

Human Rights – Conversations Across Generations

Episode: Brian Derrick

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MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:04

Hi, welcome to our podcast, Human Rights, Conversations Across Generations. I'm Meredith Lockwood, founder of Lockwood Creative, a purpose-driven creative agency. And I'm here with my dad.

BERT LOCKWOOD 0:16

And I'm Professor Bert Lockwood, the director of the Urban Morgan Institute for Human Rights at the University of Cincinnati College of Law.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:26

Together, we are your father-daughter co-hosts.

BERT LOCKWOOD 0:29

For over 50 years, I've had a front-row seat to the evolution of international human rights.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:35

And now, we're sharing that expertise with you by connecting to the powerful stories and insights of human rights voices from around the world.

BERT LOCKWOOD 0:43

We bridge the past and the present, making complex human rights issues more approachable and understandable.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 0:50

So, pull up a chair and join our table as we speak with Nobel Peace Prize recipients, political leaders and the world's leading human rights scholars and activists.

Hi, listeners. Today, my dad and I are so lucky to have one of my favorite political strategists on the podcast, Brian Derrick, founder of Oath, the one-stop shop for political giving that helps donors maximize their impact. Oath combines data analytics with electoral modeling to help donors better understand where their contributions can matter most. By analyzing thousands of races across the United States, Oath helps donors identify candidates and campaigns to support. Today, we're going to talk with Brian about the dismantling of the Voting Rights Act and the growing impact of gerrymandering across the South. We will dissect Trump's escalating corruption, the influence of billionaire money in politics, and the role media algorithms play in shaping public opinion. With the midterms on the horizon and the 2028 election already taking shape, we will explore why Democrats continue struggling with many working class voters and what the future of American democracy could look like from here. Now, let's welcome Brian to the show.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 2:16

Brian Derrick, welcome to Human Rights Conversations Across Generations. I am so excited have you here because we are Instagram friends at this point. You have taught me so much since 2022, every single election, the big ones, the smaller ones. I always go to you and your whiteboard as well as the entire Oath team to help guide me through sticky situations. And then also I get to dance with you from afar when we celebrate the wins and the fundraising goals. and for our listeners, Oath is a data driven political giving platform designed to help donors better understand where our contributions can shape political outcomes and a humble brag that Oath has surpassed 3 million candidates.

BRIAN DERRICK 3:06

Yes. thank you. Um, thank you. First of all, for having me on, I'm, I'm thrilled to be chatting in real life and not just via the DMS, if you will. and yeah, it's actually, a lot more. We're making a really big announcement. Soon, so. but more than 50 million for this election cycle.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:27

Wow. 5, 0.

BRIAN DERRICK 3:29

5, 0. And then a bunch of zeros after that.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 3:31

I

mean, truly congratulations, Oath. Oath is quite young. So you've really had such enormous success.

BRIAN DERRICK 3:41

Yeah. Thank we launched in the 2022 cycle. I had spent most of my career as a fundraiser for nonprofits and for candidates and really wanted to do something on the donor side to address two problems. One, just that, it, a lot of money was going to waste, in races where it couldn't really make a difference. It wasn't going to change the outcome. And second, we were all. with requests for money from people that we've never heard Just texts and emails every day, day and night. And so we wanted to address both of those problems at the same time. And that's really where Oath was born, to try and help people give smarter and have a better experience while doing it.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 4:23

And you met your co-founder Taylor at Ohio State University your freshman year.

BRIAN DERRICK 4:29

Yeah, we've been best friends for like 15 years now, which is But we were in the same like leadership program or some kind of extracurricular. Our freshman year, we really cut our teeth

as a sort of working relationship through Ohio State's Dance Marathon, which we led the fundraising effort for our junior and senior year. And we took the program from, I think it was like \$600, 000 raised to 1.3 million raised our senior year. And so that's how we knew we weren't just good like dancing buddies and drinking buddies, but also like we had a really amazing working And it's been fun all these years later to start an organization together, build a team together and get to see like our, a whole new dimension to, to, to, uh, one of my best friends.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 5:22

Wow. And, you know, going to your Ohio roots and you went to university in state, we've discovered we have, my dad teaches at university of Cincinnati. Born in Cincinnati. You're from Loveland. Did you consider university of Cincinnati for undergrad?

