sent me the village vote on which state we should be in after that. They like, "Hey. I think you're a Libertarian because of course like the person who wants to legalize cannabis was worried about taxation and regulation is probably a Libertarian." So they sent me the 4-way political quiz, I took it and, lo and behold, I was libertarian. Now, we'll say that I sort of started off a little bit more on the bottom left of the chart just left of the middle line. If you look at the known for way chart. I never like took any economics classes in school or anything, but after I read economics in one lesson and a bunch of other things like that, I ended up slowly moving to the right I think so. I'm actually pretty far into that bottom right corner right now.

Fiest: Okay. So how does feminism influence your entry into politics, social commentary and your libertarian philosophy?

Murti: Sort of the same way. I think I've always been a feminist. However, I had more words for that in a way that no one ever talked to me about libertarianism. I'd always kind of known about women's rights in history and the women's rights movement and heard stories from my family members and from other older women of their experiences in life and I've always sort of had these basic ideas that it would that there's something fundamentally wrong with people being held back or not being allowed to do things based upon their sex or gender and nothing else. I've always been a feminist in the same way that I've always been a Libertarian and I think that you're right A lot of people have the tendency to think that these two things come into conflict, but they really don't. Both libertarianism and feminism are fundamentally about allowing individuals freeing individuals to pursue the life path that they think best without any sort of state constructions on pushing them one way or another and, if anything, feminism really is about freeing people from the collectivism of gender essentialism. This idea that who you are is fundamentally shaped by your sex and gender and that you can't be an individual outside of that. So I think feminism and libertarianism both very much individualist philosophies and part and parcel. Really, I'm not sure if I would say that libertarianism is that all feminists are necessary libertarian, but I think that if you are truly a Libertarian you would be a feminist as well.

Fiest: Some reject feminism is part of libertarianism due to what they consider to be a collectivist mindset. How do you respond to this?



Murti: I think its actually much more collectivist to believe that everyone because they're a man or because they're a woman or because they're trans or whatever it is that fundamentally shapes who they are and their capabilities and how they should be treated. I think that we're all individuals and we all have very different capabilities will have very different needs. We have different opinions and that's fundamentally anti collectivist and gender essentialism on the other hand is collectivism. It's just another form of collectivism just as racism or anything like that ends up being.

Fiest: According to the libertarian party, there are a hundred and seventy-seven Libertarians holding some kind of public office in the US but they're all local positions various school board's utility boards were very little at the state level and there are currently no Libertarians in Congress. Why do you think that is?

Murti: Well, I think fundamentally the system is set up to keep people in one of the two main ruling parties in power that's always sort of been the case. I know that there was that we've had a little break outs in history where members and other party might actually have some chance to get two main offices, but for the most part it's very difficult. Just think about it in terms of ballot access the LPs been extremely successful at getting a lot of ballot access in the last decade or two. But even then, you know, I live here in DC, the libertarian party isn't the ballot, but I still I am a registered libertarian a register libertarian and In as much as the candidates are people that I can stand behind. I do vote for the Libertarians just because I believe that they should have a right to run just as a Republican or a Democrat should so I definitely think that's a lot of it. I think that there's also a lot of scapegoating and this whole idea that a third party vote is a protest vote that I was always sort of drives me mad. Like, who do you think I would vote for if I wasn't voting for them? You know, I've had it for Gary Johnson in the last two presidential elections and you know people see him as a spoiler and it's like okay, but it's not as if I was looking at either of the main party candidates and I was like, well, you know, I would vote for this person they're close enough to me. But instead I'm going to vote for Gary Johnson because he's closer to me. That's not actually what happened in both cases. There is no main party candidate that spoke to me or that I could in good conscience say that I thought was a better candidate the other one now maybe on one issue or another one of them was more heinous or slightly more likable than the other one, but on that I really didn't see that. So I certainly I don't vote for third party as a protest vote. I vote for Democrats. I vote for Republicans. I vote for Libertarians. I vote for independence of those were people kind of across the board. I always has but the one thing that I'm always looking for is whoever most represents individual liberty, whoever I think is going to most further people's individual rights and Shrink government and help people thrive and be free. And honestly that's often times for me that's a Libertarian. I do think also, you know, the internet is in this great democratizer of information, and now that we're online and so many people more people are online they're also able to read about ideas like libertarianism more than ever and I think that's why it really is growing. I think it's growing and I think we're also in this point now where a lot of party alliances that happened largely around the 1980s, I think with both Democrats and the Republicans, are starting to come apart and the Old Guard isn't what it used to be the Republican party and the Democratic party and other one nether really represents the exact same constituencies that uses that they used to and they've certainly both parties are sort of getting ripped apart at the seams by competing interests, and I'm hopeful that some of that might arise for if not more support for a third party. Or it or even the libertarian party at the very least

some sort of restructuring where there are people who really care about human Liberty and thriving and allowing people to live as they want to live as much as possible without the constraints of government.

Fiest: Tell me a little bit more about the outreach you do as part of Feminist for Liberty and what you hope to accomplish with the organization.

Murti: Well, so Feminists for Liberty is an organization I co-founded along with Elizabeth Nolan Brown. So this would have been I think the beginning of 2016 it was right beginning of the primary season and really honestly at that point Trump wasn't in the picture at all, but we were looking at the prospect that Hillary Clinton would likely be a nominee and we're thinking about the fact that we are sort of expecting that we would end up being told you have to vote for her because she's a woman and that's what feminism is. Let me rephrase that: That's fundamentally and typical to the idea of feminism because it sort of pushes. It says all women are the same they all have the same needs. They have the same desires. They have the same thoughts. It collectivizes women in the same way that we've been trying to break away from for centuries. And so this idea that you would vote for someone based upon their sex as opposed to see it as opposed to giving them the opportunity to represent themselves based upon who they are as a person and their policy was certainly a big part of that. And it is worth mentioning Hillary Clinton did actually end up running a campaign that season where you could donate to her campaign to get your woman card, which is just collectivizing and patronizing. As if you can't be a woman if you don't support Hillary Clinton. The other thing that we were reacting to as well was what we'd seen sort of as a dangerous bent within the libertarian movement. There is a lot of people who are sort of pursuing this feminism is cancer, anti-feminist mindset. Which we of course, like as I mentioned before we believe that feminism and libertarianism are very much intertwined and share similar goals. I think those attitudes really came out of this sort of like need to own the libs which I think is very unhealthy and doesn't actually get us to a better policy or better society in any way. But also just the fact that at that point much of the alt-right unfortunately was sort of masquerading as Libertarians still and they were sort of pushing that narrative as well. And so I think that coupled with the fact that much of what you saw in the media of feminism was the sort of like left-wing Marxist collectivist feminism that's very much antithetical to our message, which is that the state has always been the biggest perpetrator of gender-based violence, gender-based discrimination, sex-based discrimination and free markets, limited government, freedom, privacy and all of these things actually do a lot more to smash the patriarchy than, you know, putting more power in the patriarchy in the form of government. So I think our goal is really to shape the message both in the feminist movement and the libertarian movement and the media at large and the national conversation. We really do try to join in conversations as we see them happening online, we go to a lot of events like for instance the Women's March. We've gone the last couple of years, we've dressed as suffragettes and one of these Libertarians sashes kind of like the suffragettes used to wear the suffragette ribbons and carried signs that say things like, "I'm with her." with a picture of Lady Liberty or our slogan, "Anti-statism, anti-sexism, pro markets, pro-choice" or various different things really, pro sex work. The state has no business with my gender all of those kinds of things. And so yeah meeting people where they are people have been generally pretty good they come up to us. They want to ask questions. They want to know what libertarian feminism is a lot of them, unfortunately. I've only been exposed to this sort of libertarianism often times sort of pseudo

libertarianism of online or on-campus or whatever that's really closer to the alt-right or just sort of internet trolling and so we're able to sort of like talk to them and suggest why libertarianism is actually better in the most cases, and pretty much I think all cases actually, for ensuring a more equal world and a happier world and I think a Freer world most fundamentally. We also we've been hosting a series of events periodically for folks currently just right here in Washington DC where we're headquartered periodically to come out and discuss issues around feminism and libertarianism and Liberty Movement. We appear on media a lot, both of us. And yes I certainly want to shape that conversation and long run we want to shape policy. We want to shape culture and we believe that we can smash steps and sexism and statism in one go.

Fiest: Why do you think there's so few women in libertarian politics? What do you think you can we can do to bring in more? How can feminists for Liberty help with this?

Murti: So what that's a few different questions, I think one there's just not that many women in politics period and that's changing and I think the same thing is changing with libertarian politics or libertarian policy and the sort of libertarian movement at large. You know, I've been actively libertarian for the past 15 years and I didn't really notice it so much when I was younger, but a lot of the time I was the only girl in the room or one of the only ones you know, but as I've gotten older I've noticed more and more people and especially interns and young professionals are increasingly women. So I do think that that is changing a lot. I do also think that there have been a lot of issues with sexism but I think it's worth mentioning that's not something that's unique to the libertarian movement. I like to find anywhere where I can actually help create Liberty. I'm pragmatic. I like to think and so, you know, I do work across a lot of different movements and all of them are plagued by sexism because fundamentally our culture . But there has been a sort of sexism and the sort of like feminism is cancer and I think an alignment with a lot of rape denial which I think is largely not from originally a negative standpoint. I mean, it's a much more about like support for due process and things like that, but you end up bringing in a lot of like raped denial elements and things like that. And unfortunately, I think and this is changing as libertarianism is becoming less of a fringe belief, but when you are a fringe belief you tend to attract a lot of people at The Fringe and that includes a lot of misogynists and people like that. So I think that all of that is also a huge problem, Certainly anytime that there's you know sexual harassment, rape, domestic abuse that kind of thing...when people feel threatened in a movement, they're not wanting to come out they don't want to do more stuff. I'm also involved with an organization called the Ladies of Liberty Alliance and that's an organization for libertarian women. And so just being involved with Lola, you know, I was never it was never a fan of sex segregated or gender segregated environments until I got involved with Lola. I know so many amazing women that I never knew before but also we talked about issues in a very different way. You know, we're all very passionate women were all kind of nerdy we tend to be like policy focused, politically minded and we're all Libertarians or at least liberty curious. But what we all have these many of us have these conversations all the time in those four to do from people when it's a group of women the kinds of issues and the kinds of topics and the ways that things are approach I think does change so that's even stuff like talking about things which really are fundamentally libertarian issues like birth freedom or things like that. Or many other ways in which things you think of as like women's issues... gender or sexuality these kinds of things, which libertarianism is actually pretty open to philosophically certainly and there's very clear libertarian positions on these they just fundamentally weren't discussed for a long time. And so I

think that that that was a huge part of it. So one of the things that Feminists for Liberty tries to do is you know, we do talk about traditionally feminist issues that a lot of Libertarians shy away from. We just talked about it in a way that is both very feminist and also very libertarian. And honestly, yeah, I am hopeful that this will attract more women to libertarian feminism but much more than that. I really hope that we'll be able to just create a world in which these problems won't be problems anymore because we have these libertarian feminist solutions to them basically. But yeah, I mean certainly that's not one of the key goals of Feminist for Liberty.

Although it is something that we've found that we think we do seem to attract a lot of young women. We are actually in all gender organization. We're for everyone of all genders we've certainly have a lot of men and a lot of trans people of all sorts of people who identify different ways come and get involved. I think that when we're discussing these issues and we're going to these places and we're not being hostile. We just we're very genuine very open and we just want to talk and discuss and we have a lot of reasons why we believe our positions are good feminist strong positions and people are open to that. I think yes, I think that's sort of where we're we're hopefully having some good impact.

Fiest: I've received conflicting answers from people I've interviewed about if the libertarian philosophy has a race issue. Do you think we have a race issue? And if so, how do you think we can bring in a more diverse group?

Murti: All right. I like it. These are some hard-hitting questions. I don't think libertarianism has a race issue. I think certain segments of the libertarian movement absolutely do. I think those are two very different things part of this is like I said just sort of like libertarianism is a fringe movement. It's also a very tolerant movement one that allows in people with various beliefs. For instance you have the right to believe whatever you want, right? You can have really heinous beliefs what a lot of people confuse that with is that they'll and start to believe those heinous beliefs are libertarian and they're not right like for instance on discrimination you a Libertarian would say yes, of course, you have the right to discriminate you have the right to refuse to work with someone or to refuse someone on your property or whatever it is for whatever reason whether that's their race, sexuality or anything like that, but those beliefs are actually not libertarian. They're very collectivist again as I explained before it reduces the person instead of being an individual to a member of a collective. So that's fundamentally, not libertarian. They're also certainly attack on many other libertarian values. So I think those two things get in conflated a lot and I think as a result of that there was a lot of confederate apologists and other unfortunate really unpleasant people who got mixed up in the movement and when that happens, you know, as a result people kind of don't want to get as involved in you know, it's more threatening that said, you know, I'm an Indian American I have so many friends in the Liberty Movement who are from different countries different cultural backgrounds. I actually think there is a lot more diversity than people think there is I think Some of that has to do with who gets spotlighted and I think a lot of that also has to do with a stereotype and how people maybe want to portray libertarianism. I do feel like The stereotype of libertarianism is a rich old white man, and I'm not saying that there aren't rich old white men Libertarians are certainly are plenty. That's majority of libertarians. I know whoever I don't think would fit into that category for one or more reasons. So again, I think also, you know as we're much more open as we talk about more issues as we understand a lot of nuances on this to that's helpful one person who I think is written about this

issue a lot that you might find interesting. I think he has some good views on it is Jonathan blanks. Yeah. So I think he might have some stuff that you would find interesting there.

Fiest: As it relates to prostitution in America, would you prefer to see legalization or decriminalization? Something that you believe should be left completely open to the free market or more regulated version like we see run in Nevada?

Murti: So let's start with the first question legalization or decriminalization. I would take either. However, I think decriminalization in the sex work model is certainly a better option at least at current. legalization with it often comes with onerous regulations business licenses things like that that end up hurting the most marginalized people the most and it creates a lot of similar prohibition problems that we see it with prohibition. Just honestly like I think you should listen to the people who are actually at the center of these issues and what they care about and pretty much every sex worker I've talked to who's really given a lot of time and thought to the policy says and over and over again the model that works best for us that makes us safest, makes us able to operate in the best way for us is decriminalization. And so that sounds to me like the right model. And yes, absolutely. I believe everything should be left open to a free market, much more than regulated version. I think that those regulated models are a lot better than a complete Black Market in a lot of ways. One: it does help keep certain people out of the criminal justice system. It can help with certain things. That said, I think that a free-market model with a lot more freedom as a lot better. It's also worth mentioning since this comes up a lot: sex trafficking is not sex work. Sex work is consensual. Sex trafficking is non-consensual. Most of what you hear about is sex trafficking a lot of times is actually sex work. It would be so much easier to find people who are actually sex trafficked, if sex work were decriminalized if it were legal. If it were just an everyday normal job. So, people could say, "Hey, look it looks like this person's being enslaved much in the same way that you know. It seems as if a restaurant is keeping people locked up in the back or something like that people are going to start to notice. It's a lot easier for people to get help certainly in legal or decriminalized system when people are attacked, when they're raped, things like that they actually have a shot to go out there and one demand legal remedy and to defend themselves without having to worry about the fact that they're going to be facing a crime for that in and of itself.



Norma Jean Almodovar

Fiest: So I just want to make sure that I'm having a proper understanding of the timeline going into my questions for you. So you were you were doing sex work and then you decided to run for office.

Almodovar: Wow. It was a little bit different than that.

Fiest: That's why I'm asking. So let me know how that happen for you.

Almodovar: Well what happened is that I got arrested and charged with one count of pandering when I try to help my friend from the LAPD... You know, I was on the LAPD, right?

Fiest; Yes.

Almodovar: I was facing a long time in prison for one count of pandering for trying to get my friend laid. What happened is in 85, I got convicted and I was sent to solitary confinement to be studied to see if I was dangerous to Society for writing this book about the LAPD, right? The reason I got arrested, the woman basically said on the stand, she said she did this to stop me from writing an exposé on the Los Angeles Police. So after spending 50 days in solitary confinement being studied, they determined I am dangerous to society. The judge said she's not dangerous to anyone and so he gave me probation. I served two years and seven months of probation with no violations. But in the meantime, what happened is a year after I was sentenced to probation the DA's office appealed my sentence on the grounds that my crime was worse than rape or robbery because I was commercially exploiting my law enforcement past to draw on scandalous escapades that undermine respect for the law. And so therefore the judge needed to re sentence me to the mandatory three to six year prison term on the first offense with no prior convictions. If I had committed rape, robbery, assault, mayhem and murder and didn't use a gun I could get probation. But if I try to get my unpleasant looking friend laid, it was mandatory three to six years. When I get out of prison, out of the solitary, and was on probation, I kept going on talk shows all the time. I mean, I was like everybody invited me on every radio show every, you know morning television show and I kept doing them because what they had done to me originally was wrong. And now of course, they're appealing my sentence and saying I have to go to prison for the three to six years anyway. My brother Neil who lives in Arizona now, he came out here at with his friend John Robertson. He was a long-time libertarian. My brother Neil was a Libertarian, said, "Hey maybe you should run for office. And I'm like, "Yeah, right." So JR said he would be my campaign manager if I would go for it. So I said, "Sure okay, let's let's do this." Because obviously, you know, I've got to say something about what they're doing to me. I lobbied at the California state libertarian convention and it was very interesting convention. Believe me because there are a lot of people who are like, "No. No, we can't have a prostitute run on our ticket.." Fortunately, there were some good people. Do you know who Jeff and Nancy Neal are?

Fiest: No.

Almodovar: There's in Austin. Jeff used to be the national chair of the LP. Anyway, Jeff and Nancy were my big supporters. And so I got the nomination for running for lieutenant governor, and I figured I would run for lieutenant governor because it was such a superfluous office that I you know, part of my campaign would be if I get elected. I'm going to eliminate this office because it's useless.

Fiest: Yeah.

Almodovar: We had a lot of really pithy quotes that that I came up with and Jr. came up with and we decided that we would do the campaign tongue and cheek, and yet very seriously. This was a serious issue and my issue wasn't just prostitution, but a lot of other issues that relate to self ownership and individual liberty. So that's how I ran for lieutenant governor of California. I got over a hundred thousand votes and unfortunately, it didn't keep me out of prison. I was resentenced to three years in state prison.

Fiest: Well, they object to you running because they put this label of "prostitute" on you and I wonder if they understand how many prostitutes are in politics to begin with in every possible definition of the word.

Almodovar: Oh gosh, I had so many quotes and I'm trying to see if I can remember. The difference between a prostitute and politician.

Fiest: I would say there's very few differences.

Almodovar: There are some things a prostitute won't do for money.

Fiest: Yeah. There you go. Very good. I like that. That's one of those pithy comments you came up with isn't it?

Almodovar: Yes. We had some really good tart quotes that like really hit the target.

Fiest: So, talk to me about the when you and I first encountered each other on Twitter, it was the cut the red tape advertisement. How did that come to be walk me through that?

Almodovar: Well, what happened is JR said, "You know, we've got to do something outrageous. And that will attract even more attention. Which the posters by the way did this you saw three posters, right?"

Fiest: I did.

Almodovar: So anyway, he had contacts. Do you know who Suze Randall is? She's a photographer that did stuff for Penthouse and Playboy. She's very well-known photographer of women. So anyway, she donated her time to do the photography for those posters.

Fiest: Oh. Very nice.

Almodovar: Yeah. She was fabulous. So, we hired this graphic artist to put the posters together and raised money to do 10,000 of each poster. We started with three different posters, you know, the first that came out was the victory, then cut the red tape and then whose life is It anyway. It got a lot of print media. Joan Rivers had me on, and she had my poster up there. and she says, "Look familiar?" So it got a lot of publicity but it gave me an opportunity to talk about the issues. It's like, "Okay, sex sells so let's get sex out there and then let's use it to like slam in with libertarian philosophy." And I mean it was very successful in that in that sense. I mean people were like, "Yeah, okay, we can understand that."

Fiest: Right. Sex does sell, right or wrong. But it was a great kind of a jumping point to get the attention of a lot of people whose attention you may not have been able to get otherwise. And she actually showed that photo in its entirety on television?

Almodovar: My poster? Absolutely. I can send you the link to the show. She was so great, too. I did six shows with Joan Rivers. She was just wonderful. You know, she used to work.

Fiest: Oh, wow, really?

Almodovar: She talks about that in her book and her talking. She's has a chapter where at the end of the chapter she tells her boyfriend she's going to start working as a prostitute because at that time she was broke she wasn't being successful yet. That's where she left it. But I had clients who saw her.

Fiest: Okay, well in all the no I don't I personally don't see anything wrong with that. I mean the fact that it is called the world's oldest profession is very much. I mean it's very much true because it works and we're only the supply, we're not the demand. Yet we always seem to be the ones who are taking hell for it. And I've had just about enough of that myself. That's one of that's one reason why I did want to talk to you because I wanted to put out someone there who has done this, but is also a human being and who is also used that to try to push a libertarian message of, as you said, self ownership, individual liberty and who's free to do whatever it is they want and does not need Donald Trump or anyone else telling them what to do?

Almodovar: No, we sure don't.

Fiest: So how do you continue to walk a Libertarian lifestyle since you were let out of prison?

Almodovar: Well, you know, I do a lot of writing and I lecture at colleges and universities, I do my research on the police and prostitution in politics. My book was finally published, the one that they confiscated. It took me ten years and over 250 rejections. What happened was that after the Rodney King beating it was clear that what I was saying about the LAPD was true. Then finally Simon & Schuster agreed. My literary agent sent it to an editor there and he said, "Okay sure." So they got published it and that was in 1993.

Fiest: You made a pretty big jump from your everyday person to running for Lieutenant Governor. Did you ever think maybe about running for something a little bit lower?



Almodovar: That was the first and only office and the reason we did it is because, I mean lieutenant governor what the fuck is it? Nothing. He's there in case the governor goes out of state, but you never hear about them doing anything. It's not like a vice president, well, it is. Whatever. It was something that I could run for and make fun of and say we don't need this much government.

Fiest: You're actually the second person to tell me, when it comes to interviews that I've done, that they ran for an office just to eliminate it.

Almodovar: We don't need to have this guy. You have other people in line in case the governor dies. It's not just the lieutenant governor. It's all the staff that works for the lieutenant governor. What do they do but waste taxpayer money

Fiest: And do nothing as a result. Any interest in any office Simpson or is that just it for you?

Almodovar: Oh, that was that it. It was very difficult to run in. It course after running for office I went to off to prison, then I was on Parole for a while. So and then by that time my book finally was published. I was a delegate to the Women's Conference in Beijing. I've just been doing so many things. My life is so full. Everything I do is geared toward what I believe in. So whether it's doing conferences or to other countries and talking about decriminalizing prostitution, whatever it is. This is what I've been doing. I do a lot of writing, I write Law Journal articles, academic journal articles, my website which is the [policeprostitutionandpolitics.com](http://policeprostitutionandpolitics.com) website and that has so much research. I mean I'm writing three other books. One of them is called Dishonored Badge: Broken Trust The Immoral Consequences of So-called Moral Laws. Writing one that is actually four books, the postcards from prison. Did you see the little cartoon book that I sent you?

Fiest: Yes. I did very cute. Actually the one that really caught my attention was the whore word. Whore just seems to be one of those things that they had just throw at us and blanket. I'm going to be 40 next year, I've been in academics a long time, I've only been with one man my whole life, but I've heard that several times. It's when they want to just degrade you for the sole purpose of degrading you. I've learned, especially as someone with a communication background, it is just a word and it's going to define me however, I choose for it to define me and I made a decision a long time ago to just embrace all those words because you can't hurt me. You can't hurt me with something I do not allow to hurt me.

Almodovar: That's what I try to tell other sex workers is because you know, they're like, "Oh I don't like the word prostitute." When I got into this business I had to embrace every single word that people would call me and say "You want to call me a whore fine. I'm a whore. You want to call me a prostitute, I'm a prostitute. Whatever you want to call me, it doesn't matter because that's who I am and fuck you if you don't like it."

Yeah, Exactly. There's this amount of sex that women should have. If you have more than that you're this insult, if you have less than that you're that insult, and I just got tired of being insulted in general. I came to embrace all of it. What's important is not the amount of sex we have, it's that our right to have that much sex is respected no matter what. That's what got me into that. Because if you're attacking a woman for having too much sex, you're attacking her for

making a decision. And then that's attacking me because I also made a decision. It may have been a different decision, but the right to make that decision is what matters.

Almodovar: Exactly, right.

Fiest: So you mentioned the legalization of prostitution. That's something that myself and some of my friends at the Feminist for Liberty and the Association of Libertarian Feminists care about as well. Did you want to throw it into a free market or would you want to do kind of what they're doing over in Nevada?

Almodovar: No, no, no. No, no, no, no Nevada. The reason being is because, unfortunately when you legalize, particularly, commercial sex, it makes new and special laws that regulate prostitutes and, once again, gives law enforcement the opportunity to use those laws to harass sex workers. I certainly would never have worked in the brothel. Dennis Hof invited me up there and wanted me to be a manager of one of his brothels many years ago, and I'm like, "No, I really can't. Because, as a woman, I want to be able to make choices of where I want to do my work, when I want to do my work and I don't want to be picked out of a lineup. I want my clients to be able to choose me, and I choose them, in a setting of my choice. Not some place where I have to sit on a couch, "Oh, hi". I'm totally into like one-on-one. I worked through several Madam's. The only laws that should apply to prostitution are the laws that apply to any other profession, any other relationship period. You can't rape someone, you can't traffic them, you can't take their money. You can't put their working situation where they like feel like they're being exploited, or anything like that. Those already exists for every worker and every woman and every situation and you don't need new and special laws to apply only to us. If women want to work in a brothel fine, there's people that thrive in brothel work, but should that be the only way that I can work? Hell no! I'm a sculptor. I don't need special laws to regulate me. If I have someone wants to come to my house and look at my art. There's no government that says, "Oh, well, I have to protect you in case someone that comes to your house that, you know, he wants to he or she wants to hurt you or steal from you or whatever else. It seems like the government doesn't get into my artwork and they get into my sex work. So no new laws.

Fiest: So, how would how do recommend women who are doing sex work handle the possibility...this guy shows up at your house, he's aware of what you do, he wants to buy your services, then he you find out there was violent intention. Do you just arm yourself?

Almodovar: I would say that would be a good idea. When you're working as I did, you know, who the clients are you screen them first. You have the ability to share information with your fellow sex workers. "Hey, this guy is violent this guy." I knew the clients that I saw because the madam knew them first and the madam said, "Here's so and so." I could name a very famous actor, and I before I would even see him, we had lunch just talk, make sure I felt comfortable with him. I mean it's like I never was in any danger from any of my clients and that's because the people I worked for all knew who they were sending to see me.

Fiest: You can watch each other's backs.

Almodovar: I know someone saw my artwork online and came here and said, "Hey, you know, I'm just gonna take it, because I can." It's like all this protectionist thinking that women are so fragile, that we can't take care of ourselves, all us poor women. I was on the fucking LAPD. I drove a police car at night time, without a gun and without a partner. Back in the 70s women were not police officers, but they put me in a patrol car at night, by myself, to see whether or not I would survive. Why on Earth would I worry about these guy? I was worried about the guys out there on the street. I had three on duty accents one of them. I was I was towing way this guy's car on Hollywood Boulevard. It was a business owner. And he came out and he knocked me down and then he tried to run me over because I was about to, you know, take his car away. Well, there I am. I'm like, "What the fuck?" so I called for help, and help came, but and he was arrested but they dropped the charges. I couldn't sue him because he was a member of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce. I was city property. Right? So, you know, that's a very fucking dangerous job. It's the Police Department. So why is it that the same woman who after 10 years becomes a call girl isn't able to take care of herself the way I did when I was on the LAPD. Nobody worried about me then.

Fiest: I want to go back to right before your campaign started. One of the most common problems that a lot of libertarians, and I guess probably even the Green Party or any other third party people have, is that there is an ungodly amount of unnecessary things that are put on us before we get on the ballot. You have to get 500 million signatures and you have to pay just about that much in all their fees. Did you encounter that when you ran or did your friends take care of that for you?

Almodovar: My campaign manager took care of all of that. I mean there were a number of people that he was involved with that we're very vested in my campaign running, making sure my campaign was successful. So, they did all that because I was I had enough to worry about, making sure I would not be violating my probation because even though they were appealing my sentence I was still on probation. So, I had to make sure that you know, I was doing what I was supposed to do so they took care of all that. That's why I'm so glad JR was so good and had so many contacts. He passed away a few years ago. He had a heart attack. I was a luncheon speaker at the state the U.S. convention in Las Vegas back six years ago. Wayne Root and some other libertarians boycotted the convention because I was a keynote speaker.

Fiest: That does not sound very libertarian.

Almodovar: It's not. Well Wayne Root owns casinos. Casinos run on prostitutes. They arrest anybody that's not supposed to be there working because they have their own in-house sex workers, just like every other hotel. If you're a big, high-end hotel you have sex workers that are on call for anybody that contacts the concierge, and needs a little companionship.

Fiest: That reminds me. Did you hear about what's going on with Marriott?

Almodovar: Yes, of course. We're training them to see anybody who else is coming in because we have our own sex workers is really what's going on. Yeah, because that whole thing makes me very uncomfortable because I'm a single person and I hate the idea of staying at a Marriott and having a camera pointed at my front door and there are men who have sex with men. There are gay prostitutes. So why are you only watching the women that go?

Almodovar: Because we're so fragile and we need attention. Oh sweetie. We need their help. That's what I've been fighting for all these years that whole sex trafficking thing. You know the numbers just don't add up. That's one of the things I put on my website. I started a project called "operation do the math" because when they started saying they were 100,000 and 300,000 children being trafficked into prostitution every year. I don't think so. So I start doing the math and started getting the statistics from the FBI. They have all of the statistics available on their website. You just have to look for him. So, do you know how many actual confirmed sex trafficking victims there were in the United States in 2017?

Fiest: No where near that amount.

Almodovar: 467. Do you know how many minors were involved in that 467? Fourteen.

Fiest: Oh my goodness. And the so the larger amount of adults are being sex trafficked. Are they only against their will?

Almodovar: What usually happens what they can see they consider anybody that's under 18 to be sex trafficked. Let's say that you're from another country and you're here working. And you knew you were going to work when you came here, you understood that was how you were going to make money till you paid off your debt. So you get arrested. And the police say, "Were you trafficked?" if you say no and you did this voluntarily you're going to get deported. If you say, "Yes, I was trafficked and I'm willing to testify against the people that made it possible for me to come here," you get to stay.

Fiest: Okay, I see so they make their own they make their own statistics basically, however, they want.

Almodovar: But the facts show something entirely different. They also said the average age of entry into prostitution is twelve thirteen or fourteen, right? Well, I'm going to Skype you the actual statistics from and I knew can look at the look at the spreadsheet that I created. so, can you see how it would be impossible for an average age to be anywhere near 12 or 14? Look at look at ages. 25 to 29.

Fiest: That looks more like what I expected.

Almodovar: When you go to the other end, that's over 65. The average age is somewhere between 21 and 34 that would be where the average age of males or females arrested for prostitution. You got to think that the males between 10 and 20 those would be prostitutes. But when you get to the 21 to 65, most of those would be our clients. That's all arrests made period and again, the male prostitutes would be the younger ones, and the clients would be the older ones because they get arrested for prostitution too. That's the FBI's numbers, not my numbers. I just put them on spreadsheets It's taken me a long time. So that's what I do with my time is do the research and put it together and then I create a book and I mail it out to the different activists and along with posters and stuff that I put together. They take it to the politicians. The Polaris Project continued to claim that average age of entry was 12, 13, 14. One of my colleagues was attending

a conference where the people that started the Polaris project were. She took them that graph and said this is the FBI statistics. They changed their website.

Fiest: Oh good

Almodovar: and they said it's a myth that it day average age statistics don't back that up blah blah blah. But yeah, I was like so my work got out and changed their mind.

Fiest; That's important because I think one of the most important things is getting rid of the stigma and all the stuff that's not true. Do you think there's a chance we will ever see legalization?

Almodovar: I used to think so I think, in the 80s. I think we had a better shot of it then we have now, because what happened was in the 90s. After the Women's Conference in Beijing, the rabid feminists got out there and they convinced journalists and politicians that all prostitution is rape, all of it is sex trafficking and that's where we are. So will it be in my lifetime? I doubt it. But one never knows.

Fiest: Do you consider yourself to be a feminist?

Almodovar: A libertarian feminist.

Fiest: That is a whole different type of feminist all in and of itself. Good luck finding like a Republican feminist. Even if you can find like a Democrat feminist, you can talk to them about sex work being an individual decision and even empowering in certain situations. But you're not going to get any love for it.

Almodovar: I have a hard time associating with the word feminist because of what it represents to so many people. I believe my body belongs to me. If that's a feminist thought, it's also a libertarian thought. So if I'm anything I'm a libertarian feminist. I totally support men. I think this whole Me Too movement has gone so wrong. I'm not talking about they pat them on the ass or they say, oh you look pretty today. I don't think that's sexual harassment. If someone rapes you if someone assaults you sexually, that's one thing.

Fiest: You're talking about Harvey Weinstein.

Almodovar: Yeah. He's probably a fucking asshole. He probably did rape women. But I think some of the other claims coming out about other people I'm like, so he said, "Oh gee. Wouldn't it be nice if we got together?" These are natural conversations that people have if he finds you attractive. And if you find him attractive and you say things to him. That's not sexual harassment, right? I mean one of the things that I learned so much from sex work. I have eight brothers by the way, so I grew up around guys. I know how they behave, I know how to treat them. Then of course being one of the only females working at nighttime with all males on LAPD, I learned how to defend myself from sexual harassment. Women need to learn how to cut the guy to the quick, you know. We can do it so easily because guy's egos are very fragile. You just say something like, "Well, I'd like to go out with you. But I've heard you have the tiniest dick ever."

Jackie: Make them never want to speak to you again.

Almodovar: Basically, it's like instead of, "Oh my God. I'm so offended."

Fiest: Yeah, I think a lot of libertarian feminists would say the same thing. I think we need to stop viewing ourselves as delicate little flowers. I remember Penn Jillette saying if every woman went out and got a gun, what is the likelihood that men are going to do that stuff when there's a 50/50 chance that woman you're about to approach may be armed. And that that back under taking care of ourselves. The thought of carrying a gun is for me is very scary, which it really shouldn't be because I'm in Texas right now. But I'm very respectful of what could go wrong. It's a fair balanced to me and that's one reason why I kind of attached myself to libertarian feminism as well. Because it's not about being weak. It's about being strong, taking you're taking responsibility for yourself and all that. That's one reason why I adore it as well.

Almodovar: No, I know when I was on the LAPD and I was out there at night, you know without the gun without a partner. I give them a ticket and these guys would get like, "Hey baby.." and with eight brothers, I learned how to like cut them down. This one guy, he comes running out. I'm a I'm giving him a ticket and he comes out, gets in his car and tries to drive away. So I'm in the police car and I have a loudspeaker. I'm following him and I'm like, "Hey, buddy, you think you can get away from me? You're such a coward." He's driving down the street and the loud speaker is right behind. I'm following him and I'm calling him names. I'm saying, "You little sissy, you know, come back and get your ticket like a man." He finally stopped, got out, took the ticket and that's the way women should be. But, the come ons, the pickup lines and stuff that...

Fiest: Yeah. That's one reason I don't date a whole lot. You can always tell when someone is overcompensating. It's not just the big, huge truck, it's not just their attitude. I spend a lot of time at a university and you can just tell when the men are very impressed with themselves. and you figure that's probably undeserved. So, have you thought about at all going back into politics? You could probably do a lot for women at a local level.

Almodovar: That's possible but taking care of my husband, I don't even leave the house except to go to the store and take him to the doctors. And working on the projects that I work on. Besides the Dishonored badge, I'm working on a book called "Cops, Hoes, Preachers and Politicos". It's the sex scandals between the cops that were raping prostitutes and all that and politicians. One of the things I said about politicians was if every man who ever saw a prostitute got charged there'd be nobody left in politics. No offices would be filled. They'd all be in jail. I had a state supreme court judge. Our clients, everybody would know who they are if we out of them, but we don't because that's part of being a sex worker is being discreet. So now I just I have too many other things to do as far as writing and lecturing. I that's the only other thing I go out for is if I speak at a college and there's only a couple that I speak to any more mostly now.

Fiest: And that's good. I feel like the work that you do is important. So however, you can get that word out is incredible. Did you did you find feminism in the form of libertarian feminism after all of this where you involved with it before?



Almodovar: Back when I was running for office in 86 there wasn't really a group of libertarian feminists. That came years afterwards. And I'm just really not a joiner of anything.

Fiest: You're very independent. That's what I get a lot. "How can you be a feminist and a libertarian at the same time?" We're not supposed to embrace collectivism, but I have found that there is so many places that tell women, "Because you are X, you should be Y and Z as well." And a lot of the women that I've run into online, God bless them, just inject libertarianism into that to say, "Actually no. The requirement being a female does not require that you must embrace this religion. you must submit to your husband, you much this, this and this. I appreciate your independent spirit and a lot of the independent spirits I come across.

One last question is do you still follow libertarian politics at all?

Almodovar: I do on Facebook. It's making me sad very very sad. I see the infighting. I see all the, "You're not a real libertarian." I'm like, oh God. I know you know, and that's why I call myself a small L libertarian. I don't use the capital L. I just I can't get involved in infighting. I want to see a world in which people can own their own lives. I don't know if it'll ever happen. But at that's what I want to see. I don't want to see people out there tearing other people down and saying, "They're not real. They're not a real libertarian. They don't believe this, or they believe that." And hat it's like you know, what? Get over yourself!

Fiest: Yeah. Yeah. There's actually been a lot of that that has hit in the last few days. I don't know if you have heard about Bill Weld?

Almodovar: Of course.

Fiest: I've heard so much, "He was going to go back. Of course. He wasn't a Libertarian. Of course he was going to go back."

Almodovar: I didn't really support him and Gary Johnson when they were running in 2016. I spoke at the convention in LA. Whether he is a libertarian or, he's running for office, which is great. Maybe he will get libertarian philosophy out there. But I just can't get involved in this whole fighting. I want to live free. That's all I want to do.

Fiest: If you don't mind going over with me, what were a few of your issues with Gary Johnson and Bill Weld?

Almodovar: I'm trying to think back to what some of the things that they were supporting or espousing. Off the top of my head, I can't think. They were our nominees. We've had worse nominees. We've had better nominees, but you know, I was a little disappointed in Gary Johnson. They came to speak, Gary did when I was speaking at one of the libertarian supper clubs and I was disappointed in his lack of knowledge on the libertarian issues. He would say things and I'm like, "Hmm. I don't think he quite understands libertarian thought on that particular issue." I mean, it's like okay he can learn right?



Fiest: Well that was one of the common criticisms of him when he was governor of New Mexico. They would have these policy meetings and he would not be at all interested or would have very little knowledge about what was being said, so that would not be the first time I've heard that.

Almodovar: That was disappointing to me. Even when I was running for office, I learned what the issues were so that I could speak articulately about them and not just be like some air-headed sex worker that was out there. So if I could take the time to do that surely he could.