BRIAN DERRICK 5:41

it's a divisive topic in my family. My parents met at UC. Both my, both of my parents went to the university of Cincinnati. They met in college there. Um, and we're split down the middle in college where my siblings went to Ohio state as well. And, uh, my, my parents had gone to UC. So, I think that I personally wanted to just go farther from home. I don't know that I ever, if that UC was ever an option for me because I, I just had to, to go, not that Ohio state is far, but I had to go somewhere. But it's an amazing school. And of course, I have so many friends who went there. And I'm very proud of being from Cincinnati. And yeah, Bert, it's wonderful that they have you there teach.

BERT LOCKWOOD 6:25

We have the, uh, oldest program uh, international human rights, and, um, they recruited me in 1979 to put it together, the reason that it's in Cincinnati, Ohio, is not because Cincinnati, Ohio was the ideal place to create the first program in international human rights, it's sort of the story of American education. A nice thing, with our culture is that, uh, rich tend to be, generous with their money and often give to causes, and, Urban Morgan, which is the, the name of the institute, when he died, it was the end of the Morgan family, and his was given the discretion as to, well, it had to go to the University of but it gave his lawyer the discretion as to what to do with it, and his lawyer was, a fellow named Bill Butler in New who was, uh, promin in the international human rights field, and with his his money, uh, he had created the Arthur Garfield Hayes program in civil liberties law at NYU. Uh, Arthur Garfield Hayes was one of the founders of the ACLU in, in 1901, and Butler's idea was to create the international counterpart to it at Cincinnati, and they recruited me to put it together. And, uh, uh, uh, I was the associate dean at American, uh, University,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 7:55

And, you know, something that was really fascinating for me growing up, Brian, and such an ode to Cincinnati is that through my dad's work at the Urban Morgan Institute, throughout the years he hosts international human rights conferences, where true giants in the space come together for panels, robust discussions. So, a lot of lawyers, journalists, academics, have been able to come to our city and get to experience it, and Ohio's not usually on many global

roadmaps, but I think a lot of people have quite an affinity now, and my dad's hosting another big one November 6th and 7th, it's going to be another discussion. And, talking about the state of the world and the United States, which is what we will be talking about today, because, I don't know, I mean, I think have nearly enough topics that we could go into.

BRIAN DERRICK 8:47

Yeah. When it rains, it pours, and we certainly have no shortage of topics to dive into, that's for sure.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 8:53

Yeah, and I feel like it probably keeps you and Taylor and the entire Oath team quite busy, and I would love to share with our listeners what your Oath team is like. I know you have an incredible team of engineers, and we could talk about the algorithm, how everyone pulls data, and how you pick the best candidates for your donors.

BRIAN DERRICK 9:13

Yeah, absolutely. Our, our goal is to make it really easy to make a difference on the things that you care about the most. And so for some people using the platform, that might be democracy as an issue area, voting rights, ballot access, ballot certification, t kinds uh, related issues. For others, it might be reproductive rights or LGBT equality, gun safety, any,any range of things. We want to centralize in one place really smart recommendations for where you can have the biggest impact. And we do that by aggregating tons of data across the ecosystem. As you mentioned, about half our team are engineers and data analysts. We pull in all this data, every secretary of state website who's running for office, every prognosticator and sort of political, blogger, forecaster. Then we do our own analysis on top of that with data that we purchase from, uh, data partners. And that gives us a pretty 360 degree view of these races from the top of the ticket down to your local dog catcher. And we're able to map them to these issue areas based on the powers of the office. And so as an example, to, to take reproductive rights, in one state, it might be the attorney general. That is the linchpin. That's going to help protect abortion access. in the state, whereas in a different state, it really might be trying to hold on to pro-repro state Supreme Court majority or a ballot measure that could be reversing an abortion ban that had been passed by the legislature. There's all kinds of different mechanics that in different places will go into progress on an issue. We want to do all of that research, take all of that work off of the responsibility of the individual donor and make it easy with a button so that you can really say, I have \$50 to give. This is what matters to me. How do I make the most of it? And we're just going to make it as simple as possible give and have your voice counted.

BERT LOCKWOOD 11:21

are there more than Democrats that you focus on?

BRIAN DERRICK 11:24

Yeah, we have Democrats, Independents, and nonpartisan races on the site. And the reason for that, the reason that we omit Republicans, is that with the donors that we are working

with, they are pretty universally looking to advance progressive human rights issues that are identified as left of center in our modern political era. A so it feels incongruent with our goals to be simultaneously directing money to both sides of a particular race. It would be like canceling each other out in a way. And so you can find Democrats, Independents, and nonpartisan seats.

BERT LOCKWOOD 12:11

recently came into focus with the have been so few voices that have stood up to and whether it was sort of worth those voices. I'm curious the stuff you're looking if you sense that Trump being lame duck, if you will, if that is going to significantly the dynamic, if he no longer on the ballot, I guess.

BRIAN DERRICK 12:43

Yeah. Despite the Trump 2028 hats that are being sold, maybe like in the White House, or at minimum, online, everywhere, for MAGA people, he's not running again. And so he, knowing that he's his final stand, last act, so to speak, seems pretty intent on political destruction of himself, his base, and honestly, many of his political allies, his personal allies and friends. He's very committed to helping, specifically financially, I mean, this week is possibly the best example of it, where you have the president forcing through this billion dollar bill for the ballroom, which is absolutely radioactive really puts in a huge spotlight the... Complete disregard that he has for American's financial challenges right now while he builds himself a golden ballroom. You can't write better political ads than that. And he's forcing, a to force vulnerable senators and members of the Republican House caucus to vote on it. Same with Iran, where his reckless behavior, driving up energy prices and the price of everything, like bringing inflation back single-handedly to the US in a way that we haven't seen without some sort of global that prompted is, again, really demonstrating that he doesn't care. He doesn't care how Republicans fare in the midterms or in 2028 or beyond. He has a very singular focus, and that is enriching himself and his family, which he's done an amazing job at. He's been very effective to that ends. And if you just pay attention to what he does and says, it's very evident that that is what he's optimizing for. So I would agree. I think that duck nature of his presidency has freed him to be his truest self. And it is unfortunate for all of just what that really means.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 14:54

Brian, when I was listening to your insight, I just kept replaying in my the video clip I've seen of Trump when a journalist asked him about spending all this money with the war in Iran, but Americans are asking for better health care. And blatantly just don't care about Americans' health care, Medicaid, and Medicaid. I'm focusing on a war. So, he's literally just saying he doesn't care. Like, what you just stated is actually a fact because we have recorded. So, I think you're right. I next two years, it's only for greed and power. is what his agenda is and dismantling systems that we worked really hard to build.

BRIAN DERRICK 15:40

Yeah. The other thing that's come to light in the last week or so has been around his stock portfolio. that he's made over 3,500 stock trades in the last quarter. And some of them took place on the same day he was... posting about these companies, hosting their CEOs to the White House, manufacturing plants and job sites, Telling people to go buy products like Dell computers at the same time he was spending millions of dollars purchasing Dell stock. And it's obvious to people, right? It's not the type of, like, sleuthy, under-the-ra type. It's brazen. It's brazen. It's in the open. And I do think that that's related to being term-limited. And, obviously, just a true narcissist.

BERT LOCKWOOD 16:36

but I wonder if there Some have said, and it is unique with Trump, he believes that doing it openly...

BRIAN DERRICK 16:46

Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 16:46

It creates a certain immunity, if you will, around him. I mean, this is not any kind of insight. But, I mean, had any other politician done, you know... Any of the acts that he's done, it probably would been on the way to destroying their political career, you know, it's the old, uh, he could shoot someone on 5th Avenue,

BRIAN DERRICK 17:10

right.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 17:10

but,

BERT LOCKWOOD 17:10

yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 17:10

but he's getting away with so many things, it just feels like we're lawless.

BRIAN DERRICK 17:14

Yeah, no, I, I actually, I really think that that is an important point Caroline Levitt, the press secretary, who's, uh, currently on mat-leave, will pressed by reporters and say, hey, Donald Trump is doing this thing that seems really corrupt, kind of like insert corrupt crypto, whatever thing here. And she'll it's the most transparent administration in history. That's what they always say. The most transparent administration in history. And I can't take issue with that. Right. Like, I'm like, yes, that's true. But live streaming, you robbing a bank doesn't make robbing the bank less illegal just because you're live streaming doing it. Like it's crazy making that they think that that's a defense. but you're right. You are correct that they do. They really, they really do believe as long as you're saying it out loud, that there's nothing wrong with it

and that no one cares that his sons are flying all over the world. You're right, um, that there's nothing wrong with it, um, to the point of human rights, right, that they're going into countries and using their position in ways never before in American politics to force through business deals and real estate, uh, portfolio purchases, leveraging their position to affect American foreign policy. It's abhorrent,

BERT LOCKWOOD 18:37

and yeah, and curious what you think is because some people that, have analyzed this situation have attributed it to the fact we live in silos where we get our information and news from. Um, and so you're an MSNBC or MSNOW, uh, you're hearing we talk about. I mean, you're getting that side of it, but if it's Fox, and some of his other things, you may have completely different view Trump.