Fiest: I almost forgot. I received a special request from a friend of mine with a specific question for you. She's really big on Twitter about right defending the rights of sex workers and human trafficking. She wanted me to ask you how you feel that your message is being embraced more or less now versus when you were running for office.

Almodovar: That's really hard to say. Wwhen I was running for office. I did get a lot of national attention and back in the 80s actually. Yeah 1986 when I ran for office, I thought we were we were close to decriminalizing prostitution. So I think that I did have more impact back then but you know now I have more opportunity with the internet. I think the internet is going to change the way people see libertarian philosophy. I think if we use it right, if the government doesn't shut it down.

Fiest: Right. And if we don't spend so much time infighting about who is and is not a true libertarian.

Almodovar: One of my push buttons my buttons that people push when people talk about you know, the sex trafficking in this and that the other thing I'm like you guys you listen to these lies.

Fiest: It's becoming almost like the new War on Drugs. The War on Drugs is going to be going away soon. So we need a new moral emergency.

Almodovar: Exactly. We have to save rescue all these people. We have to save people from drugs. I've never done drugs. I had the opportunity to do free drugs when I was on the LAPD. When cops pull over are some drug dealer, let's say there's 10 kilos of cocaine in their trunk. The report says there were three. You think the drug dealers going to go in front of the judge and say, Yo, your honor. I had ten pound 10 kilos in there.”. Not gonna happen. So what'd the cops do with those drugs that they confiscate

Fiest: They do some of they probably sell some of them..

Almodovar: Yes...

Fiest: But they probably guess they do them. I used to go to the cop parties so I don't drink I don't smoke. I don't use drugs. I didn't go to these parties for very long because I stick out like a sore thumb since I don't do any of those things. Now also a lot of the cops worked off duty for the movie industry in Hollywood. So you have people, you know are using drugs the actors the writers The Producers, okay. You have absolutely zero markup. You don't have to pay anybody for those drugs everything you make is pure profit.

Fiest: Yet they have their eyes on us. Okay.

Almodovar: Oh my gosh, you have no idea. How many cops are doing. They bring when I was in prison. The guards all did drugs. They brought in drugs for the inmates. One day she comes she'd been working like two or three shifts, right? So she comes out of her the cop shop and she has white powder under her nose. The other inmates are all laughing," Miss Jones. You got white stuff under your nose." People have no idea how hypocritical our government it is. And it's just it's just like that shooting in Texas in Houston., if you're not following it turns out that there were no informants that went in at house and bought drugs. The cop lied. Those two people did not sell drugs and they're dead. and If those cops don't get charged with murder, there is no justice, right?

Cathy Reisenwitz

Reisenwitz: I got into politics because I've always been into politics. My family was always super political. We just talked about politics and religion around the dinner table. I thought that was normal. My parents are very conservative. My dad listens to Rush Limbaugh and my mom is very religious. Then in 2006 I discovered Ron Paul on the internet. Then my friend from high school said, "If you like Ron Paul, you should check out Reason and Mises." So I check them out started getting super into libertarianism. It was a slow evolution of changing my mind on things like the drug war and foreign policy, but by 2009 I had started anarchocapitalismblog.com. I was fully fully in it. Then in 2011, I moved to DC to start working with a libertarian think tank.

Fiest: So how did feminism work its way in?

Reisenwitz: I've always been a feminist. I really started focusing on it when I started to think about how to sell libertarianism and especially in demographics that are not particularly well represented in libertarianism. Like women, people of color and so that's when I started writing about the intersection of libertarianism and feminism.

Fiest: So tell me a little bit about the outreach that you do Specifically, I know you have your Sex and the State blog. Do you still do that a little bit now?

Reisenwitz: A little bit. It's basically doing podcast interviews where I talk about libertarianism and feminism. But in the beginning, I was writing a lot of op-eds and articles in other outlets. I wrote about legalizing prostitution for The Daily Beast, the feminism of Ludwig von Mises for FEE Online. And yeah, so it was just like writing and speaking about feminism for libertarian and conservative audiences. Then with The Daily Beast, it was more left-leaning audiences. It was letting everybody know that libertarianism is compatible with feminism. And, if you're a feminist, then you should feel at home and libertarianism.

Fiest: That's one thing that I find a lot. I am surrounded by conservatives or Libertarians, primarily male libertarians to be honest, and I start talking about feminism, I get, "Oh, no. You can't talk about that because that's collectivist. You can't talk about that." Is that..

Reisenwitz: Oh yeah. It was like a very unpleasant wake up situation. I kind of assumed that the whole reason that libertarians hadn't talked about feminism very much was oversight essentially. What I realized is that actually a lot of people who are calling themselves libertarians are actually very conservative and all of the conservative anti-feminism has a very large and active presence and libertarianism.

Fiest: Agreed. Yeah.

Reisenwitz: Yeah, so, you know all of the arguments that you will hear from conservatives about why feminism is bad, I was hearing from Libertarians. And it wasn't reasoned arguments either. It was like a lot of like, "Collectivist!!! You're a socialist!!! You're pretending to be a libertarian to like push feminism!! You just want attention!!!" It was really gendered, very emotional, ad hominem attacks...

Fiest: It was almost kind of like the same thing that I find when I go online and game. They view that sphere as their space. When I, as a woman, try to break myself in there, I'm not someone who, "Hey, let's just play a game." I'm breaking into their space and they lash out rather aggressively.

Reisenwitz: I think libertarianism generally suffers from a little bit of a safe space problem. Where weirdos have found their group of weirdos and they don't want us to be a part of libertarianism. That's its own problem. But then you also have a lot of guys who just don't have a lot of interaction with women and then old conservative married guys who just think, "Get your little lady brain, and your little lady ideas out of here." Women belong in the kitchen kind of situation.

Fiest: Yeah. I agree wholeheartedly. I spoke to someone yesterday as part of my interviews who was a libertarian for a long time. Then, like some libertarians, do when it came down time to run for office, he did run as a Republican. We've known each other for like 10 years and I was like, "How could you?" I was I was betrayed. When I first heard that he was running as a Republican, oh my God, the only thing that kept me from killing him were the four or five states between us. During the process of talking to him, he said that he was comfortable enough that a lot of the people there are live and let live and the small government ideas that they have there that he was comfortable running as a Republican. He even said that the Republican party needs to adjust its message because it does not appeal to women, young people, and people of color. He mentioned that the libertarian party may need to do that as well. Number one: do you agree with that and number two, how would you suggest they tweak their message?

Reisenwitz: I mean, I think there was going to require more than a tweak but...

Fiest: We're talking about an overhaul?

Reisenwitz: Yeah, definitely. I mean I would say like number one, stop being outright misogynistic when it comes to your policies. For example, the fact that a lot of so-called libertarians support forcing women to undergo transvaginal ultrasounds before they can get an abortion. Like if there's any fucking issue where self-ownership, property rights means anything to you, self-sovereignty, the state saying outside of your body should probably be it. When you see other libertarians being openly misogynistic, maybe call them out on that. I would say it's also just an issue of priorities. Which is not it's a complicated issue and it mostly has to do with funding. The Cato Institute has a very well-funded program for studying the gold standard. But, so far, they haven't gotten any big name, big time donors to fund sex work decriminalization. Sometimes you do things because they're right and I think that more libertarian should cover topics that are under understudied, under covered, don't get enough exposure. Because it's fully and completely in alignment with our principles to fight for the ability of sex workers to be able to do their jobs without getting raped by cops. But somehow that's not as pressing an emergency as you know, 1% of a tax decrease in some random jurisdiction. I think those are the main things.

Fiest: Do you have a preference between, since you mentioned sex work, between either decriminalization or legalization?

Reisenwitz: Decrim.

Fiest: Would you want to see prostitution or sex work thrown into the free market or would you prefer to use the Nevada way of doing things?

Reisenwitz: Market. Free market.

Fiest: I want to kind of switch gears for a little bit. I guess its still kind of falls under protecting those as it comes to sex. A lot of people are using the idea that women and children are being raped by coyotes when coming to the United States as an excuse to be against even legal immigration. Is this an argument you've heard and what would you say against it?

Reisenwitz: Wow. No, I've never heard that. Yeah, you know what?

Fiest: I'm sure you know, what a coyote is.

Reisenwitz: Yeah. Yeah.

Fiest: It's one of the things when social conservatives try to use rape, sexual assault or in the case of the children, being molested, the same way they say, "Well we can't have this abortion clinic here because this doctor doesn't have admission rights to a hospital and we need to think about their safety." I think it's kind of the same idea.

Reisenwitz: Yeah, that's what it sounds like. There's really robust evidence that straight forward legal immigration processes eliminate the demand for black market services like coyotes.

Immigration is such a women's rights issue. If you look at that article in the New York Times about how workers in nail salons are being exploited. It's barely even touched on the fact that a lot of these workers had dubious legal immigration status. And therefore were more dependent on their employers than they would be in a more free, straightforward immigration system.

Fiest: I don't think they they quite grasp the idea that the fact that we are placing legal or illegal status on them it is what is causing the harm. And every time you pass a law to do something that you say is protecting them, all you are doing is causing more harm.

Reisenwitz: Yeah, and that's kind of consequences.

Fiest: I live in El Paso. I am right on the border. And as all of this stuff has been going on and everything is coming down here. Most of them, these the conservative people have, I'm sorry, but they have no idea what they're talking about. I mean when you talk about the fact that there's really no mention of borderlines in the Constitution. It's everyone created by God, which is pretty much everyone. There's no limits to this. They're coming down here. They should be allowed to come down here, or come up here. This whole thing ever since it landed in my backyard has just been super, super frustrating. I appreciate your point of view on that. Thank you.

Kind of switching to something kind of along the lines of libertarians and looking at us publicly: I went to the LPS website and they are listing something like 177 Libertarians are in some kind of office, either voted to or appointed in the United States. But they're mostly all things like school boards and utility boards. So we seem to do well locally, but we're not so popular as things get bigger. It's like they want someone small government close to them. But the minute

you start getting into federal office they seem to want as big government as possible. Why do you think that is?

Reisenwitz: Why are libertarian candidates not very popular?

Fiest: Well, that's certainly one question if you want to answer that. But it's also why is it that we do so well at a local level, you know that the LP says that there's like a 177 of us in small offices all over the United States. But we seem to really struggle the state level. And there's two Independents in Congress but no Libertarians at all.

Reisenwitz: Yeah, that's an interesting question that I haven't thought much about. I mean, I've definitely thought about like kind of what's wrong with the LP. But yeah, I haven't had a lot of specific question.

Fiest: Okay. By the way, my interview after you is the chair of the LP.

Reisenwitz: Hmm.

Fiest: Yeah. So if you have any questions, please let me know.

Reisenwitz: I'm not going to say anything new or interesting. But it's an ideology about how government is not the answer is not going to be an ideal situation to grow up candidates that are very knowledgeable about government for one thing. That's kind of our challenge at the local level. And the reason that we can overcome that at the local level, I think that there's less to know. And I think people are more interested in like whether this person is going to be an effective administrator. As you go up higher in electoral politics, it gets to be more of a personality question than a policy question. Libertarians are, to stereotype, not the most friendly, accessible personality types. And yes, this is a stereotype that I'm mostly gathering from anecdote. But there's been some research on the kinds of people who identify as libertarian, what other traits that they have. Like one trait that they have is that they tend to be more lower empathy than your average person. When it comes to electing someone for higher office, empathy is a really important trait to display.

Fiest: Do you think that the lowercase L libertarians are getting in the way of the uppercase L libertarians in that regard?

Reisenwitz: Oh, yeah, definitely. The libertarian brand is mostly decided by lowercase

Libertarians. And that brand is fucking toxic. It's really bad.

Fiest: We're asking people to take us seriously when there's people calling themselves libertarians online comparing the taxes that people pay to fund schools to rape.

Reisenwitz: Even the Libertarian Party's brand isn't great either. It's not as repugnant, but it's very, "don't take me seriously".

Fiest: Can you provide me an example of the last time you saw something that just screamed that at you?

Reisenwitz: Sure, I went to an LP event and it was...somebody with pink hair and somebody peddling vaccination myths and ill-fitting suits. Just crazy people. I am a crazy person, but it's this is this is serious business for people. People are not going to take the time to see beyond the crackpots and we need to professionalize if we're going to actually be here. It's the worst of all worlds to because the LP is less principled than your average libertarian, but not vastly more professional serious, all of the things that you would hope people working in politics would be. So there's just a lot of work to do with our organization.

Fiest: I can agree with that because I don't recall the last time anyone at either the Republican National Convention or the Democratic National Convention jumped on the stage and removed all their clothing. I was so embarrassed by that. I don't know if you find yourself in this situation, but for me, especially living in Texas, I often find myself like the only libertarian in the room. So when something like that happens and this gentleman does what he does and one of my friends hears about happened at the libertarian convention, this dude jumps up and takes all his clothes off. Everyone comes to me and says, "Oh my God, this is what happened at your convention."

Reisenwitz: Yeah.

Fiest; And then you're afraid people will think it's a reflection of you and I'm like, so not a reflection of me. This is why we could push non-collectivism because we don't want to be collected in with those people. I know I certainly don't.

Reisenwitz: This is something I was pushing for when I was more active, like a professional libertarian. Look at the DSA. The DSA have pretty much every problem that we have but it's a different flavor. It's a different direction, but it's like crazy ideas, poor people, their image problems, like people not taking them seriously. In San Francisco we were about to have a really massive storm and DSA members were outside distributing tents to homeless people and like that got covered in the local news. And maybe their solutions are wrong, but they're like out there getting their hands dirty. Bring the community and advocating for the policies that they support. Where is the LP doing any of that?

Fiest: I'm sorry. What is the DSA?

Reisenwitz: Democratic Socialist of America.

Fiest: Okay. And that's a very legitimate point to make. I think that's one thing that was kind of reflected when Gary Johnson ran for president in 2016. I felt like he spent so much time trying to define what a libertarian was that he didn't actually get anything accomplished about he would stand for.

Reisenwitz: It's like how do these ideas matter for real people?



Fiest: ...and in your situation that the DSA, you know, no matter what we may think of their policies, were actually out getting something accomplished, getting stuff done right and we could learn a little bit of something from that. On the other hand, I don't know what the national LP financial situation is, but people don't exactly seem to be throwing money at them either. It's very easy for me to sit here and judge, but I know that there's probably a lot of work that could be done at a grassroots level as well. I talked to a gentleman Saturday who dropped \$14,000 of his own just trying to get on the ballot. First of all, if I could make enough money to afford to drop \$14,000 getting Libertarians on the ballot, that would be great. Do you think that libertarianism needs to be a party? Do you think it maybe we're better off just as a philosophy?

Reisenwitz: I don't I don't participate in the LP. So that kind of tells you, you know. I think the LP is doing some good. I think that libertarian candidates are obviously good. I think in a perfect world, would I love to see Republicans and Democrats have more competition? Absolutely. Are they doing good? Yes. Could they do more good? Absolutely. Is there a place for them? For sure. Is the party, as constituted, worth putting a lot of time and energy into reforming? Not for me. I have several friends who are doing that work, they're active in the LP, they're trying to change things and I admire them very much and appreciate their service. But I would never look at a young activist and say, "Yeah. The LP is where you should start." I think the court of public opinion is where I'm more interested in playing, and that doesn't mean it's like objectively more important. It's just that the libertarian brand is so tainted. And so running people on the libertarian tickets, when most people can like have very negative associations with libertarians is the kind of the wrong order to do things in in my opinion. And like you could use the LP to reform the libertarian brand. If you could you could have LP members out there distributing tents to homeless people, you also have to like clear out a bunch of the crap. You'd have to say no to vaccine bullshit, no to fluoride trutherism, no to pro-life bullshit. Once you've cleared out all that, it's like alright, what do we have left?"

Fiest; Yeah, that's and I agree with you on that. And that's where I find some of the problem. I feel like a lot of the people who I deal with online who say they're libertarian, I feel like they come to libertarianism because they feel that it's like Diet Republicanism.

Reisenwitz: Yeah. Yeah.

Fiest: For whatever reason they're frustrated with the Republican Party and they come here, but through my interpretation, it's still Republicanism. No matter how you shake it if you if you believe in free markets, that's great. But if you still insist on trying to prevent women from having an abortion because you don't approve of it, or you want them to have to get the man's permission first, or if you want to keep prostitution illegal, or not decriminalized. These are still not libertarian trains of thought. Then they end up making ridiculous remarks online and making all of us overall look bad and that's very damaging. And especially as it relates to sex work and abortion and things like that, there are not that many of us out there that consider ourselves libertarian feminists pick up the slack.

Reisenwitz: No, and it's really unfortunate. I feel like this is really on the professional libertarians, you know. We have done a fucking horrible job of recruiting from the left, and it's because the professional libertarians have decided that it's not their job to fix that. To focus on

the issues that could appeal to people on the left and potentially alienate some of the people who we've attracted from the right. And that sucks and I wish it would change.

Fiest: I have two interviews scheduled with people who once claimed libertarianism and ran for office as Republicans. And I looked and I looked, and maybe I didn't look hard enough, but I couldn't find any example of someone being a philosophical libertarian running as a Democrat. I couldn't find that at all and unfortunately you just do not find that a lot. Take my friend that I interviewed yesterday who said that a lot of the people in his area were live and let live. If you apply abortion to the live and let live, I bet it's not quite as live and let live. I'm thankful for people that I've met like you and Elizabeth Nolan Brown. I had a chance to talk to Norma Jean Almodovar and she was great, but we just need we just need a whole lot more of us. As someone who is a philosophical libertarian, but not bound by the LP, you mentioned that there's not a whole lot of an attempt to recruit from the left...what would you do to recruit more from the left?

Reisenwitz: Decriminalizing prostitution, streamlining immigration, deregulating childcare, striking down abortion regulations, make all these things a bigger priority. I would talk about them in your party platforms and create videos, books and articles about them. Make a case for them, interview sex workers and talk to women who've had late-term abortion. I could go on and on and on about the ways that I tried to do these things when I was a libertarian doing it full time. That's what I would do.

Fiest: When you look at what the libertarian party is pushing, it is free markets, free markets, free markets. And while free markets, I don't think is something that either you and I disagree with, I feel like a lot of the things that you discussed on a national level, even on a state level are not even touched. Other than when you go to the LPS website and their platforms are there, but I don't remember the last time I saw anyone from the LP dealing with, for example, abortion or prostitution on a national level, anywhere.

Reisenwitz: Yeah me neither.

Fiest: Well that's unfortunate, especially when that would be a very good way to bring women into the Libertarian Party. Which is something that they'd like to see more of. I just kind of funny how we do not get a whole lot of outreach.

Reisenwitz: What about occupational licensing that disproportionately affects women? Like hair braiding licenses, cosmetology licenses and licenses for fucking florists? Like that's a free market issue. That's a property rights issue that affects women disproportionately. that you know could be a bigger emphasis.

Fiest: And you think that the fact that these issues are not pushed by the LP and thus kind of leaves us out is one of the reasons why there are not more of us.

Reisenwitz: Absolutely.

Fiest: Yeah, I tend to agree. Women are a diverse group of people as well. To some women, abortion and prostitution are not as big of a deal. If they're very conservative women then they live in a world where these are just not issues that are discussed because they're wrong or immoral and that's fine. But if we don't start kicking, fighting and knocking down doors for the rights that we're losing now, they will come for whatever it is that's important to you eventually.

Reisenwitz: Libertarians are very big on saying that legislation is not the best solution to a particular problem. Take the gender wage gap for instance and I agree. I don't support equal pay legislation. However, they often take it a step further and say that it's not a real problem. I would say that instead of saying, "Hey. This thing that you think is a problem, isn't a real problem so we don't need to legislate for it." Instead said, "Maybe the gender wage gap is explained by differences in choices that men and women make but how can we encourage women to make more profitable choices in a free market, voluntary, cooperative way." Basically, what I'm saying is that Libertarians I think to be successful, and to be fucking morale individuals, shouldn't just leave it at, "This is not a real problem". What is or isn't a real problem is an inherently subjective question? Your invalidating other people's point of view by saying this is not a real problem. So, don't do that. Second of all acknowledge that it is a felt problem for this group of people and then offer solutions that don't involve government. Because if that's all Libertarians have to offer is the denial of people's problems, then we should be fucking losing. That's not helpful.