BRIAN DERRICK 19:08

I think that that's part of it, but I think it's an incomplete explanation because we both know that if we sat down a loyal Fox viewer and had them listen to this conversation or any sort of hour of programming, on MSNBC, they wouldn't be enlightened. They wouldn't see suddenly see the error of their ways. Um, and there we go, because they're completely, completely bought in, and that has to do, I think, more with a tribalism that has taken root in the country that goes beyond just the information ecosystem and our, our media fracture. Um, and more into a cultural problem that I think is just as hard for us to fix moving forward. and it's hard to present solutions without sounding a little Kumbaya and a little, uh, a little out of touch. But when you genuinely are able to harbor such hatred for the people, your neighbors, um, whether they're your neighbors 50 yards away or 500 miles away, it is very hard to come to the table and solve big problems. And we have a lot of big problems that need solving. And so I, I agree with you. I do think that having all the information that we consume filtered through algorithms, even, even TV, right? They're creating content for clicks, and for eyes like in, in this attention economy. is incredibly damaging and pushes, creates this outward pressure towards the extremes. But I think that there's also a cultural component of what has been lost from that developing over, at this point, decades. it won't be enough to, even if we could sort of turn that off or, or make a, a switch to go back to everyone. Um, I don't know, I don't know, watching Walter Cronkite nightly or something. I actually think that that's insufficient at this point to address the cultural like rot that has sort of taken place, allowing people to, harbor such for immigrants and for, uh, the, whoever, insert community here that has been blamed, for our problems.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 21:29

And Brian this month you Christina Rivers were on the podcast, The Right For Your Vote, to Count, and you shared some great media reports. resources with their listeners that you go to, that you trust. Would you be able to share some of those with our listeners?

BRIAN DERRICK 21:45

Yeah, I'm a huge proponent of reading your news um, versus watching television of any kind. And I say that as someone who occasionally goes on TV and yells at, at people and tries to get

the truth out there. I, I really believe in reading and taking as much of the emotion out of it as possible and, and fact-based journalism. I pay for news. I think that people should subscribe to things like Axios is, is usually my top pick for people that are news averse or feel sort of overwhelmed by the current media environment. And, and it's really, it's really bite-sized. It's extremely data driven and it's just the need to know stuff once a day in your, in your inbox and you can read it in three or four minutes. I also, I mean, I'm a nerd. So if you're a nerd, like on, on my side of the spectrum, Politico, Punchbowl, city and state, I mean, it depends on where you live. um, I think there's a, a long list of newsletters and Substackers that are worth a follow to be able to have really curated information in your inbox. And the other reason that's important, and I'm not specifically saying go follow all these people on social media is that relying too heavily on a algorithm based platform means that somebody somewhere controls whether you see it or not. Um, and I don't want that. So I think, I think that's why I want to have a direct relationship with the people responsible for authoring my, media diet. And so I try to avoid relying on Instagram or TikTok or something like that, where I'm looking through someone else's, uh, lens or filter of what they think I want to see, rather than me choosing directly.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 23:34

And I think it's so important to support journalists. And, and dad, before you ask your next question to Brian, I just want to spotlight Brian, because this week he was featured in Politico magazine. The title of the article is Democrats have a billionaire problem. This app is trying to fix it. It is a wonderful interview, Brian. And I know you've been working. So hard on the front end, on the back end. And I'm just really happy that you're working the entire Oath team is getting recognized at a national

BRIAN DERRICK 24:03

Thank you

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 24:05

to make sure to

BRIAN DERRICK 24:07

Thank you.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 24:08

Okay. For our listeners, my dad is whipping out his hard copy. of the New York Times. He still reads his actual printed newspaper daily.