Fiest: Right and that kind of and that's one question I have actually always asked myself. I'm sitting here talking to you right now, on the 18th of February, and I'm supposed to be graduating with a Master's degree in May and I just kind of people say here and say, "Women make choices to stay home instead of going out and working and getting an education. I don't have any kids and I have a Master's degree, which should put me in the top 12 percent of earners. I would love to find out.. whatever my first job is...what my mail cohorts are making at whatever the degrees level are. I would bet you that you'll find someone with a lower level degree and more money.

Reisenwitz: We've done the empirical research that two identical resumes with man's name and a woman's name are perceived differently, offered jobs at different rates, offer different starting salaries. Like this is the truth but libertarians pretend like it's not a problem because they don't want to suggest a government solution. That's not the way to look at that. That's not reality.

Fiest: Do you think that's the conservative influence?

Reisenwitz: It's 100% a demographics problem. It's conservative and the fact that it's overwhelmingly middle-class white and male means that problems that they see as real problems are going to be the problems that affected them. It's a self-perpetuating problem.

Fiest: I experienced that myself in speaking with, frankly, white male libertarians. I'll say something to the effect of the amount of times that rape is actually prosecuted all the way through to someone landing in jail. The nearest white man in the room will come to me and start complaining about false rape accusations. According to the statistics out there, this happens in less than 2% of the time. The same statistics say that actual rapes, you know, and I'm not talking about someone pats your butt even though that's also not cool, but I'm talking about an actual

violent rape with a knife or a gun or some kind of weapon forcing someone to do something against their will, is not even reported 50% of the time.

Reisenwitz: Look at Reason Magazine, like how much of they cover false Title Nine accusations, versus the fact that we have thousands of untested rape kits in police stations across the country.

Fiest: Right which is pretty sad when you consider that there's celebrities pushing this more than people who actually claim to be fighting for the rights of individuals.

Reisenwitz: Right?

Fiest: These celebrities probably I mean, I'm not intending to say that they have good or bad intentions. I'm saying it's good PR for them to do this. I've seen that from Reason Magazine to either, you know Title Nine crap or false rape accusations or this white kid did something and he's being you know criticized too much for it. But I'm looking at women who were fighting rape or people of color that are fighting discrimination or the right to not be shot by the police over a bag of Skittles and a Sprite. it'll I always sometimes tend to feel like we are not focusing on the right subjects

Reisenwitz: Absolutely could not agree more.

Fiest: I am a perpetually a white person and I do have white privilege. I will never deny that. I come from a biracial marriage and my mom's entire side of the family is Mexican-American. I see what they go through and my thing is as a Libertarian, we need to make sure their rights are being protected. I am amazed at how many people are willing to sit back and tell me that I am a victim, I just am not looking at it in the right way. feel like I'm doing okay. I would really like to focus on what these other people who are not doing okay are talking about it. A lot of Libertarians don't want to hear that.

Reisenwitz: Agreed. That's been my experience.

Fiest: I'm glad to know that it's not just me. I think this is probably why you and I associate the same because you know, true feminism fights for what's bad for everybody not just for women. When I spoke to Norma Jean, I asked her if she identified as a feminist and she made sure I understood that she identifies as a libertarian feminist. Hmm. While I think that's great because I'm a libertarian feminist before I'm a Libertarian. She goes, "I identify as a Libertarian feminist. I love men." I think that kind perpetuates the idea that feminism getting a bad rap as being man-haters. One of the things that I appreciate about libertarian feminism is that the forefront of what we talk about is that when things affect men, it affects us. When it affects children, it affects us. We all suffer from the same problems Toxic masculinity causes very bad things to happen to women physically, but it's also important to talk about how it affects men emotionally. If we can bring them to a better place, that is better for women as well.

Reisenwitz: Absolutely.

Fiest: Yeah. I was I was very glad to find this group and was glad I was able to get three of you in for an interview because I think we can get some really interesting point of view. It's not only for people who are not libertarian. It's about people who don't think that you can be libertarian and be feminists because feminists are bad.

Nick Sarwark

Fiest: Why don't you tell me just a little bit about yourself and what got you into electoral politics? Because I know you had a mayoral run as well.

Sarwark: I did. So I have been a Libertarian since probably 11 or 12 years old. My father lived here in Phoenix and took me to Maricopa County meetings. I met some interesting people and he had books on a shelf and one of them was David Berglas, "Libertarianism In One Lesson", which I think has gone through a couple of additions. I read it. I was 12 and it all made sense to me. So I was like, "That's what I am." So I've never really identified as anything other than a Libertarian. When I got out of college in 98, I join the party as an adult, got involved with the libertarian party in Maryland, ended up being state chair there and worked on some campaigns and petition drives and all that stuff. I backed away from active work in the party while I was going to law school probably 2004 through 2008. Then when I moved out to Colorado to take a position as a deputy public defender for the state, I went to the Colorado Convention and sort of got voluntold into being the vice-chair of the Colorado party, which worked out pretty well. We had a full slate of electoral candidates in 2012. We actually recruited all hundred of the legislative candidates. Although, I think only 80 ended up getting through because of paperwork but that was a big achievement. We also were the only state party to back amendment 64 which ended up getting more votes than the sitting president in 2012, and we kicked off the real legalization of cannabis in the United States. I then ended up running for chair of the National Party In summer of 2014, won re-election in 2016 and then re-re-election in 2018. So, I now have the most consecutive terms in party history for a national chair. The aforementioned Berglund had two terms back in the 1980s and then they brought him back in the 1990s.

Fiest: Are there term limits?

Sarwark: No, there's no term limits. Usually just Libertarians get tired of people. You know, and the job sucks. So, you've got pressures on both ends where either they don't like you, or you don't like them, and eventually it adds up

Fiest: That's one reason why, when I decided to write this thesis on this, I was like, "I don't know if I want to. Because the minute it gets published, I'm going to start getting emails, my opinion is wrong and why I'm not a real libertarian and here's why. I had to sit down and ask myself, "Do you really care about this philosophy enough to risk that." and I decided that, number one, I did. And number two, that I will just put an email on it that I never check. That's basically I've decided to do because that's a lot of what you find online. At least it's bickering back and forth about these things.

Sarwark: Yeah, and there's strategies to deal with that in order to keep yourself sane. But as far as electoral politics, I'd never run for public office until the mayoral race in 2018. And that was more serendipitous than anything. It wasn't in my plan to run for public office. But the our current mayor, or our mayor at the time, resigning to run for Congress left an open seat. It was a special election. So it was out of the normal cycle. The he strongest Republican on the city council actively chose not to run. So as a non-partisan race, with two Democrats splitting the Democratic vote and there was, at the time I got into the race, no Republican running. So for me,

being a native Phoenician, with a house in Phoenix and a business in Phoenix and my kids going to school in Phoenix, it was kind of the perfect storm. You have to take advantage of that if that's offered to you. Other than that, I was probably at least six years out from the grand plan of running for public office because I have little kids and it wasn't on my on my list. But it was good experience. I'm still writing thank you notes to donors because it was very successful by the metrics of, you know, a first-time candidacy libertarian or otherwise. We got a little over 10%, managed to force a runoff and made the other candidates engage issues that they weren't otherwise going to engage. About public pension crises, whether or not we should give subsidies to sports teams owners, whether the city should focus on core city services or, you know, boondoggles like the light rail things like that. I was the only candidate really pushing for one hundred percent body cams and criminal justice reform. I think it was worth it.

Fiest: My understanding is that there is actually quite a libertarian movement over in Phoenix. I have a friend who lives over there who whose name you've probably heard. He runs for office all the time. Barry Hess.

Sarwark: Yeah, I know Barry. Yeah me too. I've known Barry since I was a kid. He was one of the people I met at those Maricopa County meetings.

Fiest: I met him through a mutual friend and have been over there a few times and they I mean he said that there really was and I've had my eye on. I don't think I'm going to stay I'll stay in El Paso much longer after graduation and Phoenix is where the places I had my eye on it specifically for that reason.

Sarwark: Arizona has always been had a Libertarian streak in it. The whole mountain west does.

Fiest: It started in Colorado, right?

Sarwark: It did start in Colorado. But if you look at the Electoral results, the mountain west is really the stronghold for libertarians as sort of a base level. So, regardless of who the candidate is, or what the issues are, there's a floor for libertarian candidates and it's higher up through the intermountain west. Obviously, New Hampshire is an outlier in that regard. And there are some states that have worked very hard, like Georgia or Indiana, where they kind of punch above their regional grade. But as far as just base-level libertarianism, the mountain west is really strong.

Fiest: I wonder why we don't have it here?

Sarwark: You do. The Libertarian Party of Texas is very...they're one of the biggest libertarian partys in the country, population wise, because it's Texas.

Fiest: I've never seen them here in El Paso.

Sarwark: El Paso has not been the strongest county in Texas. Harris is really big. Bexar. Dallas obviously. What county is El Paso in?

Fiest: El Paso County.



Sarwark: I mean El Paso has its own thing because you got the border, you got the fort.

Fiest: We've got Beto. It's very Democrat around here.

Sarwark: You got Beto. The LP of Texas, they've maintained ballot access consistently for a long time, which is something to be to be...

Fiest: That's a big deal.

Sarwark: If you start from scratch tomorrow, like you want to start a party and get ballot access, your somewhere between \$250 and \$300 thousand dollars in Texas.

Fiest: Yea. I interviewed one person who works with the LP in Kentucky who dropped about \$14,000 just trying to get ballot access, primarily through signatures. The manpower and the money required to do it, building software to make sure that the signatures were legitimate, not going to get kicked out. And that \$14,000 was out of his own pocket. Yeah. So, you know, that's unfortunate. One of the many things I've heard. You're interview number five out of 11 and there have been some very interesting stories. Some of them we'll get to.

One of the things I want to touch on, just because it's personally annoying to me, is I'm finding popping up more is the idea of people being public libertarians for so long and then when it comes time to running for office, they magically become Republicans. I interviewed yesterday Glenn Jacobs. I don't know if you're familiar with Glenn Jacobs.

Sarwark: Yep, mayor of Knox County, Tennessee.

Fiest: He and I met through mutual friend after I first became a libertarian and when he was in my area we'd get together and eat and all we'd ever talk about was our beliefs in libertarianism. Then he's running for office one day and I go to watch his press conference and he's running as a Republican. Why is this happening? How do we prevent this? Is it really just money?

Sarwark: A couple things. Ballot access in a lot of places. Tennessee specifically. In Tennessee, the Republicans and Democrats are a recognized party and Libertarians are not. Part of the reason for that is if you want to run for office as an independent candidate in Tennessee, it requires 25 signatures. If you would like to get a political party qualified in Tennessee it requires somewhere around 34,000 valid signatures to be a political party. In Tennessee, specifically, there is an advantage to running as a Republican because you get a party designation on your ballot and thus you get a lot of the low information voters that our party identified. This is also an issue for people, just to use an example, Justin Amash, in Michigan. One of the things that I think has prevented him from making a switch from the political party he's in right now to the one that really fits his ideals much better, is that Michigan still has the straight ticket voting device. A Michigan voter can go in and say, "R", and be done and that just goes "R" all the way down and it doesn't examine our races.

Fiest: And we get left out.

Sarwark: Texas actually has that or at least this last round was their last time having it. I'm actually waiting for that data. Let's see what happens in Texas because the advantage of having

straight ticket voting is it's a structural thing that's hard to underestimate how painful it can be. The other thing is there is more money on the Republican side than there is on the libertarian side. There are members of the donor class who may be libertarian in ideology but have gone through enough election cycles where they're active players and have seen better results from the Republican side to the point that they will not give to a Libertarian campaign, but they will give to a Republican campaign. Not because they don't like what you're doing, but because they look at it as a political investment where you know, what's my likelihood of return on my money that effect has reduced or narrowed over the last two or three cycles? You know, you've got somebody like Austin Peterson running for the Republican Senate nomination in 2018 in Missouri and choosing to run as a Republican raising approximately \$600,000. But you have Larry Sharpe running a statewide race in New York raising in the high \$400,000 range for a similar statewide race as a Libertarian. So that gap is narrowing between what is possible as a Libertarian Republican but it's kind of a lagging indicator, right? The donor class takes a while to catch up because they tend to be older, so they're not as attuned to the data and there's a pattern you have to break by showing them this is where we're at. Now you need to re-examine what your premises are.

Fiest: So you think we're in the process of coming out of this?

Sarwark: Well, the other thing is the Republican party is busy both imploding forcing out Libertarians and undercutting their desirability to anybody that shares our ideals. That's where you get, you know, like the Never Trump movement. There are people who are in that wealthy donor class who will no longer give to Republicans at all that have cut them off. Spear Lancaster when he ran for governor in Maryland in 2002, he was the first non-Republican/Democrat to run in almost a century. We got him on the ballot and he used to tell me that some politicians are dumb and some politicians are corrupt, but all politicians can count. So, the language that politicians speak are vote totals and dollars. So sometimes the only way you can explain to them that you're not happy is you take away votes or dollars and then that helps them understand and you know, tiny words that they can comprehend.

Fiest: Talking points.

Sarwark: This is how many votes you don't have and then they ask well, "Why? What can I do to fix that?" and that's when you can open a dialogue. I think we underestimate the ability to take something like withdrawing votes or running a candidate who's taking votes or taking money away from a candidate. That's not something where they're mad at you I mean, they might be mad in the short term but it actually does open a dialogue because then you get to have a discussion about why is it you lost those votes. And then can you fix it.

Fiest: And that's one of the things that kind of annoys me so much is that that's kind of how we are viewed. Taking votes away from the Republican candidate or the Green Party is taking votes away from the Democrat candidate. I'm like, how about adjusting and looking at what they're doing wrong or that we're doing right that we're getting those votes to begin with?

Sarwark: Well, that's the power that we have as Libertarians. We're like Babe Ruth, you know, we can call our shot. I can run a campaign and take votes from a Republican, and I can run the same campaign and take votes from a Democrat.

Fiest: Did you run as a Libertarian?

Sarwark: Yeah, I ran as a libertarian. I am openly and notoriously a Libertarian.

Fiest: Yea, but I would have said the same thing about Glenn Jacobs five years ago.

Sarwark: Usually municipal elections here in Arizona are nonpartisan. So no party affiliation was listed on the ballot. But every news outlet went out of their way to tell everyone I was libertarian. And I'm National chair. I mean like I can hide my light under a bushel.

Fiest: Right. Especially in your own home city. On the LP website, one thing that I found that was really interesting was that there are something like 170 or 180 Libertarians in the United States holding some kind of elected or appointed office in the United States. I noticed there were primarily local level, you know, school boards and utility boards and all that. It seems that people like us close to them. But the further up the chain you go, state office, Congress, federal office, even president...they start going big government. Why is that? What is it that they think that we can't provide on a state level that we can provide on their child's school board?

Sarwark: I think it's more of what people are willing to try where. So it's like if you go to your grocery store and you see a new soda or snack food, and there is a coupon on the rack and you get 50% off and you know, you buy a bag or you buy a six-pack, that is something a lot of people will do. You get, "Hey. This is something new. Maybe I'll try it. Maybe I'll like it." If you go to Costco and they have a case of it and you've never seen it before, you're not buying a case. Because there's a commitment to buying a case. I think what a lot of people see is...they perceive the higher stakes of the larger office, and people become less willing to move outside of what brand loyalty they already have. When they go to those decisions for those higher-level offices, ironically. It doesn't make any logical sense, but a lot of things that people do in politics don't make any logical sense. We would actually be better on the federal level, I think, than the local level. I think that Libertarians have a lot more to offer on those broad federal issues. But the electorate is where they are, you know, we have to meet them where they are and work to put more people into those lower-level offices, have them succeed, have people realize that we're not going to burn City Hall down and sell it Monsanto or whatever. And then gain that trust that we can then parlay into higher and higher level offices.

Fiest: Even though I laugh when you say we're not going to burn down the governor's mansion or city hall, I think there's a lot of the public that gets that idea that we may do that and I think a lot of the reason why is kind of that dynamic between the uppercase L libertarian and the lowercase L libertarian. There are some there are some very crazy lowercase L libertarians out there. These are the ones that are online screaming about equating having to pay taxes to run a public school to rape. These people are out there. Do you think these people cause a problem for us as a party?

Sarwark: I don't think they're helping. But I also don't think that that's the problem to focus on. The vast majority of human beings in this country have no sense of what online political discourse looks like. They are not in the circles in which they ever read any Facebook posts or Twitter posts or anything like that. They are low information voters. They're open to our ideas if they're presented in a way that's palatable and speaks to their values. People being jerks on the internet really doesn't affect us unless we choose to let it affect us. That's a remarkably small group that has a remarkably low amount of power or ability to affect anything. That's actually the most maddening thing you can do to them. When people get very angry or trollish online, ignoring them or not caring what they say is actually the most potent response that you can have.

Fiest: A lot of that is out for attention and I understand that especially as you know, having a communication background. I've just always been really concerned that we would lose even one person because of these lunatics. I often worry about that. But thank you. I'm glad to know that I shouldn't.

Sarwark: Well it's not going to be the best use of your time. Because you can probably recruit five people with the same amount of effort it would take to try and quelle or deal with one lunatic.

Fiest: I know that as Libertarians, at least most Libertarians, I speak to are very much open borders. So we will talk about that publicly and that's enough to make some people think that I am crazy. I had one situation where someone came up to me and said, "After meeting you I did this research for libertarian philosophy online, and these people were crazy. I'm just like, "I swear to God, that's not me and that's not us." That's always been a big concern.

Sarwark: The important libertarian in the entire libertarian party is you. Because for your colleagues, for the people in your department, for your friends, you're the only libertarian thier ever going to meet. They're not going to meet me. They're not going to meet Gary Johnson. They're not going to meet all these other people, they're going to meet you. And so how you interact with them and what perception they get of you as a person, and whether or not you're genuine, whether you care about their ideas is more important than every other thing that happens online, because that's a real human interaction. And so if they meet you and they go, you know, "She seems nice enough. I could have a beer with her. Maybe she's a little nutty on the border but you know, I'm not mad about it, you know, everybody's wrong about something. She seems like a genuine person who cares about her community..." that does more than you know thousands of dollars worth of marketing campaigns. Because you've created a positive impression of libertarianism and Libertarians in the minds of your friends. And that's more powerful than some jackass on Facebook because they can just go. Yeah, that's some jackass on Facebook. It's full of jackasses.

Fiest: That was one thing that I discussed when I met with my committee, when I did my thesis proposal. I had mentioned every reason in the world why Gary Johnson and Bill Weld were 10 times more qualified than Donald Trump to be president just on executive experience alone. And one of my committee chairs is very much a Democrat and she said that even with them identifying as libertarian she didn't feel that she could trust them because they were Republicans. To her, a Republican is a racist and someone who wants to take money away from her

grandmother's Social Security and all that. And I told her that one of the things that was important to me, is for Libertarians to provide a space for people to discuss free markets and discuss and all these different ideas without having to be affiliated with all the baggage frankly that comes with the Republican Party. I think I got a little bit of her attention with that but now I just becomes backing that up and making that conversation available.

Sarwark: I mean with that with that particular ticket, they both won re-election by substantial margins and a 2 to 1 Democratic state in the case of New Mexico, and a 3 to 1 Democratic state in the case of Massachusetts.

Fiest: The Kennedy State.