BERT LOCKWOOD 24:16

Well, and I'm just wondering there's a generational to younger people, I get a sense, get their news online, as opposed to, uh, some of us people that still read the New York Times daily

BRIAN DERRICK 24:31

Yeah. I mean, I think that, the medium print versus digital versus a newsletter versus a website is less

important of a distinction than editorial control. to put it a different way, I don't want a billionaire in between me and the information. And by relying on TikTok or, or meta or something else, you are letting someone else pick for you, curate for you what news and information you see. It's why so many people are so angry and dissatisfied all the time. in 2024 and before that, even, we talked a lot about disinformation on social media, about the, the virality of disinformation. But I think that we underestimate the virality of dissatisfaction. That actually a lot of people stand to profit financially, politically, and otherwise from just making you upset. From just making you unhappy actually profits so many people's bottom lines and gives so many people the type of capital that they need to advance themselves. And so you're, you're really constantly being spoon-fed, personalized, increasingly personalized content to make you as unhappy as possible. Which is, I know, like really hard to hear and deal with, but I think that it's an important truth for us to contend with if we want to map a legitimate way out of morass in which we find ourselves. And why people so often are confused, why they're so depressed and upset and feeling hopeless about the political situation or otherwise.

BERT LOCKWOOD 26:17

Probably, two of the most, uh, articulate just in terms of being able to analyze the situation and explain it, are Pete Buttigieg and AOC. And I'm just curious you think either of them would have a serious chance of, the presidential nominee and then actually winning.

BRIAN DERRICK 26:43

I feel like I'm going to have to get out a whiteboard

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:45

I,

BRIAN DERRICK 26:46

I literally should just start writing.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:47

my dad does.

BRIAN DERRICK 26:48

There's.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 26:48

And how big of a deal this is for me right now that I'm getting a live recording of Brian giving us a whiteboard. Dad, that's like Brian has gone completely viral on social media Talk about Pete Buttigieg and AOC.

BRIAN DERRICK 27:01

Yeah. I mean, there are just so many contenders already in this, what we would call a shadow primary. There's, there's not an official contest underway, but all of these candidates are making moves. They're putting out books. They're doing podcasts. They're making visits to early primary states. They're endorsing candidates. They're making moves to position themselves to run. And it's probably about 25 or so Democrats that are on that short list, using air quotes. I think that both of those people, AOC and Pete Buttigieg, definitely considered to be on that list. I think both are likely to launch a campaign in the next 11 months, let's say. For me, won't knock or support either one directly because I have not made up any sort of decision or opinion about the individual that is the right fit for 2028. I think that it's important to me that the person who is selected can be authentically anti-system. That what the country is crying out for and has been for the last decade and, and, and more even, is that they feel like the system is rigged against them. And the rise of Donald Trump at the time that he ascended created a situation in which Democrats were painted as defenders of the system. That Democrats became the defenders of the things that people were identifying as broken. As, as, as well as all the things that make America great, all of the, the constitution, right. And all of these other things that Donald, Donald Trump stands against, opposes and violates. but I don't think that it's smart for us to be, to put institutions ahead of outcomes, and improvement in people's everyday life. And I think that to be a real disruptor in that sense, you have to be willing to buck the party, break the status quo, say the thing that's uncomfortable, say the thing that's unpopular. And a lot of that is trained out of our elected leaders who, who are in politics for, for a long time. And it's maybe a hot take, or I may be in the minority, but I'm really skeptical of a lot of the governors that are set up to run. There's like eight democratic governors that are planning on running the second, the midterms are over and I have a hard time hearing and believing an anti-system in message from any of them. That any of them are gonna, like, side with the people over the tradition or over the expectation of what it means to be a statesman and a president and all of these things that they idolize as part of the presidency. it's a very long-winded, almost deflection, but hopefully not quite, one that there are multiple kinds of Democrats that can fit that mold. I'm not saying we need someone far left or that we need a center left. I don't believe in a demographic type of selection. I don't think we need a white man over 60 or we have to have a black person on the ticket one way or the other. Like, I don't believe in that. what I do believe in is having someone who people hear speak, not scripted, not from a group of consultants that come up with the right message, but they hear someone speak and they're like, that person is fighting for me, period. You're like, that is a, like, that is a baseline must. That it there is this undeniable belief in that fact the rest kind of flows from there. Then your message, whatever that might be, is believable. Then you pick the right candidate because they are matching that energy, they're bringing that vibe. that all comes from that. People believed that about Donald Trump, regardless of all of his lies, regardless of his personal behavior, his personal immorality, anything else. People believed that he was going to choose them over the system every time. That's why he won. And so, I want to take a little bit of that. I want to learn from it. I don't want to emulate Donald Trump ever. But I want to learn from that to say that I want people to see our candidate and be like, that person would pick me. That person would fight for me over anything else.