Sarwark: Weld holds the record for the highest vote total for a gubernatorial candidate in that state. Forever. He got something like 78 or 80 percent of the vote. So that's the response on that particular issue. But I do get Republican, as a brand identity, has a lot of baggage. This was a disagreement that I had with some of the senior people in the Johnson campaign, because they came from this background where Republicans still have a cache to it and they were afraid of libertarianism as an identifier having too much of that crazy person vibe. I was trying to explain that where we're at now is a society, Republican actually carries negative baggage. Libertarian, while it doesn't have the same brand identity, the brand identity it has is generally positive. We have low negatives. We have high positives. We just have a low name recognition overall, or people don't know what exactly it is, but not to the point like Republican. Republican, at this point, is an exceedingly toxic brand. Our senator here, Sinema, she's a Democrat, and her campaign, I don't think used the word Democrat one time that I saw in any media. Because it's Arizona. She knew where she was running and she knew what other things she would have to answer for. And the irony is that she actually formally ran as a Green Party candidate. She is one of the only openly bisexual, and I want to say atheist, members of Congress, and now the Senate. She didn't play up any of that when she wanted to be Senator and that's why she's a senator. So, I think with Republicans, you know, we're at a point where that whole, "You have to run as a Republican if you want to win," thing is a lot less resonant because Republicans are losing right and left.

Fiest: Because Glenn is not the only libertarian turned Republican I'm interviewing and sadly, the other one is in was in New Hampshire Carla Gerick.

Sarwark: Oh, yeah, I know Carla. Yeah, we talked to Carla.

Fiest: We met when she hosted Free Talk Live and they had a special show where it was only the women. I was I was engaged because there's not a whole lot of women right now in the party. I reached out and she's just wonderful. I just love her but she was another one that really surprised me that she started to run as a Republican because...this is the one who challenged the right to record police all the way up to the state supreme court. And the fighting against the Bearcat and I'm like, I can't believe they would take her with that kind of a background. So that one was another one that ultimately disappointed but you know...

Sarwark: Parties are very fluid. There are a lot of Libertarians in both the Democratic and Republican parties in New Hampshire. New Hampshire is just it's different and so I wouldn't read too much into that for the rest of the country.

Fiest: What I'm going to do from here is I want to jump onto a few issues. I know most of them I did pull or I could from the platform on the website, but since this is you know academic research. I just wanted to reach out to you directly on some of these and not just cut and copy a bunch of talking points. Okay. So one thing that I wanted to ask you about was what is the reason why we do have so few women and people of color and young people within the party why am I struggling to find so many female friends within this party?

Sarwark: I don't know. That could be because of where you're at because I do see a lot more women in the party than the stereotypes would suggest. Our current interim executive director is a woman, our previous political and executive director was a woman, our membership managers a woman, our designer as a woman.

Fiest: Jess...

Sarwark: Yes. Jess. There's a lot more women in the party than I think people give us credit for. People of color were still short on. Historically everyone comes to the libertarian party through their own path. There's something that triggers them that they want to be a Libertarian. It could be guns. It could be immigration. It could be the War on Drugs. It could be ending the fed, or gold or whatever it is. Historically Libertarians have gone out of their way to talk to other people about the thing that brought them to the party. Which is kind of the opposite of what salespeople are supposed to do, which is listen to what the other person cares about and then talk to them about their issues. We've done a poor job of talking to communities of color about what values we have that are resonant with the issues that they have. A lot of it is the social proof and less people see people like them in the Libertarian Party. They don't feel like it's a place for them. So that's going to be an uphill battle. But we're trying to put out messaging that makes it clear where we stand and be an open and welcoming place and we'll see how it goes.

Fiest: When I talk to people online, because I do consider myself a libertarian feminist, the term libertarian is just as important as the term feminist, and when I go online and discuss these things the first thing I get often is well, "You can't be libertarian and be a feminist because feminist is collectivist..."

Sarwark: Collectivism...

Fiest: Yea...

Sarwark: No, it's a common fallacy. It also is used to tell people that they shouldn't fight for marriage equality because you can't identify as gay. If you're a Libertarian that the racial disparities in the criminal justice system should be something that we don't say anything about because you know..

Fiest: Collectivism.



Sarwark: Collectivism is judging a group based on an identity that they have or a demographic but it's not It's not collectivist to know what boxes you check and that's how people identify themselves. There's a gentleman who ran for Court of Criminal Appeals in Texas quite a few times criminal defense attorney out of Harris County Mark Bennett. He tweeted out the other day that racism is about the superiority of mediocrities. Which was one of those things I had to kind of repeat it to myself a couple times before I realized the depth of that idea. If you're if you're dealing in racial characteristics, you're looking at an entire group and then averaging them out and taking the middle, or the mediocrity, of the group, then fighting over the middle of this group, versus the middle of that group over here...up there. That is a denial of individualism. That's where you don't care about whether this guy is really cool, or smart, or nice, or funny. They're part of this broader group and you're not willing to do the work to evaluate them as an individual. But recognizing the difference is that we have, or recognizing what different demographic groups that you're in is not in any way counter to libertarianism. Might be orthogonal to it because libertarianism of political economy is this idea of you know, individual Freedom Uber Alles that doesn't care about your individual ethical or moral, aesthetic preferences. It just allows you the space to have those aesthetic preferences.

Fiest: Well, it's also kind of ironic that you're sitting here identifying yourself as a member of political party telling me that I can't identify as this group over here because it's collectivist.

Sarwark: Yeah, there's a lot there's a lot to unpack there.

Fiest: I had a chance to speak to someone who writes about race for Cato and he had quite a lot to say and we would be here all night to go over it. But I'm glad to hear that you do not buy into that because that's always a big concern. Sometimes I love libertarians and sometimes not. But hey, I'm still here.

How much do you think that we as a party or maybe higher-ups in the party can take advantage of the opportunity that, for the most part, Republicans are very unpopular right now. I saw the editor of Reason Magazine on MSNBC recently. Are we pushing this that, "Hey the Republicans are unpopular right now. And we also believe in free markets. Is the time to get the word out. Now that you know, even Jennifer Ruben is saying, "I'm a Republican but I'm not going to do this party right now because Donald Trump is out of his mind." Do we have an opening here?

Sarwark: We do have an opening. It is not the most productive opening, but it's an opening that we need to take advantage of when it's kind of put in our lap. You know, outreach to the right is probably going to be less productive than outreach to the left at this point because the Republican party is in power. It is very difficult to peel people away from a party that is in power. Because why would they leave they're in charge?

Fiest: Interesting that you say that as far as appealing to the left because I did an interview a few hours before you from someone who doesn't think that we do any appeal to the left. She was like, "That's one of the things that frustrates me about the Libertarian Party. All they do is appeal to the right and they never appeal to the left." So in response to what she said, can you tell me a little bit about how we appeal to the left?



Sarwark: Just look at our press releases. Look at my Twitter feed. The immigration stuff. Historically has been more appealing to the left than the right, although both parties suck on that. All the criminal justice, the drug war stuff tends to appeal to the left. The marriage equality stuff appealed to the left, there's the anti-war stuff is a left-leaning appeal. Other than the tax things and the gun stuff, most of our positions appeal to the left more than the right when you come down to looking at them as positions. We are saddled with a history of conservative fusionism that comes out of the mid 1940s through the 60s and the rise of this idea of communist threat or red menace. So, Fusionism made sense at the time, that it would be the Libertarians and the Republicans versus the Communists, or Libertarians and conservatives versus the Communists. But communism kind of went to hell. They're not the threat anymore and it turns out that we're not actually natural allies with conservatives. Burkean conservatism is the sort of thing that would've allowed slavery to continue because it was the system that was in place and it was very skeptical of change. My conception of libertarianism, what I believe to be correct, but I'm not one of those people likes to say you're not a real libertarian, is that libertarianism is about individual freedom as the highest goal in political economy, which leads you to a lot of sort of abolitionists and very radical positions. You just can't own other people. I don't care how long we've owned other people, it doesn't matter. The system has no legitimacy. And this is where I got into a fight couple of years back with a lot of the more conservatarian people about this whole idea of states rights. If the federal government is more defensive of individual rights in a particular case than the state government, then I'm going to be on the side of the feds. If the state government's more defensive individual rights than the federal government may be on the side of the states. As a Libertarian, individual rights are going to be my highest priority and I don't care what level of government is or isn't dealing with them. I don't think there's anything magical about a state government saying that you can't marry who you love. I don't think that the fact that that's a local decision makes it any better. Anyone who thinks that subsidiarity by itself the idea that local government is best, as some sort of lodestar, has never been to a homeowner's association meeting. Those people are Nazis, right? Legit Nazis. There's nothing magical about having it be close to you other than you can find the person to go yell. But there's nothing that makes that any more beneficial to individual freedom. The only thing subsidiary gets you is the relative ease of moving to a different political jurisdiction. That's all you get. It's easier to opt out. But other than that, there's nothing magic about states rights. And in fact, state's rights tend to be pernicious.

Fiest: I think it's very easy to be pro state's rights, for example in the South when you are a straight, white, Christian male. Ask an African-American gay woman about that and see how they feel.

Sarwark: Exactly. I don't know if you've read it. But Jonathan Roush wrote a book entitled, "Kindly Inquisitors: The New Attacks on Free Thought". His point was that we should not have any governmental laws against hate speech or governmental protections for certain classes or groups. The reason is that governments tend to be the oppressors. And by the time that they get around to defending an oppressed group, the group has achieved a level of societal acceptance where they don't need the defense anymore. We're a lot better off having the haters out themselves by being able to say what terrible thing they want to say so you know where the enemy is. The example of gay rights was the one that he used. Most of the oppression of the homosexual community in the United States was governmental. They were the ones who said

you couldn't be a school teacher. They were the ones who said that you couldn't get a security clearance. They were the ones who went and busted up people that led to the Stonewall Riots. At the point that you got defense from the government the tide had already shifted. You didn't need it anymore. Government comes in after everything is already done. You can look at cannabis legalization as another example of that. Someone asked me when our politicians were going to start passing marijuana legalization because it's always been by initiative and I said probably when the polls hit about 80 percent in favor, because politicians are spineless. We're not getting on board until it's already past them and that's where opportunity lies in the Libertarian Party is to find those places where you have a 60 plus percent majority of the population is on the side of the issue, but the politicians either due spinelessness or regulatory capture just aren't with the times aren't able to be there. We can go be where the people are and leave the old party politicians behind on both sides.

Fiest: Since you brought up marijuana, which is one of those big controversial issues. I know to us, it's not a controversial. But to most of the world is a controversial issue. Well, let me let me rephrase that. Here in El Paso, it is not a controversial issue. It's not. Trust me. Ask most of my relatives. It is not a controversial issue.

One of the issues that I wanted to touch on is guns. I know where the Libertarian Party stands on guns. Because of all the school shootings we have a lot of people calling for an outright ban on guns. Others are looking to find some kind of compromise, such as magazine sizes, bump stocks and things like that. Is there anywhere the libertarian party would offer up any compromise on banning anything or even lowering the amounts of bullets in a magazine, no more bump stocks or just it's just all or nothing?

Sarwark: I think there are some Libertarians who would acknowledge that individuals probably should not have nuclear weapons because they're not useful for self-defense or defense against a tyrannical government. They caused a lot of collateral damage. Maybe you could get the same sort of agreement for biologicals or you know, like dirty nukes. This is going to do the salt the earth thing, but I think most Libertarians are not going to give you any ground on anything that can be carried by an individual. You can probably get a little wiggle room on like an RPG. It's carried by an individual but it's really for tanks and planes. There's some Libertarians that are gonna be like, "Yea. You should have one of those too because, why not?" We just put out a press release because they brought magazine limits back in the Congress over in The House. What we pointed out was Libertarians would like to reduce the amount of gun violence in the United States. And we're one of the few political parties that actually has plans that would reduce the amount of gun violence. The Democrats would like to focus on things like high-capacity magazines and expanding the number of people required to have a background check prior to a firearm transfer. The Republicans, at least the president, are willing to give up things like bump stocks, which are basically a novelty item. It's akin to putting a 5 liter Mustang engine into a Miata. It's not a good idea, but it probably from my perspective shouldn't be illegal. It's just dumb. You waste a lot of ammo with a bump stock and you have very low accuracy and that's just me, as a gun guy, being like this is stupid. Both of them are tinkering around the edges and where we really have a gun violence problem in this country, it on the demand side not the supply side. They want to affect whether or not you can get a big magazine, or whether or not you got to go through a background check, or whether or not you can get the goofy bump stock attachment to make your going to shoot a million rounds a minute. We live in a country about

350 million people. There are probably about two to five hundred thousand independent pharmaceutical distributors actively operating in this country right now who are distributing pharmaceuticals that the government has chosen to make illegal to distribute or sell. If they have any dispute over marketing territory, whether or not a delivery was made or not, whether a contract was fulfilled, whether a purchase agreement was executed in the way they're supposed to, they are not able to, because those pharmaceuticals are considered illicit, they are not able to go to court to resolve that dispute peacefully. If I have a dispute with another car dealer I can sue them. If we can't work it out I can go to court. Somebody's going to win and somebody's going to lose, and it's not going to affect anybody that's outside of our transaction. That judgment applies to either me or the other dealer. It doesn't apply to the guy walking down the street. But if you force people out of the legal system and you force them to resolve their disputes with force, which is what the whole point of government was supposed to be was to allow us to not resolve our disputes with force, then you force them to use guns in order to resolve that dispute. Those resolutions often spill over into the community, innocent bystanders get shot, and it creates a demand where everybody who's involved in that business has to be armed whether they're interested in guns or feel danger. It's the nature of it. we made it an illicit market. If you really want to reduce gun violence in the country, ending the racist War on Drugs would do way more than tinkering with magazine size or bump stocks or any of the goofy stuff. Let's focus on the actual problem. The vast majority of gun violence in this country comes from handguns and it is related to gang violence often tied to the drug trade. If we really want to deal with it, let's deal with it at the source, let's not dick around at the edges. And so that's the perspective that I have is libertarian. The reason I'm not willing to contemplate any of these restrictions on people's right to defend themselves however they choose, as long as they don't actively go out and try and hurt somebody, is: One, it's a violation of their individual rights, but two it's stupid, even if we agree on the premise we want to reduce gun violence. It's a dumb way to do it.

Fiest: These people who are fighting for gun control are focusing on the background checks. If I get so mad at you that I feel the need to kill you, I'm not going to go buy a gun that can be traced back to me. I'm going to get one off the black market somewhere. I cannot remember the last time any of these people who are dying to protect us from guns even acknowledged that or had a plan to even deal with that. Or we have Obama losing guns, you know Fast and Furious, and this is all from the Democrats. I mean Obama was a Democrat. Trump had done that, or if Gary Johnson had become president and done that there would have been hell to pay.

Sarwark: Well the right and the left both have a blind spot. So the Right thinks, "Hey, we can just make drugs illegal and then people will stop using drugs." ...which is dumb. It doesn't work that way. And the Left thinks we can just make guns illegal and then people will stop having guns, which is dumb. It doesn't work that way. The problem is the Right can't see that the same rule that applies to guns which they're happy to quote, "If you outlaw guns, only outlaws will have guns." They don't have the insight to apply the thing that they know is true about the guns to the drugs. And the people on the other side don't know how to apply the thing they know is true, "If you can't keep drugs out of the prisons you sure as hell can't keep him out of the country." and apply it to the guns. The practicalities of implementing these solutions are the best counter argument because they're the one that is least politically fraught, it's least likely to offend someone. If you talk to somebody who really wants to confiscate AR-15s. For example, AR15 should be illegal. You don't say, "I have a natural right to defend myself," because they don't

give a shit. That's not their values. So you want us to ban all the AR-15s. Do you know how many of those are in the country? Usually they don't. Somewhere between 30 and 50 million of them. How would you get them back? Well, we hire people to register them and give them in. Okay, so if people don't what are you going to do? We would have the cops do something. If they go to the house and they don't want to give you the gun what happens? You start running that through and then you point out that this is going to lead to a bunch of people getting shot. They will often kind of back away from it and go, "You make a good point that would be really hard to do. Probably very unpleasant and there's some cost that I don't want to pay." And that same discussion works on the other side. If you talk to people who are pro-life to the point that they want to criminalize abortion, you don't talk to him about you know, whether or not a fetus is a person because that gets all fraught with ethical and moral questions. You start walking through with them, "Well, what would you do to stop it? How would you enforce your laws? How would you check? And if this is a murder you're definitely going to prosecute whoever paid for the murder right?" Then you start you see the wheels start to turn because there are things that are easy to say in an argument that are not easy to say when you're talking about implementation. It's easy for people to say so and so should be executed or killed. If you took that same person and you're like, "Here's a gun. There's the person. I've tied them up. Go ahead." There's a disconnect that they have from it, right? Where saying it in the abstract is easy, doing it as hard.

Fiest: I hope doing it is hard because you know what? I have talked to some people who are so dead set against abortion. I think some of them would.

Sarwark: The hardcore people will tell you. "Yes, I do think we should prosecute the mother just like any other murder for hire."

Fiest: ...and the doctor.

Sarwark: Well that's the thing as the doctor is the hitman basically Those people exist and I don't know how much you're going to get past that point. But I know that if you start asking those questions and having that discussion, you're going to find out that it's a much smaller group that really supports that level of government regulation.

Fiest: I hope so. I grew up in the Republican party and that level of the desperate need to control somebody for any reason, let alone all the complications that come with possibly the need to terminate a pregnancy, I just could not with these people. You mentioned the drug war. So tell me a little bit more about how the drug war is causing all this immigration up here through Mexico and into El Paso.

Sarwark: The drug war causes the immigration pressure in so much as Guatemala and El Salvador and most of Honduras Nicaragua. Most of your Central and South American countries have been basically ripped apart with violence because of the cartels fighting over territory in an extrajudicial way. That is creating the pressure for people to want to seek asylum up in the United States because their country has been made so bad through US government policy in criminalizing drugs and forcing our International neighbors to adopt our policies. So that's the reason for the pressure. The whole immigration issue in the drug issue are kind of parallel, but

they don't always attached real tightly. The same people the coyotes are going to be moving across the border may also be moving drugs, but it's kind of incidental. They're not they're not attached at the same level. But I think the War on Drugs in Central and South America is causing a lot of the pressure for people to want to leave those countries.

Fiest: So we're causing the problem down here, the people are coming up to avoid those problems and finding more problems when they arrive.

Sarwark: Correct.

Fiest: I just feel terrible about that because I had my DNA tested and I have attachment to this area of the country. I don't see any difference between those people and me. If I graduate with my Master's Degree then I can't get a job here, so I move elsewhere I am no different than them. Trump takes these buses and they just dump these people in the middle of downtown El Paso and we have you know, all these Charities coming in try to take care of them. And there's only so many resources. And it just it's particularly sad to be here every day and see young children by themselves.

Sarwark: This is one of the issues that's very important is economics teaches us that you can do anything but you can't do everything. That's the nature of Economics. You have limited resources, but you have unlimited opportunity. And what people don't realize is if you try to do everything, then you're not going to do anything. We see this in a very controversial area of sex offender registries. The expansion of sex offender registries to cover everything from indecent exposure to Romeo and Juliet consensual activity to peeing in the alley behind the bar and getting caught, in addition to child rape and child pornography and all these other really heinous crimes. You put everybody on the registry then you actually minimize the ability to focus on the threat because everything is bad, all these people are bad, but it's not the same level of bad. That's the same thing that happens when you have an administration that's going to say all immigration is terrible, the whole border is a mess, we have to go after everybody and everything and all the time, build the wall and blah blah blah. You're not focusing on the place where you can have the most effect. If most of your drugs are coming through ports of entry, then you could have the best effect on minimizing the amount of drugs coming in by focusing on ports of entry. But instead we're going to focus on everything because it's scary.

Fiest: Well because brown immigration is scary. I mean Trump has made it very clear he would welcome more immigrants Norway, but people have that color or not making their way up through Mexico.