Brian, I completely agree with every single thing you said and I think I needed to hear it because speaking amongst my friends and we are all quite politically active, we try to stay as informed as we can. When I speak to my girlfriends and as women voters, a lot of us really thought we were going to have our first woman president and it is so overdue and we thought Harris was going to take that ticket and some, some of us could call it naive or whatnot, but we put every single thing we had in us behind her and we didn't have that many days to do it, of course. But, you know, just having the conversations in my own silo with women is we are really worried about another woman. We're so fearful of like a J. D. Vance. So many of us are actually saying what you just said you don't subscribe to and deep down I don't subscribe to it either, but there's this like fear based mentality of like, no, maybe we do need just like a straight white guy. We're so afraid. Candidly, I don't want that in the White House next time. Like I would love Pete Buttigieg to be our first gay president. I would love AOC to be our first woman president. And to me they are of the people we're seeing peak around our country.

What do they need? What are they struggling with? AOC just held up two disgusting brown mason jars from Morgan County in Georgia of what's happening with the AI data centers. And they are water and unsafe. And to me those kind of examples is someone who cares about the people and not the systems that we have to dismantling.

BRIAN DERRICK 33:09

Yeah, definitely. And I hear the fear and I I and I hear that from voters, donors, operatives, what have you all the time of like America is too sexist or too racist or too homophobic or whatever to elect this person or that person. But I do think that it hangs too much up on, I don't want to say the individual, but like kind of the individual. And minimizes the harder part, which is that people don't think that Democrats are fighting for them like, and people didn't think that Harris was people didn't think that Hillary Clinton was going to pick them over enter any other sort of entity whatever here. That was not the overwhelming message and like deep seated belief. And I think that played a bigger role than their sex in both cases.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 34:03

mm. And for our we got two years to go. I'm gonna talk to Brian next about midterms, but one thing I will say is that I just had the utmost honor of going to Chicago. My dear friend, Emily Koh, who was on the podcast, invited

The

BRIAN DERRICK 34:23

Amazing.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 34:23

official opening is Juneteenth with Michelle and Barack. Sadly, they weren't there when I was doing my tour, but one thing I was able to walk away from that incredible museum that is so well curated, very intentional. You start at the bottom, you make your way up the different floors, is- It took me back to 2007 and then into 2016. I

BRIAN DERRICK 34:45

Yep.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 34:45

was very lucky that my first vote ever was to Barack Obama. 2008, I was living in New York City, and I just remember that sheer excitement, crying in the street, can't believe it happened, jubilation, and how much hope we had. And the slogan, yes, we can. And now looking back in 2026, yes, we did. and I left feeling so renewed in my purpose of protecting our democracy and being a mobilizer And volunteering, whomever becomes our 2020 candidate, I believe in and knocking on doors, making phone calls. And I just, anybody that can go to the presidential center and think it's going to help give us that, like, Surge of positivity and optimism we need. And again, hope.

BRIAN DERRICK 35:40

100%. And I think that hope is a necessary ingredient for

positive social change, but it's also insufficient

alone. And I think that was part of people's sort of confusion or surprise at the 2024 loss was Harris had this campaign that was really rooted in joy and it felt actually fun again. it was short, like you said, but there was this huge energy burst, especially, like, it felt like from young people and that we were on this historic precipice and they injected a lot of that joy and hope sort of into the moment, but I think that's, like, step one or even, like, kind of pre-step one and it's not the strategy that gets you to the finish line. and so I'm, like, the biggest believer in optimism. If you don't believe that something can change, like, why even bother? Wh even get off the starting blocks, right? Like, you have to have this hopeful mindset and it's a courageous thing to do to cultivate that. But then a lot of really hard work comes after that, too. and, I mean, we saw, I'm a big Obama fan. The Audacity of Hope, his book, was, like, a big turning point for me in pulling me into politics professionally.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 37:02

And I want to ask you and my dad both about midterms. Let's dive into all things midterms. I know we've been seeing some really exciting results happening in the primaries. I'm going to name a couple. And, Brian, this is your expertise, so I'm going to really let you run with it. But Georgia Democrats recently outvoted Republicans by roughly 150,000 votes in statewide primaries. Brian, you noted recently that the Georgia Supreme Court losses, let me just quote you, a sitting Georgia Supreme Court justice hasn't lost re-election in a that Democrats came within roughly two points. And my last highlight is that Dr. Amy Atkin, shout out to Ohio, she received the highest number of votes in the current Ohio primary going on.