I know because of the whole idea of self-ownership the LP most likely supports legalization of prostitution.

Sarwark: Yes. I think we specifically have a sex work platform plank now.

Fiest: Does that include just throwing it to the free market or like a Nevada setup? Is there any particular way of doing it the LP supports?

Sarwark: The platform is neutral on whether or not there's any government involved. It doesn't specify any particular model like the Scandinavian model or in Nevada model.

“The libertarian party supports the decriminalization of prostitution. We assert the right of consenting adults provide sexual services to clients for compensation and the right of clients to purchase sexual services from consenting sex workers.”

Fiest: I know that we got that the libertarian party also basically legalize all drugs across the board.

Sarwark: Yes.

Fiest: And that includes prescription drugs for research?

Sarwark: Yep.

Fiest: I want to go back to your mayoral campaign for a second. One of the reasons that I'm interviewing Barry Hess is I know he has taken a hit by a lot of the laws making it necessary that people who are part of third parties must get ungodly amount of signatures. And in that way waste all kinds of time and money just getting those signatures. Were you impacted by any of those laws?

Sarwark: Not personally because the mayoral campaign being a non-partisan campaign, all candidates for mayor had get 1,500 signatures citywide from any registered voter. So I wasn't impacted by having to only get from libertarians or unaffiliated voters. I could get from any registered voter. All of my opponents, regardless of what their personal political registration, was had to get the same number of signatures.

Fiest: Is there anything that either the Arizona LP or the national LP are doing to fight to get some of these laws removed or repealed or just getting them out of the way?

Sarwark: The Arizona libertarian party has a federal lawsuit against the Secretary of State regarding the law and its violation of the First Amendment. We did not prevail in the district court in Arizona, but we are set for oral argument in the ninth circuit next month. So yes, we are fighting really hard.

Fiest: Is this is this anything the national LP is involved in or is it just the states?

The national LP is supportive of it, but I think the state has done all the funding for counsel and stuff.

Fiest: Okay. I skipped over a question, but I think you did touch on it. Does the LP officially have a stance on hate crime legislation? I think you may have touched on that.



Sarwark: We're opposed to it. The concept of hate crime legislation is too fraught with violation of rights to freedom of speech, and freedom of conscience. If you're going to have a law against a criminal activity like hurting somebody, assaulting someone, killing someone, raping someone...it should be based on the activity and not on the state of mind of the person doing it. That leads to much into this idea of you know, you're not having equal protection for people, you're singling out certain people based on their politically protected beliefs and speech in order to enhance the crime. That's not to say a jury or a judge in sentencing can't take into account statements, acts that provide a context of the crime the same way that they can take into account mitigating circumstances. They should be able to take into account aggravating circumstances, but we are opposed to there being a different law for somebody that kills somebody versus somebody kills somebody because they were black.

Fiest: If I get mad and I kill a woman because she had an affair with my husband, or if I kill her because I don't like her because she's black, there's really no difference. Bottom line is, this person is deceased due to my actions.

Sarwark: The law should apply equally. There is still that space for mitigating and aggravating circumstances at sentencing. If you had a heat-of-passion murder where that woman was in bed with your husband at the time that you killed her, that would probably be treated more leniently than if you followed her to Starbucks and shot her in the back of the head and said bad things about her race when the cops came to pick you up. It's not that you shouldn't take those things into account, but that shouldn't be how the law is written.

Fiest: I had an opportunity yesterday afternoon to speak to Jonathan Blanks who writes for Cato on race. I asked him if he thought that either the LP or the philosophy of libertarianism had a race problem. Do we have a race problem? He said to a certain extent he thinks that we do. I wanted to ask if you agreed with that.

Sarwark: I don't think that the philosophy has a race problem. I don't think the party has a race problem. Although we have the under representation that I mentioned earlier. I think the race problem stems from the prior fusionism. I think it's a holdover where we got a lot of people who came from the political right who may have already had certain racial biases who came in and thought, "This is how things should be." The other place where as a party in a movement we have to be careful is libertarianism attracts people who are political outsiders. The issue is sometimes people are political outsiders because they have non-mainstream philosophical beliefs about individual freedom. Sometimes they're outsiders because they're racist jerks. Being accepting of people who are minorities politically should not be taken as being giving sanction or approval to people and saying that those ideas that are outside the mainstream are good or right. I think it's actually incumbent on us as libertarians, more so than people of other political ideologies, to be very clear about our ethical and aesthetic preferences because we're so laissez-faire as far as what you're allowed to do. We wouldn't prohibit any sort of terrible speech or thoughts or ideas so it's more important to say what is and isn't good.

Fiest: If we're not going to stand back and stop someone from saying something who's racist because we believe in the right of free speech...total all.



Sarwark: We do say that's shitty racism. Right? The party has an official stance on that. This is not up for debate.

Larry Sharpe

Fiest: What interested you in electoral politics?

Sharpe: What interested me in electoral politics? Meaning for me to be interested in voting, with the interest in supporting, or for me to be interested in running or all three?

Fiest: All three?

Sharpe: As a youngster I didn't start voting until I was 20. I only voted in presidential campaigns because I was in the Marine Corps and I was overseas. I didn't think that I could vote locally because I didn't know who was even running locally. I wasn't local. I was overseas. So, I didn't really care much about local politics. I only cared about presidential campaigns and I voted by mail because I was away. When I came back in the 90s, I started to care a little bit, but I cared more. but I was disenchanted. I thought the Rs the Ds weren't really doing anything for me. The War on Drugs was doing nothing but hurting people I knew. Including my mother. My mother was a former addict before she passed. So, none of it was helping me. It wasn't doing good. We were in perpetual war and not winning any of them. Nothing was going well. I didn't like it. So, I became a guy who liked Perot and Nader because they weren't the mainstream but to be fair with you I had no idea what their policies were. If you would ask me, "what's great about Nader's policies? I'd say, "I don't know. He's not them."

Fiest: He's not one of the big mean guys.

Sharpe: Yes, he's not them. Therefore, he's the best guy I got. So that's kind of how I thought of both Perot and Nader. Then I kind of was disenchanted until Obama came in. When Obama came, I thought, "This guy's got to be different. He's black. He's from a city. He's young. This this guy gets it. I'm sure he gets it." I was fooled he didn't get it either. He was no better than all the rest. Didn't get it at all. And what hurt me most about that is he had given me my hope back. And then when he was no better than anybody else I was I was ready to stop voting. I was ready to quit. Then I heard Gary Johnson speak in 2012. And when Gary Johnson spoke in 2012, I was able to hear him. Gary Johnson's an entrepreneur like I am. And that's why, I think we connected immediately right away. He was saying things and I was like, "Oh this guy's a construction guy. This guy start his own business." There were many people before him who spoke better than he did, but I couldn't hear them.

Fiest: Or you had heard what they had to say million times already and we're buying it.

Sharpe: Well, no,. Guys like Ron Paul was saying good things but I didn't hear Ron Paul, right? A lot of people in the movement now came from Ron Paul in 2008. I didn't really hear him right to me. He was another Republican. Now I get him but my brain was like, "Another Republican. Another Democrat. I don't care. I don't hear you." But Gary Johnson was different. He was an entrepreneur. He spoke things that made sense to me and there was a connection to me because in my personal life and my business, I teach leadership. I teach business growth. I teach networking sales. So I'm a business consultant trainer teaching colleges. It's what I do for a

living. I had been teaching post-industrial leadership for eight years. Post-industrial leadership is all about not the factory world where everyone does what they're told, everyone has to be in the right cog in the right week. That that goes away in today's world. I need your intuition. I need your expertise. I need your initiative. I need to creativity to do that. I need you to want to be here. I need you to understand the goal without me being there. I need you to do it and to do it on your own. I want you to volunteer. I want you to be free. That's what I want. I was teaching libertarian leadership already not knowing it was obtained leadership, right? So when all of a sudden I hear Gary Johnson speak things begin to connect for me, wow. It seems to make sense, but I wasn't fooled right away. I wasn't because I've been fooled before and I was like, "You know what? I'm not gonna buy this." So I literally went to libertarian party events. I never been to party events before. It was the first time I actually could go. I went and met people. I thought, "All right. He's my people," and I supported Gary Johnson in 2012. I supported Michael McDermott here in New York state. He ran for governor in 2014. I supported Alex Merced ran for Senate. And, again, Gary Johnson who ran for president 2016 and then I ran in 2017 and 2018. So that is what got me on board. And again, it's like the most zealous are the converted. So, I was converted therefore. I am the most zealous right? Because that's how that kind of works. So, I fall into that same thing I say often the most zealous are the converted. I was converted and so now I'm the most zealous.

Fiest: Well, we're so excited about what we found that at least we believe to be different than any other message out there. I mean, I don't consider myself one of those people that come up to your house every Sunday, "Can I tell you the good news?" I don't think I'm quite that bad. But if there is a political discussion going on where I do hear some frustration and certainly, under Donald Trump, I have heard quite a bit of frustration. I'm happy to give my opinion. It seems to be a little bit alternative but let me share it with you and see what you think.

Sharpe: Well, that's the issue in the long run here. The country is becoming more and more split. You can see it. Everyone knows it. They get it right people are people are deciding who you are by one or two questions and putting you in a box. I know I'm winning because to the most staunch conservative, I'm a terrible liberal. To the most staunch liberal, I'm a terrible conservative. So that's how I know I'm winning. I'll give you a good example. I would go upstate New York last year and meet someone who is a farmer, and a farmer who's losing their farm. New York State obviously is a very old state, one of the first 13 and you have some farms in upstate New York have been in someone's family for seven Generations. They're losing that farm and they come to me and the first question they ask me is, "What do you think about Trump?" Why do you care? Whether Trump is President, whether he's the Emperor, whether he's the Milkman, it doesn't change the fact that you're going to lose your farm. Whether I love him and think he's the best president ever, or I hate him, it doesn't change that at all. That's critical and we see ourselves being split based upon that and the only way to make that change is the Liberty Movement. The Liberty Movement is the only movement that says I'm not going to convert you. People will tell you very often, "Well Libertarians are you know, socially liberal and fiscally conservative." That's not true. The party as a whole often becomes that by default. But the individuals are very different. There are people who are staunch conservatives or staunch liberals and they are libertarians because they just don't think someone else should be forced to do what they say. The factor is the force aspect. The Libertarian Party says, "Please be as liberal or as

conservative as you want to be, just don't force your views on others.” That's it. That is the Third Way.

Fiest: That's what brought me in. I come from I come from a mixed-race background. My mom's family is Mexican and my dad's family is white. These are two very different groups of people. And, as long as we are all getting along...that was kind of the basis of my whole life. And libertarianism is smack dab right in the center of that. So I came I came to appreciate you know, that whole dynamic.

You mentioned that you were in the Marines. Do you feel like that's had any implication on your libertarian on your libertarian journey? Has it helped?

Sharpe: Yes. In ways that weren't obvious at the time. I grew up in a very Democrat household. I grew up in New York City. I grew up in the Bronx, which meant in my household politics are very simple. Democrats, good. Republicans, evil. Done. Yeah, you said that's how it works. Yes, very simple life is simple, easy. Black and white. But I joined the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps is the most conservative of all the branches and the vast majority of people who I respected, who I loved, who I would have literally died for, most of them were conservative. Most of them are Republicans. Ronald Reagan was my first Commander in Chief. So that really changed my viewpoint like, “These Republicans, they aren't bad guys at all. In fact, love these guys.” Something's wrong here. It didn't make any sense. Bu Democrats are my family. I don't hate Democrats either, but I didn't hate Republicans. And the idea of hating someone because they have an R or D by their name went away in the Marine Corps. So I think when it comes to that, yes that helped me tremendously and thinking, “Why am I hating someone because they have an R or D by their name? They're either a bad person or not, right? And I was not a D because I joined the party or because I cared, but because my family was. The thing that really got me specifically in the Marine Corps, initiative is critical. It is praised, you give accolades for having initiative. They want you to take charge of stuff and just do stuff. The culture is about that. The Marine Corps has the lowest percentage of officer to enlisted ratio. The Air Force is 1 to 4. The Marine Corps is 1 to 12. So what that means is there are very few officers compared to enlisted, which means there's very little guidance. Go and do and I think that has always been in my head since then. Go and do. Which means I don't require someone over me telling me what to do. I know what's right, go do it. Take charge of things go do things. I think that helped me and that's probably how my Marine Corps took made that work.

Fiest: One of the things that I saw when I was doing my research about Libertarians running for office was we kind of got this reputation amongst some as Diet Republicans. I'm going to interview two people that were longtime Libertarians who ran for office as Republicans, but you never care about Libertarians Democrats. And so I'm wondering why do you think this is? Why do we have this Dynamic?

Sharpe: There are two things. As a general rule, some people don't actually realize we do pull from both sides. We absolutely do. Look at the actual party, you will see we do pull from both sides. Republicans come to us easier, but they also leave faster. Democrats come to us slower and less, but they stay. When we get people from the left, they're done. From the right, they linger, some stay, some don't. The biggest issue is, as a general rule, when people are afraid, they

make bad decisions. When groups are afraid they make bigger bad decision. That is always based upon two things they either scream for socialism, or they scream for a strong man. One of the two, it always ends up in dictatorship. That's the endgame. If you have a strong man, the strong man can say, "Well, I will do some libertarian things." So, we lean more towards that because the guy can be a good dictator, maybe. Right? Socialism is directly against libertarianism. I think that's why you find more right than left because of that. But remember about the left, in the long run, and I mean 20, 30 years long run not like next month, the Democratic party will be our bigger ally. This will be maybe a generation away. The reason is most people on the left, they want exactly the same outcomes that we want, they just disagree completely on how to get there. We are diametrically opposed on how to get there. But they want the same things. They do want people to be treated fairly. They just think the only way is to force people through law. Once you get someone on the left to understand that law doesn't work. The best defense against racism is people not being racist. That's the best defense, not punishing those who are racist. That's not the best defense. That makes you feel righteous because you punish them but...

Fiest: You've just irritated them and made it worse.

Sharpe: That's correct. So if they get those concepts, and when they do, they will come to us because they realized, "Oh. We want the same outcome, and your ways a better way." But that will take literally decades of education and constant showing up as we get small victories. However, it will actually work. Now the average person the right feels the same way. They want the right things, but there's a chunk on the right that just wants to be righteous, period. That chunk would never join us because that righteousness is more important than anything else. And their less likely be able to Lord it over people here because we're not we're not going to bow down to anybody like that. That chunk will never come to us. So in the 30 years from now or whatever that long term is there will be some people who still be righteous on the left who will actually join the Republican Party. And they won't call Republican party more their call it something else like the Constitution party or the King Party, or something like that. And it'll basically be a theocracy. And they will be against the Libertarian Party. It'll be autocracy versus freedom is what in 30 or 40 years from now it will become. If we don't do that, we're going to hit Civil War.

Fiest: We might hit it anyway

Sharpe: That's correct. If we have a balance between clear autocracy and libertarianism and, we're fighting that balance, that's a survivable fight without violence. That's a fight we can survive with testing people moving across borders people who are happier being free. Not everybody wants to be free. And that's fine too. As long as you voluntarily don't want to be free, go ahead. If you want to give up some of your rights, if you want to give up some of your freedoms, people do it every day. People put themselves in rehab, people join the military, people put themselves into hospitals, people let their family members have power of attorney over them. People do give up their freedom, as long as it's voluntary. Socialism is not necessarily bad. Voluntary socialism is awesome. We give money to our families, to our church groups, to our civic associations. We say, "Hey take my money. I'm okay. Spend it how you like." That's socialism. But again, that's me deciding where I put my money and I can stop. I can say I don't

like that organization, or that church, or that civic association. I'm pulling my money back. I disagree. Government, not so much.

Fiest: Right. It doesn't entitle everyone else to go by your decision.

Sharpe: That's correct. And other people will join my church, or my civic association, others who agree, "Hey, let's go do this. I think it's a wonderful idea."

Fiest: I agree absolutely agree. So one of the things that caught my attention about you that I wanted to speak to you on was your role in running for governor of New York? Yep, so tell me a little bit about that. What prompted you to do that?

Sharpe: There were several things that prompted me to do that. The first one was I knew that we had to have some form of leadership in libertarian movement. Right after 2016, I ran to become the vice presidential candidate in 2016. I was beaten by Bill Weld by 31 points I had a feeling that once the campaign was over they would go away. I thought another four years of this happening and then someone goes away and we're lost. So someone had to pick up the mantle, so I did. I knew it had to be me. I didn't think anyone else would and no one else did, so I picked it up. I had a feeling that was gonna happen. So I had to do something. I wasn't sure it was going to be Governor yet. I put out a video the night of the election, as soon as Trump was elected, I had a video prepared. It went right off saying, "Guys, we're gonna be fine. I'm going to run a campaign. It's gonna be a great campaign. We're going to do this. Stay with me. Let's do this." So I knew I was gonna run something. I had a thing it was governor, but I wasn't sure. Another reason I picked governor is because in New York state you have to get ballot access through the governor's race and I knew that I was the only one to do that New York State. No one else can do it. I was the only one that could take the time off. I was the only one that could stop my life for a year and a half and make it happen. So that was another issue that was thinking about, but also something else. I was thinking about leaving New York State. I was considering moving to North Carolina. I went to North Carolina to check out homes and places, I looked outside Charlotte and I thought, "This place is great."

Fiest: I'm glad to hear you say that because I'm actually graduating in May and I've had my eye on North Carolina.

Sharpe: Yes. I was like this place is great. I could sell my house here in New York City, buy a mansion in Charlotte, right? There's a big city, I could work there, I could consult. This is great. Taxes are low. What the hell am I thinking? Then I got mad and I thought, "Why does my state suck?" Well, you live in a high tax, big government state. I live in a horrible State. I live in New York City. I live in the belly of the beast. Alexandria Ocasio Cortez is my rep, right..

Fiest: ...and you can't buy a soda more than 16 ounces, I mean, God bless you.

Sharpe: They never passed that law. That was shot down. But AOC, Miss Green New Deal, is my rep right. I don't mean in my city. I mean my district right? So I live in the belly of the beast. So I'm saying to myself I don't want it to suck. Then I realized if I could influence New York State, I can influence entire country. We were ranked 50th by Cato in freedom. If I could move



New York State we can move anything. As a business consultant, I very often want to go into businesses that are broken people say, "Larry, why?" I want to go to a business when I go help out that's like...things are on fire. That's what I want. Like, why would you want easy to fix? If you already have a good team, and a good business, that's harder to fix. If you've got a broken team, I just walk in and go, "Hey boss. Nobody died today. Oh my God. Nobody died? Larry, you're amazing." soap never nobody died. I can do that. So New York State is the same thing. Any impact I can make a New York state shows impact. Another reason why I ran is I wanted to be able to show everybody...Democrats, Republicans, Libertarians, Greens, third parties...that being a third party doesn't mean you can't run a real campaign. You can actually run a real campaign and I did. I raised half million dollars, had a full team across the entire state, all 62 counties. I got lots of impact, everything was against me, and I still did very well. Third parties got crushed in 2018. Completely murdered all around. We got totally torn up. I had a big victory compared to everyone else who got killed. So I showed everyone that it can be done and that was the goal. So there were several reasons why I ran I hope I answer your questions.

Fiest: Yes, you did. We discussed a New York being a big government, high tax state. What would have been your number one priority day, one and office?

Sharpe: As I mentioned often was the idea of unfunded mandates. Don't know if you have this. What state are you in right now?

Fiest: Texas.

Sharpe: That's right. Thank you. Yes. I don't know if you have this in Texas, but in New York, we have what's called an unfunded mandate. That means Albany, our capital, tells the countys, "You must buy all these things. And by the way, we're not giving you any money." So that's called an unfunded mandate. So Albany says, You must buy all these things." So now the county has to buy all these things, 90 percent of their budget is taken up. How can they innovate? How can they change? How can they do anything of any real value where they've only got ten percent of a budget? Could you imagine? I tell people this who were actual county reps, I would say, Imagine if you can start your budget at zero. You have to rethink your entire budget. Not just that, you could make real change. Not just that, people would have to come to you and care about local government. and vote on their own budget and decide what's valuable to them. This is what I was trying to achieve, because the sad part is in New York state, we have a very low voter turnout now. Only about 30-40 percent of New Yorkers who can vote, vote. It's so bad in some local jurisdictions, they can't find those people to actually hold all the billets. It's like three people show up, "Okay. Guess you're the chair. I'm the vice chair and your Treasurer." Why? Cause you showed up. Because he showed up. We have we have a lot of that too. So, once you get rid of unfunded mandates, you for small government to have to react, spur Innovation, allow some counties to come up with some new ideas. And this is what I wanted.

Fiest: Okay, great. That's great. That sounds like a great idea. So, did this run for office just burn you out or are you looking to run in the future? Maybe go somewhere that's a little less liberal, more smaller government. Involve yourself there like North Carolina? They're not quite small government. But..



Sharpe: Two things. Did it burn me out? Of course he did. It was brutal. I mean it was a year and a half of punishment. Imagine going to year and a half having a family, I have a wife who doesn't work and two kids. I didn't get a paycheck for year and a half. So just imagine of course it burned me out, hurt me financially, of course it did. But it was worth it because I care about my state, I care about our country and someone's got to do it. It's me. I accept that it's me. But am I burned out, of course I am? People ask me about 2020. I got bills to pay. Unless someone's gonna write me a check for a couple million bucks to keep me running then fine. But unless that's going to happen, I've done my bit for king and country. Now it's time for someone else right. I helped write the rules for my state. I'm not even on my state committee. I'm not on the committee for my political party, Libertarian Party of New York State. Someone else does that. Marines know that you have to grow other leaders. My goal is not to be the Larry Sharpe show. That's not it. My goal is groom leaders. I need someone else to pick up this mantle. I picked it up after Gary Johnson now, it's back in the floor again. Let someone else pick it up. So, will I run again? Probably yes. I don't know when. It's not this year. That's for sure.

Fiest: You're still recovering probably I mean right financially. You're probably going to need a few years.

Sharpe: That's correct.

Fiest: And if you're looking to move to North Carolina or anywhere else outside of New York, you have to get yourself situated in settled and then continue to recover and then finally decide.

Sharpe: That's correct. So no time soon. Am I burned from running? No, not at all. I still do events in New York state every month. I get 20 30 40 people show up. I still raise money. I support the candidates. I just did a video to support a Libertarian Party of Florida. I'm supporting a candidate here in Western New York Duane Whitmer. I'm always supporting candidates still. I always do. And whoever runs for president 2020, I'll be supporting them here in New York state. I'll be raising money for him. I'll be open to do events. If they come to New York City, I'll help to chaperone them around to do the media circuit. Whatever. I'm still in the party. I'm still helping out. I'll do whatever I can but running the near future probably pretty slim.

Fiest: I was doing some research on the LP website. I found something that indicated that there are roughly about a 177 Libertarians either elected or appointed to some kind of office here in the United States, but most of them are kind of small local things. School board's, utility boards. So we seem to do really well there...

Sharpe: It's because they are nonpartisan.

Fiest: ...but as we get bigger the office gets higher we don't do so well.

Sharpe: Because they're nonpartisan. And this is another reason why I ran for governor. What people don't realize is, and sadly I wish the party got this and it doesn't, my campaign was the most important campaign of the entire country for libertarian party. People can see that, and it was and the reason is I was the highest profile guy who actually had an L by his name right. All of the other the high-profile people, didn't run with an L. Right they ran with an "R" or a "C" or

nothing. I was the only one who every single interview, every single press piece, every single media piece was, “Libertarian. Libertarian. Libertarian. Libertarian.” I was trying to rebrand libertarianism. That was the goal. Because we very often hide from that, we run nonpartisan, and we run as a republican. I was running as a Libertarian purposefully because I want to show people you can do it. You should do it. We're not going to, all of a sudden, win until people change their image. Me, a city kid from the Bronx, in New York is libertarian. I'll take that any day of the week. Yeah, let's do that. I'm in.

Fiest: So you don't think it's anything like we're not trusted because we're so new or...

Sharpe: No. It's it's most the average American has no idea what libertarianism is.

Fiest: Yeah, I agree.

Sharpe: They have no idea. So they just think weird kook, right? If you're a Democrat you think, “Libertarians? Those are those are the Koch brothers.” Even though the Koch Brothers haven't supported us in 40 years.

Fiest: I'm not even sure who they are. People always throw that at me when I say I'm libertarian and I'm like, “I don't even know who the Koch brothers are.”

Sharpe: Yeah that one of them ran for president in 1980, I think.

Fiest; And, yea. That's the year I was born so...

Sharpe: Exactly. Republicans think, “Oh, you're all hippies. You pot-smoking hippies”. So if you're Republican we're pot-smoking hippie. If it's Democrat we're Koch brothers corporatists? I guess. I don't know and we are neither those things.

Fiest: No, we're not.

Sharpe: I think most people just don't know what we are, which is why we have to run with our name and we have to have the right people in front of us, which is what I try to do. I want to be the change that I want right. So I model the behavior I wanted from others.

Fiest: Be the change you want to see in the world.

Sharpe: That's what I was trying to do. So, I'm hoping that it worked and other people follow me. Okay, thank you another I've interviewed a few other people since Saturday and the one of the things that I heard from people who wanted to run for office as an L, as you say, is they were often unable to. Often laws are being passed to keep us off the ballot. You must get 500 million signatures and you must raise this amount of money. I talked to one gentleman who dropped 14 thousand dollars of his own money chasing and verifying signatures and all that. Did you run into any of this?

Sharpe: Was he in Arizona?

Fiest: No, he wasn't Kentucky,

Sharpe: Kentucky. Oh my God. Yes.

Fiest: But I did get a chance to talk to Nick Sarwark and he did he did know, you know, obviously the party is struggling with this.

Sharpe: Of course. Yes, they're totally correct. In my own world, they completely screw me over on the ballot. They had to get me on the ballot because we got too many signatures. How it worked is the ballot went down, I was next to someone on the ballot. On the same line with somebody else. That's completely wrong, illegal, immoral, unethical and we brought up and they said, "We don't care and we can do nothing." Because the Board of Elections is run by the two top parties. So, literally if you put your ballot in, and the computer only reads one row, it can't read my vote. So literally I can't get that vote. Second people didn't know that two people were on the same line, so they assumed the other person was my lieutenant governor, and they circled both. There were over a hundred thousand votes, at least have those are mine, gone. Not just that. On some ballots, my name wasn't even on because I was on the wrong line. So they had no chance to vote for me. It was terrible. Now, I could sue but why? I If I lost by 20,000 votes I'd be in court now.

Fiest; You'd be what's going on in North Carolina.

Sharpe: Exactly. It happens all the time. So yes, do they beat us up? Yes. A hundred percent and we can try to fight the laws and we can try to do lawsuits...useless. Because they run the courts, because they run the power. Useless. No value whatsoever. Here's what matters. Be popular. That's all that matters. It sounds so cheesy. It sounds so dumb, but it's exactly the answer. Be popular. We have a lawsuit now, you know, we need a lawsuit now to get us in debates. Never gonna work. It is a colossal waste of time. I support it because Gary Johnson supports it. I am loyal to Gary. If he wants to do something, I support it because he says so. I get it. But it's a waste of time, because here's what will happen. Let's assume we had won the lawsuit in 2016. And now they had to put us in the debates. Here's what would have happened. How do I know this? It happened to me. What would happen is Trump says, "Oh Gary Johnson's going to be there? I'm not showing up." Debate canceled.

Fiest:...and he's just child enough to do that.

Sharpe: Of course. What does CNN, MSNBC, Fox News think? "Where's my ad revenue? I'm not giving up ad revenue." We'll do a town hall. Hilary and Trump...it's just town halls with who they pick. We lose anyway. If you want if you want us in the debates, be popular enough so that people want to see us. It's not about getting ideas across. Those debates are horrible anyway. They ask dumb questions and they say, "The world's ending. Tell us how you're going to fix it. You have one minute." What's wrong with you? Those debates are useless. Anyway, they're all sound like garbage, right? But we have to be seen so what do they care about? Ad revenue. If you're popular, and people want to see you, you'll be in the debates. If Kim Kardashian was a libertarian and she ran for president, we'd be in every debate. Guaranteed. And she would have no idea what she's saying but we'd be in every debate. Because people want to see Kim

Kardashian because she's popular. So you want to solve our problem, be popular. That's what I try to do. Be popular. I was the guy on Joe Rogan. I was guy on Dave Rubin. I was guy who did comedy clubs. I was the guy who did Dave Smith. I was a guy who did Glenn Beck. Why? I'm the guy who does lives every week. I'm the guy who does all my stuff live on Facebook, on YouTube, on Twitter. Why? To be popular. That's the answer. I'm trying to show other people to be popular. If you're popular, people want to see you. If people want to see you, you'll be in debates. I wasn't popular enough. I wish I was more popular. But again, most of us aren't. Also again, I picked up the mantle, let someone else come up behind me, and be more popular than me.

Fiest: While I was researching you for all this one of the things that I came across is that you were adopted.

Sharpe: Yes, correct.

Fiest: I know that there's been a lot of controversy kind of sprinkled around about adoption recently because a lot of people are trying to cut out basically any non-white straight Christian from being able to adopt. Is this a problem you have in New York and how would you react?

Sharpe: Is that true?

Fiest: Yes. They're wanting to block out. It's a lot of basically...evangelical organizations want to keep anyone who doesn't fall in line with what they believe from being able to adopt children. They would rather kids sit in the custody of the state.

Sharpe: That's immoral.

Fiest: Yeah, that's absolutely horrible.

Sharpe: That's terrible. I though Evangelicals were against abortion.

Fiest: Yea. They are.

Sharpe: You'd think you'd want to make adoption easier.

Fiest: Yeah. You would.

Sharpe: I guess not. No. We're not having that New York City at all.

Fiest: Okay, good.

Sharpe: No, not at all. Our issue in New York it's too hard to adopt or possibly be a surrogate. Period. But it's not based upon race or religion. That's not the issue.

Fiest: Why is it too hard to adopt?

Sharpe: Because they assume that, “If your adopting then you might want to kill the kid, or you can't be a surrogate because now it's human trafficking.” It's stupid backward laws that should not exist, that make no sense and no one will touch.

Fiest: So you think this human trafficking stuff is overblown?

Sharpe: It is absolutely overblown. They call a woman who has been caught by a pimp. human trafficking. It's not human trafficking. She's been caught by a pimp. That's not human trafficking. When you grab people from Ukraine and bring him to United States, or you capture them here and lock them up? That's human trafficking. This is illegal prostitution. Not that it's good. It's just not human trafficking. Manslaughter is bad, but it's not murder. Illegal prostitution is still bad, it's just not human trafficking.

Fiest: And there's the question of if prostitution should even be illegal. And I know that's something I've discussed with quite a few people. What would you have done with prostitution as governor of New York?

Sharpe: Well first off, it absolutely should not be illegal. A majority of people, not all, but the majority of people who go into prostitution are purposefully or unconsciously engaging in self-destructive behavior. You think I'm making up? Do your homework. That's what happened. They're engaging in self-destructive behavior. They're searching for something they don't have. Ask anyone who's been in that field they say the same thing, “What I thought I was getting from my pimp was love. That's all I knew. I left my family because of abuse.” That's so common. Why wouldn't I try, if I have any compassion as a human being, to make it as safe as possible? The problem is the vast majority of women, and some men, who go into prostitution, the only way they come out is death or jail. That's it. Now if you look at places where prostitution is legal, that is not true. Not even close. Look at the Netherlands. Look at Nevada.

Fiest: Would you have decriminalized it, or would you have thrown into the free market or done like they do in Nevada?

Sharp: You have to go to Nevada.

Fiest: And why would you say that?

Sharpe: Because when you make radical change too fast, people become afraid and rebel. Even if it's for their own good, even if you're righteous, even if it's correct, doesn't matter. I do change management organizations all the time. It's part of what I do. When you make radical change people rebel, even if it's for their own good. It's human nature. So the first step is Nevada. Then you find the right step after that.

Fiest: So starting with Nevada and moving it to a more free market situation later on?

Sharpe: I would just let consumers decide what makes the most sense right? Some communities aren't going to want it. I wouldn't force it. I'm all about local laws. There are going to be communities who say, “I don't want prostitution in my county.” Okay fine. I'm just saying, at a

state level, I'm not going to say that prostitution is illegal. The county wants to keep it, you know what's going to happen? Some counties will open up brothels. That will happen. Similar to Nevada. Certain places you can have brothels, in other places, you can't. Some counties will open up brothels. Let them. They'll be regulated like any of the business. No different. Same as other businesses. Employees. Protection, right? What does every prostitute who has a pimp? They say, "The pimp beat, me hurt me, hit me, took my money. Well now he can't do that anymore because he goes to jail. You can't do anymore., Dennis Hoff, the guy who passed away in Nevada, He ran the Bunny Ranch. He was basically a pimp right? And what would he do? Did he did he exploit women? I guess. But guess what, he didn't take their money. They made more money than would have made on the street.

Fiest: The question of whether they're exploited comes down to if they're there voluntarily, if they want to be there and if they don't want to be there they can leave. They can go to a different brothel. They can save their money and open up a business. And here's the funny part, if you look at this statistically: Women who go into legal prostitution come out in the end when they leave the field, they always leave the field eventually, when they leave the field statistically they come out better mentally, emotionally, financially. Does that mean that every woman who goes in there comes out fine? No. Going into the sex business can break someone mentally. Most of the men who go in tend to be homosexual, they do it in a homosexual way. Even if they are straight, their clients tend to be more homosexual than straight. There are very few straight, male prostitutes and most prostitutes are women.

Fiest: Well, it is mostly man that are searching for the service.

Sharpe: Right. The vast majority of John's are men. The vast majority. There are women who do it also, but the vast majority are male. So usually you have men who are engaging in homosexual sex or women. And for many of them, it breaks them. But here's the issue, do I completely destroy them by making it illegal and put them in jail, making them criminals and having them have no recourse, no health insurance, drug addicts and everything in the dark black market. Oh my God. Or do I give them the best chance of pulling themselves out of that pit? If I have any compassion in my life, I want to pull the person out of that pit.

Fiest: I don't feel like, as a woman, I don't feel like any woman would ever want to go into that trade as long as it continues to be illegal. For myself Self, you know, I'm finishing up a master's degree soon, I'm almost 40, I'm a single person with no children. It just seems better for it to be a free market issue for me, because then I choose. I like this guy. I don't like this guy as opposed to going into an illegal system where I have a pimp who's beats the hell out of me and tells me what I do. Control over one's life is what libertarianism is all about.

Sharpe: Yes. Absolutely. And if making legal was stop it, that'd be awesome. But it's like it's gone on in our country for how many years.

Fiest: It's the world's oldest profession as they say. If anything, its growing.

Fiest: Imagine the internet and the effect that it had.

Sharpe: That's correct. But even with the internet, here's what's happening. As we use technology, the individual people you see around you, particularly youngsters, they're having trouble making connections. They struggle making connections. As they struggle making connections. It means they struggle romantically also. That's why you have the incels now. That's why you have them. They struggle and when they struggle with the connections, what is their answer? They buy the connection. And that sounds horrible, but you see it happen. I'm not making this up.

Fiest: In theory, it's the first step towards being able to make a human connection if not emotional connection and that may sound very unfortunate that it happens that way but that's just that's just a reality the world we live, in unfortunately. We can either accept that that's what is going to happen or we can start throwing away our cell phones, and our laptops, and our tablets and all that and I'm not I'm not going to do that.

Sharpe:...or we could actually make it to where there is a prostitute who specializes, literally, in pulling incels out of their world. And that's illegal but they already have that. They have people who go to these men, and they almost always are men, and the first contact is actually not sex.

Fiest: Oh the girlfriend game.

Sharpe: Yes, it's just showing this person that you can be intimate with someone period. That you can be intimate with someone, and some of these guys they have no idea what that's like.

Fiest: ....and how sad that is illegal.

Sharpe: Yes. That's my point. That should not be illegal. There's people who are trying to teach someone that you can have a connection with someone. All they know is, no connection or pornography.

Fiest: Or both. Yeah.

Sharpe: Yeah. Those two. No connection and pornography. Wow. There's so much in between those two.

Fiest: And we wonder why they are so screwed up. There's so much in between those two. There are a huge amount of people that don't know that. And you might laugh, "Ha. Ha. They're bad guys put him in jail." Those bad guys are literally shooting up schools.

Fiest: Yea. I was gonna say.

Sharpe: They are literally killing our children. And the answer is, "They're bad guys put him in jail." I don't want to put a guy in jail after he shot up a school. I want a guy to not shoot up a school.

Fiest: Right. To intervene before hand.



Sharpe: Exactly. And if that means he has to go pay somebody to go give him a hug, and that makes him feel better to not shoot a school up. Okay do that. I'm fine with that. No worries. It's not my decision to decide what's right for some guy or some gal. It simply isn't. So let the consumers decide and if there's enough incels who want to pay women to snuggle with them. Please do that, don't shoot a school up. Yes, exactly. Exactly the couple hundred bucks you would have paid for that van you rented so you can go kill people, give that to the woman and have her hug you for an hour.

Fiest: And literally we that's what happened in Toronto. He ran a van into a group of women.

Sharpe: Yes. That's exactly my point. So don't rent the van. There we go. Good with that. No worries.

Fiest: Yes. Absolutely. Especially since I get harassed by those guys online quite a bit. I you know, I would love for them to be doing anything else but telling me how horrible I am, sending me pictures that I don't need to see.

Sharpe: Correct And there are literally people and it's going to sound crazy who you could pay to take your to send pictures to. You can pay them and they'll go, "Send me pictures."

Fiest: Yeah, I've seen that. Pictures are more are the most popular because they are the most easily transmitted and the most quickly transmitted. There's also guys that want your underwear after you've taken them off, your used feminine hygiene products. I mean, oh my God

Sharpe: All kind of stuff.

Fiest; And it's a little bit disturbing to me. But if some woman feels like she could handle it...

Sharpe: You probably know this. But there are some women, that's how they pay their bills. Because there's a market for that right? And I'm fine with it. And then I saw panty vending machines.

Sharpe: Yes, and if someone's fine with that, who am I to decide what's right for him or for her. If that keeps that guy from renting a van and running down school kids, take someone's panties then. What do I care? Right?

Fiest: And then also, as you said, some women make a living this way, I've known women who have been strippers, which is considered sex work, to get through school. UTEP is a big university here. And who am I and who is Donald Trump to tell them that's bad. Especially since most of these guys, and they are frankly in my opinion mostly men, who fight to keep this illegal who are usually coming out as having participated in this exact same event.

Sharpe: The more they hate it the more they do it. Look I don't go to strip clubs. My wife won't let me go right, so I don't go. I want to be clear on something. You said, "Who were they just say, it's bad." There's nothing wrong with saying it's bad. It's stopping someone, physically putting them in jail, taking their money. That's a problem. But if you want to stand in front of a

strip club and say, "This is wrong. This is immoral"...you should do it. All good. You have every right to believe prosecution's wrong to tell your kids to not engage in it, to tell others it's wrong, to have a website that says prostitution's wrong and horrible. Don't do it. Every right to do that. You don't you do not have to accept my or anyone else's morality. You simply can't force someone to not do it.