BRIAN DERRICK 37:50

I love that. And you really have your data down pat and I appreciate it. You're exactly right. We're coming off of some elections just recently in Georgia. Kentucky and Oregon and Idaho

and Alabama, and a few other states and there are a lot of signs, a lot of early indicators pointing to a great midterm cycle for Democrats that they're putting in the work, that we're really having a major swing in the particular demographics that we lost in 2024 back towards Dems and that that could be-- Enough to flip Congress to pick up seats in the Senate to flip potentially hundreds of seats for state legislature and the more that Donald Trump leans into all the things that we talked about earlier around his own self enrichment at the cost of the American people. I think the more we will see that trend. Continue. but it's also not a given. It's something that we have to work for in every single race to define that candidate for voters to say. What they actually stand for, uh, because in a midterm cycle, you're not just riding the coattails campaign that's turning people out. You have to give people a reason to show up and think that you're going to be any better. And that takes a ton of work, a ton of messaging, a lot of money, uh, and all of that. So I do actually feel quite good about the midterms being a, saving grace of sorts, or at least, a backstop against the anti-democratic and anti-American side of the Trump administration.

BERT LOCKWOOD 39:34

I've, uh, read in the six months, well, I guess past year anyway, two Stacey Abrams novels. Um, and I just want to say she's an novel writer. they're great stories. One uh, rogue justice and the other was coded justice. they're well worth

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 39:53

And dad, if I can piggyback um, Brian, our conversation today, I listened to Stacey Abrams podcast, assembly required.

there's, podcast

To our show notes for our listeners. The two episodes I listened to for today's conversation is How SCOTUS is Erasing Black Voters and Abby Phillip on Jesse Jackson's legacy. And the other one is what's next for voting rights and why activism matters. And that was featured with Jane Fonda. So for me, I just, I looked to Stacey Abrams for a lot of guidance as well as I do you, Brian. and I think those are just really important voices.

BRIAN DERRICK 40:36

I completely agree. I actually, I'm surprised at myself that I'm disappointed in myself. I didn't know that Stacey Abrams had written novels. so I just added that to my Goodreads', uh, list. So thank you for the recommendation. big Stacey Abrams fan and, it's a little bit premature, but I'll say, stay tuned for a, oath Stacey Abrams potential team up in the coming months. but yeah, I, I mean, we're at this historic moment of the, just indefensible gutting of the VRA during the Calais decision from the Supreme Court. Um, and it's a, it's a new era in what the fight for representation looks like, particularly for voters, but really for all of us. Um, and I mean, I'll fast forward a bit to, to my thesis and say, the only path forward requires a modern version of the, of the Voting Rights Act to be passed again. Like we need ambitious, sort a new bulwark for democracy so that we can get out of this doom loop that we're currently in of trying to chip away at the will of voters, such that we have a minority locked into power,

representing a minority of states, representing a minority of, of, uh, the population and enacting the will of a handful of billionaires and their, and their friends. Right. And, and like some, a handful of white Christian nationalists who are, who are in with them. we have to be more ambitious in what our solutions look like. And so oath is very tactical. We're making plans for how to win the midterms and how to fight back. Dr. Friedman Lachiebid: Um, an we do that with an eye towards like revolutionary change generation, multi-generation, level change that can get us out of this, scenario where we're fighting for scraps and like back into a place where we're dreaming about what representative democracy should look like and how it should function.

BERT LOCKWOOD 42:52

Brian, uh, I wonder your observations on Um, I had the privilege of being an election observer in 1994 in South Africa.

BRIAN DERRICK 43:03

Wow.

BERT LOCKWOOD 43:04

to the first vote that they, uh, had after apartheid. and, there- there were two days of voting, but one of the days I- I- I to sort of the, uh, regular, uh, e. uh, it was an area that was called sort of, uh, the there were lines of people that were at least two miles waiting to cast their first vote We just uh, an election in Cincinnati drew 15% the registered voters. Yeah. my guess is there's nothing unique about Cincinnati.

BRIAN DERRICK 43:48

that's on par with, New York, with New York municipal elections are around that 11 to 16%.

BERT LOCKWOOD 43:53

uh, I grew up in a where I was sort of taught that it was an obligation to vote, uh, both to inform yourself of what the issues were, to vote. I'm 82 now. I don't think I've missed a, uh, election in terms of voting do you have some insight into why we such low percentages?