Fiest; Well it in another thing that that I have found and, in in my opinion it's mostly Republicans that do this: They go and they take pictures of dude's license plate, pictures of him getting out of his car to send to their family or to put their pictures on TV. If they happen to get, you know, pulled over soliciting a prostitute and I think that, because prostitution is illegal, that they are completely justified in doing that and people's lives are literally ruined and they are humiliated. They you lose their jobs, or their spouses leave them. This is all over the world's oldest profession. Something that has been going on for years, and that just makes me mad.

Sharpe: Would things be different if it was legal? Probably? Would some people still, you know lose their marriages sure. Should someone go to jail for cheating on your spouse, of course not. But should you cheat on your spouse? No. Unless your spouse is okay with it, which case you're not cheating? Right? My relationship is very traditional in that regard. I've been married now, 18 years and it's not an open relationship. It is closed. But that doesn't mean I have to tell you what kind of relationship you can have. If you just want to date, if you want to have for boyfriends or one boyfriend, it's not my place to say. I can say I don't like it if I want to, but I can't stop you.

Fiest: Right And that seems to be the perfect balance. I don't know why we have this problem.

Sharpe: I can shake my finger at you and go, "You should do what I say," if I want to write but I can't stop you. And I'll hope you'll go, "Larry's right I'll do what he says," And if you voluntarily do it, we're good.

Fiest; Great. Yeah, exactly. Well, that was fun. Thank you for that. So I had a chance to speak to a gentleman who writes on race for Cato..

Sharpe: What's his name?

Fiest: Jonathan Blanks

Sharpe: Don't think I know him.

Fiest: Yeah, he's a he and I kind of share an issue. I mentioned to you at the beginning of our conversation that I was a bi-racial person. My dad European genes came out much more. I live in El Paso that is mostly a Mexican population. His father is black but he came out looking primarily white as I did. When we talk about race issues because we care, because it affects our family, we kind of immediately get shot down. You have no right to be in this discussion and you have nothing to say about this and I find that it's something that I run into all the time. But his opinion was that their the L the lowercase L libertarian kind of philosophy group as well as the uppercase L libertarian party. He thinks it has a race problem. Do you think that we have a race problem?

Sharpe: I hear that all the time. You know, who you looking at? Right? That's all I have to say. We don't have a race problem. We have a race image problem. What's what we have. And it's reinforced when people keep saying that. I don't say it. People ask me that all the time, and when they bring it up I go, "You know who you're looking at right." And it's all males. Who am I looking at right now? Right?

Fiest: That was one thing that Sarwark brought up is that the LP has a lot of women. I mean I uses Jess Mears, who's the membership person to get through to Jonathan Blanks. I sent Sarwark an email asking me to give me a list of every woman that he can think of so that I can use it my thesis. Boom. Boom. Boom. Boom.

Sharpe: It was an article that came out about the gubernatorial candidates New York State. It was about the diversity of each campaign. My campaign was the most diverse, hands down, not even close. We had trans, gay, straight, black, white, Hispanic, women...didn't matter It's all mixed. And here's the best part, I didn't care. Like I didn't go, "Wait a minute. I don't have a Hispanic guy." I didn't do that. "Do we have somebody gay around here?" I didn't do that.

Fiest: You just went out there, was yourself and they came to you.

Sharpe: I just picked the right people who came and I just said yes to people who came and it wound up being that. Okay. And what is the reason why I became that? Because I live in New York City.

Fiest: I was about to say I think that might have had something to do with it.

Sharpe: Yes. My City's has a lot of diversity there for its diverse, right? There are more Libertarians in more areas that are not diverse. Okay, therefore those areas tend to be less diverse, but I come from New York City, One of the most diverse cities in the country. I have people on my team who are Jehovah's Witness, people who are Jewish people, who are Muslim, people are Christian. Doesn't matter. All mixed. And they'e still on my team now.

Fiest: That's wonderful.

Sharpe: Yes. I had four campaign managers. Two male, two female, and one was Asian.

Fiest: So you think it's more of a reflection of the ethnicity of people where they live.

Sharpe: Yes.

Fiest: You have a more diverse group to pick from, but maybe the earlier gentleman that I told you about who lives at Kentucky would not see that. But that's probably more reflective of the population.

## **Questions for Glenn Jacobs – Use your name? Yes**

Glenn Jacobs is the mayor of Knox County, Tennessee. After being a long time libertarian, he decided to run for mayor in 2016 as a Republican.

### **PERSONAL EXPERIENCES**

To begin with, what prompted your initial interest in electoral politics?

How did you then move specifically to libertarianism?

What made you want to run for office, especially in a role like County Mayor?

Is it also because this position is so close to the day to day lives of your constituents?

How do you apply your libertarian principles to your day to day governing of Knox County?

### **REASONS FOR LACK OF LIBERTARIAN PARTY REPRESENTATION**

During your time at the WWE, you developed a fan base that gave you a huge advantage where people wanted to vote for you, simply because they liked you. Maybe no wonder what you stood for politically. And a lot of fans knew you were a Libertarian. Despite this advantage, you decided to run for office as a Republican? What prompted this decision?

Do you think a libertarian can or will get a fair run as a libertarian for a major office, local state or federal?

According to the LP website, there are 177 Libertarians holding some kind of public office in the U.S., but they are all local positions. Various school boards, utility boards...but very little at the state level and there are currently no Libertarians in Congress. Why do you think that is?

### **Questions for Carla Gericke – Use Your Name? Yes**

Carla is a president emeritus of the Free State Project and libertarian who ran for New Hampshire State in 2018 as a Republican.

#### **PERSONAL EXPERIENCES**

Early on, what prompted interest in first politics and then libertarianism?

What made you want to run for a federal office? Had you run for any local or state offices before running for senate?

What prompted you to run as a Republican despite this? Did running as a Democrat ever enter your mind?

How did you plan to apply your libertarian principles in your role as senator of NH?

Can you tell us about your time as president of the Free State Project and what this project is about?

Why do you think there are so few women in libertarian politics? What do you think we can do to bring in more?

#### **REASONS FOR LACK OF LIBERTARIAN PARTY REPRESENTATION**

Another person I'm interviewing has talked a bit about steps that some Democrats and Republicans have taken to keep libertarians off the ballot in the state of Arizona. Were you met with any of these roadblocks, and, if so, how would you have handled this?

According to the LP, there are 177 Libertarians holding some kind of public office in the U.S., but they are all local positions. Various school boards, utility boards...but very little at the state level and there are currently no Libertarians in Congress. Why do you think that is?

### **Questions for Kat Murti – Use Your Name? Yes**

Kat Murti is a libertarian personality who appears on television on online, speaking on libertarian feminist issues. She is what some consider to be a “celebratarian”. She is also a co-founder of Feminists for Liberty with Elizabeth Nolan Brown.

#### **PERSONAL EXPERIENCES**

Have you always followed libertarian principals and, if not, how did you discover it?  
To begin with what got you into politics in general?

How did feminism influence your entry into politics?

How did libertarianism influence and shape your entry into politics?

Some reject feminism as a part of libertarianism due to what they consider to be a collectivist mind set. What is your opinion on this?

According to the LP, there are 177 Libertarians holding some kind of public office in the U.S., but they are all local positions. Various school boards, utility boards...but very little at the state level and there are currently no Libertarians in Congress. Why do you think that is?

Tell me a bit more about the outreach you do as a part of Feminists for Liberty and what the goal you hope to accomplish is.

#### **FEMINISM AND LIBERTARIANISM**

What do you see as the connections between feminism and libertarianism?

Why do you think they are so few women in libertarian politics? What do you think we can do to bring in more?

Why do you think there are so few people of color in libertarian politics? What do you think we can do to bring in more?

#### **Prostitution and libertarianism?**

Would you like to see prostitution legalized in the United States?

Is this something that should be left completely open to the free market or a more regulated version like we see run in Nevada?

### **Questions for ENB – Use Your Name? Yes**

Elizabeth Nolan Brown is a Staff Editor at Reason Magazine. She also appears on TV as a speaker on libertarian issues. She is co-founder of Feminists for Liberty with Kat Murti.

#### **PERSONAL EXPERIENCES**

Have you always followed libertarian principals and, if not, how did you discover it?  
To begin with what got you into politics in general?

How did feminism influence your entry into politics/libertarian politics?

How did libertarianism influence and shape your entry into politics? Some reject feminism as a part of libertarianism due to what they consider to be a collectivist mind set. What is your opinion on this? According to the LP, there are 177 Libertarians holding some kind of public office in the U.S., but they are all local positions. Various school boards, utility boards...but very little at the state level and there are currently no Libertarians in Congress. Why do you think that is?

Tell me a bit more about the outreach you do as a part of Feminists for Liberty and what the goal you hope to accomplish is.

#### **FEMINISM AND LIBERTARIANISM**

What do you see as the connections between feminism and libertarianism?

Why do you think they are so few women in libertarian politics? What do you think we can do to bring in more?

Why do you think there are so few people of color in libertarian politics? What do you think we can do to bring in more?

#### **Prostitution and libertarianism?**

Would you like to see prostitution legalized in the United States?

Is this something that should be left completely open to the free market or a more regulated version like we see run in Nevada?

#### **Libertarians on Immigration**

A lot of people who support Trump's border wall say that they are trying to stop the caravans because women and children are being raped by coyotes as they come across the border. You study on "trafficking" quite a bit. Is this a commonly held belief that this is happening or is this trying to use concern about women's wellbeing to influence policy?



### Questions for Cathy Reisenwitz – Use Your Name? Yes

Cathy Reisenwitz is a libertarian personality who speaks on libertarian feminist issues. She is what some consider to be a “celebratarian”. She writes a blog called “Sex and the State”.

#### PERSONAL EXPERIENCES

To begin with what got you into politics in general?

How did feminism influence your entry into politics?

How did libertarianism influence and shape your entry into politics? Tell me a bit more about the outreach you do as a part of libertarian feminism and what the goal you hope to accomplish is.

#### FEMINISM AND LIBERTARIANISM

What do you see as the connections between feminism and libertarianism?

Some libertarians reject feminism as a part of libertarianism due to what they consider to be a collectivist mind set. What is your opinion on this?

Why do you think there are so few women in libertarian politics? What do you think we can do to bring in more?

Why do you think there are so few people of color in libertarian politics? What do you think we can do to bring in more?

Also, what can be done to attract younger people?

#### Prostitution and libertarianism?

Would you like to see prostitution legalized in the United States?

Is this something that should be left completely open to the free market or a more regulated version like we see run in Nevada?

#### Libertarians on Immigration

A lot of people who support Trump’s border wall say that they are trying to stop the caravans because women and children are being raped by coyotes as they come across the border. Do you think this an actual concern or do you think this is just using the idea of women’s safety to try to sway political policy?

### **Questions for Barry Hess – Use Your Name? Yes**

Barry Hess is a libertarian who has run for governor of the state of Arizona every cycle since the early 2000s.

#### **PERSONAL EXPERIENCES**

To begin with what got you into electoral politics in general?

What prompted your decision to run for office?

#### **REASONS FOR LACK OF LIBERTARIAN PARTY REPRESENTATION**

Please tell me a little bit about some of the roadblocks you have had placed in front of you, specifically because you are a libertarian? How do these roadblocks that you face (signatures, fundraiser) compare to the requirements that the Republican and Democrat parties come up against?

How have you as an individual candidate responded to the laws that have been passed to limit your access to the ballot.

Do you feel like you've received any meaningful assistance from the national LP or the LP of Arizona?

What legal action have you taken and how successful do you feel that legal action has been?

Do we have any idea of what the cost has been in these laws? From costs paid trying to meet the standards set to the legal costs of fighting them in court?

Other libertarians have found success in elections by running as a Republican. Is this something you've ever considered doing?

You once said in an interview that if the Republicans kept trying to block you from getting on the ballot, you would run as a Democrat. Is running as a Republican or Democrat something you've seriously considered?

According to the national LP, there are 177 Libertarians holding some kind of public office in the U.S., but they are all local positions. Various school boards, utility boards...but very little at the state level and there are currently no Libertarians in Congress. Why do you think that is?

### **Questions for Norma Jean Almodovar – Use Your Name? Yes**

Norma Jean is a former sex worker who ran as Lt. Governor of California in the 80s as a Libertarian.

#### **PERSONAL EXPERIENCES**

Have you always followed libertarian principals and, if not, how did you discover it?

What got you into electoral politics in general and your eventual decision to run for office?

You started pretty high up in politics, shooting for Lt. Governor. What prompted that decision?

Did you ever think of starting lower? A city council or mayor position?

Please tell me a little bit about some of the roadblocks you had placed in front of you, specifically because you are a libertarian? How do these roadblocks that you faced (signatures, fundraisers) compare to the requirements that the Republican and Democrat parties come up against? Did those roadblocks ever put your campaign in danger?

#### **REASONS FOR LACK OF LIBERTARIAN PARTY REPRESENTATION**

According to the LP, there are 177 Libertarians holding some kind of public office in the U.S., but they are all local positions. Various school boards, utility boards...but very little at the state level and there are currently no Libertarians in Congress. Why do you think that is?

#### **FEMINISM AND LIBERTARIANISM**

There are currently four women set to run for president. How do you feel about that? Why do you think they are so few women in libertarian politics? What do you think we can do to bring in more?

Do you consider yourself a feminist?

How did feminism influence your entry into politics?

Some reject feminism as a part of libertarianism due to what they consider to be a collectivist mind set. What is your opinion on this?

#### **Prostitution and libertarianism?**

Would you like to see prostitution legalized in the United States?

Is this something that should be left completely open to the free market or a more regulated version like we see run in Nevada?

## **Questions for Larry Sharpe – Use Your Name? Yes**

Larry Sharpe is a former Marine who ran for governor of New York as a libertarian in 2018.

### **PERSONAL EXPERIENCES**

To begin with, what prompted your initial interest in electoral politics?

How did you then move specifically to libertarianism?

How do you feel that your military background (Marine) has benefitted your walk as a libertarian political candidate?

Do you think the public sees libertarianism as “Diet Republicans” which is possibly why people have a hard time placing faith in us?

What made you want to run for office, especially in a role like New York governor? New York has always been considered a state that is a big government/high tax state. What were some of the more libertarian principals you intended to implement in New York?

Are there any offices you are looking at, maybe running in a less liberal state?

According to information on the LP website, there are 177 Libertarians holding some kind of public office in the U.S., but they are all local positions. Various school boards, utility boards...but very little at the state level and there are currently no Libertarians in Congress.

Please tell me a little bit about some of the roadblocks you had placed in front of you, specifically because you are a libertarian? How do these roadblocks that you faced (signatures, fundraisers) compare to the requirements that the Republican and Democrat parties come up against? Did those roadblocks ever put your campaign in danger?

### **Libertarians and the Media**

Did you feel like, as a libertarian candidate, that you got a fair shake in the media? Was the local coverage better than the national coverage? Do you think the reasoning for libertarians get so little mainstream coverage is that we don't provide as much drama as the two major parties or they really think there is no interest in us?

### **Libertarianism and Adoption**

While researching you for this interview I found that you were adopted. Some places have passed laws keeping anyone who isn't a Christian, or who is LGBTQ, from adopting. Is this something that is on your political radar and how would you have handled that as governor?

### **Race in libertarianism**

One of the reasons we support libertarian ideals is that we believe they are better for all people. But when I look at pictures of libertarian conventions or the speaking panels of events, it is overwhelmingly white men. Why do you think that is?

What do you think can be done to bring in more people of color, women and members of the LGBTQ community?

#### Prostitution in libertarianism

Would you have legalized prostitution as governor of NY? Would you support it legalized on a national level?

Is this something that should be left completely open to the free market or a more regulated version like we see run in Nevada?

#### Libertarianism and gun control

Guns are a huge issue in America right now. Is there any compromise the LP would be willing to make? Limit magazine size? Banning bump stocks? Should there be any focus on other issues like mental health?

## **Questions for Johnathan Blanks – Use Your Name? Yes**

Jonathan Blanks is a Fellow at the Cato Institute.

### **PERSONAL EXPERIENCES**

Have you always followed libertarian principals and, if not, how did you discover it?

To begin with, what prompted your initial interest in policy and your work at the Cato Institute?

How did you find your way into identity politics?

How would you respond to people that say looking at issues like gender and race does not align with libertarian philosophy as it is considered, “collectivist”?

People who are pretty prominent members of the AltRight, such as Chris Cantwell and Stefan Molyneux for example, once considered themselves libertarian. I remember Cantwell being on libertarian radio show Free Talk Live before being banned after dropping the “N” word and showing no remorse nor apologizing. Libertarianism is a philosophy that respects people as individuals so how did they stay hidden for so long?

What is your opinion on hate crime legislation?

**Questions for Ken Moellman – Use Your Name? Yes**

**REASONS FOR LACK OF LIBERTARIAN PARTY REPRESENTATION**

Have you always followed libertarian principals and, if not, how did you discover it?

Please tell me a little bit about some of the legal roadblocks that have been passed to keep third parties off the ballot? What are some of the methods used? How far back do they go?

Is this done more often by the Republicans or Democrats?

Between some of the more notable third parties (Libertarians, Green Party, Reform Party) who is often most affected by these laws?

Have there been any legal steps taken to bring any of these laws down? Who has been most active in fighting them?

Do we have any idea of what the cost has been in these laws? From costs paid trying to meet the standards set to the legal costs of fighting them in court?

What organizations have been most active in fighting these laws?

Do you believe these laws are passed because we are gaining ground and the two major parties are worried that we may be catching up to them or is it just selfish protectionism?



### Questions for Nick Sarwark – Use Your Name? Yes

Nick Sarwark is the Chair of the Libertarian Party in the United States. He also ran for mayor of Phoenix in 2018.

### REASONS FOR LACK OF LIBERTARIAN PARTY REPRESENTATION

To begin with, what prompted your initial interest in electoral politics?

How did you then move specifically to libertarianism?

Do you think the public sees libertarianism as “Diet Republicans” which is possibility why people have a hard time placing faith in us?

According to information on the LP website, there are 177 Libertarians holding some kind of public office in the U.S., but they are all local positions. Various school boards, utility boards...but very little at the state level and there are currently no Libertarians in Congress.

### Libertarians and the Media

Did you feel like libertarians get fair coverage from the media? Would you like to get more time on the big three cable networks, Fox News, MSNBC and CNN?

Are there any particular, individual issues that you would like to see the party more involved with? Gun control? Marriage Equality?

### LP on Immigration

Can you tell us a little about where the LP stands on Trump’s wall, immigration and how the U.S. should handle the caravans coming up from South America?

Does the Libertarian Party believe in open borders?

### LP on Guns

Guns are a huge issue in America right now. Is there any compromise the LP would be willing to make? Limit magazine size? Banning bump stocks? Should there be any focus on other issues like mental health?

### Race in the LP.

One of the reasons we support libertarian ideals is that we believe they are better for all people. But when I look at pictures of libertarian conventions or the speaking panels of events, it is overwhelmingly white men. Why do you think that is?

What do you think can be done to bring in more people of color, women and members of the LGBTQ community? What steps are being taken to reach out to these groups?

Does the LP have an official stance on hate crime legislation?

### Prostitution in the LP

Does the LP support legalizing prostitution in the United States?

Is this something that should be left completely open to the free market or a more regulated version like we see run in Nevada?

The LP on marijuana/drug use

Would the LP legalize drug use? All drugs or just marijuana? Use in research?

Mayor of Phoenix.

I understand that in 2018 you ran for mayor of Phoenix, AZ. I had a chance to speak to someone who has run for governor of AZ pretty consistently since the early 2000s and he's been hit by laws passed, primarily by the Republicans, to keep third parties off the ballot. Were you affected by those during your campaign? If so, how did you handle it?

Has the national or AZ LP moved against any of those laws in the past? Is this something that you see as a major problem for the party right now? Are the state LPs looking at this on a state level?

## Vita

Jacqueline Ann Fiest received her undergraduate degree in Communication from the University of Texas at El Paso in 2010 and will receive her Master in Communication in 2019.