BRIAN DERRICK 44:16

um, it's a tricky well, it's- it's simultaneously tricky because I obviously always want to be so nuanced, and then it's also not, and it's very straightforward. and we'll go- we'll go with the latter. I think that people show up when they believe that it actually matters. they believe that it will have an impact on their life. And whether it's true or not, there is a really significant portion of the country that feels like there's no difference. That a Democrat gets elected, and a Republican gets elected, and then Congress, if they even know who's in control of Congress, goes this way or that way or whatever. and their life does materially improve in either case. That they can't pay their rent, that they're, unable to afford their childcare, health insurance, whatever that looks like. and so it- it- it doesn't affect them. And, like, why should they bother? And so part of- I think there are two responses to that. One is to raise the stakes for people by making them afraid. If you make people fearful that things are going to get worse somehow,

then they might show up to prevent a worst-case scenario. That's the Donald Trump path, right?

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 45:35

And like people, Are taking away their jobs.

BRIAN DERRICK 45:38

People are taking your jobs. There's an invasion. There are caravans of people escaped from mental asylums at the border coming to attack your wife and your kids. Like, that's, like, literal, basically verbatim ads, that- that they run. And that's their strategy. The other is to make people believe that you can materially improve their life. And that is much harder to do, which is why many leaders opt for the former path, and including some Democrats, right? Democrats are also guilty of trying to scare people into voting, scare people into action. Because it's really hard, because it's really hard, because it goes back to the hope question that we were talking about earlier. It's much harder to make someone truly believe that you can materially improve their life. it's more of a Mamdani route. If you followed Mayor Mamdani in New York, he really made people believe that he would materially improve the conditions of their life. And that was why we had insane turnout for the New York mayoral election. There were other people who I think turned out, out of fear. that's, that's my answer to that is most people don't feel either one of those things enough to, not necessarily most people, but it depends, it depends on the election. Then there's also like educational issues and tactical issues about availability for people to get off of work and transportation and knowing that an election is happening and all of these other things that I want to get into. I think that that's the real, the real answer.

BERT LOCKWOOD 47:09

uh, you state this directly, but something you said made me is there any analysis in terms of the percentage people that given class or, you know, Socioeconomic, well, yeah, economic, I mean, I would guess the answer, if there is one, it would be the more wealthy you are, the more likely you are to vote.

BRIAN DERRICK 47:36

Socioeconomic status, and so there's actually like pretty much perfect data on that question. So, um, that is correct. That correct. actually perfect data. Whether or not you vote is public in all 50 states. It's, it's a public record whether or not you vote. Who you vote for is private. And so, and we can enrich data using like data people who, who do that for a living, to know general income or estimated socioeconomic status. And so there's actually like pretty much perfect data on that question. The why behind people's vote is more related to, exit polling. When you literally stand outside of a polling location and say why did you show up today? And that's grayer as to how accurate it is and how you can sort adjust samples to be reflective of, of the population at large. And there's challenges there, but, yes, you're, you're correct that wealthy people know the power of their vote, know how much it matters to their bank balance, their happiness, their control of, their political future. And, and they show up at higher rates.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 48:36

And Brian, according to the data, from the University of Florida Election Lab, approximate 88 million eligible Americans did not vote in our past 2024 election. Do you, um, do and the Oath team ever come up with strategies to find those non-voters and get them engaged? I know you have very loyal who are educated and politics and in certain ways, but I always think about, you know, I was, was part a local establishment here that I, you know, paid monthly for and the owner. Candidly just said to me, politics doesn't affect me. I don't vote. Don't care to vote. And this is a person who does well for themselves. And I decided to not renew my monthly membership. It didn't feel right to me. and I was like, wow, that person's going to have to, it's something that's going to have to impact them and their

BRIAN DERRICK 49:30

Right.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 49:30

business and make them uncomfortable for them to actually get out to vote. But I think there are just some voters who might not have the resources we do They might feel invisible by candidates, but that might be I'm not just going to big.

BRIAN DERRICK 49:46

Okay, here comes another hot take potentially. I think that Democrats, myself included liberals at large, let's say, often ask people to vote to benefit the life of someone else.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 50:02

Mm hmm.

BRIAN DERRICK 50:03

Or they themselves vote specifically with someone else or some other neighbor with their neighbor in mind. And we've been doing that a lot lately. Like, I don't think that was always true, but definitely in the last 10 years we've been doing that a lot. And we talk a lot about like showing up for I'm just going to use immigrants as one, as one example, show up to defend immigrants. And there are lots of reasons that Donald Trump's immigration policy is horrible. And part of it is that it's inhumane, right? Is that it is horrible. like, indescribable separating families in the way that he is currently today in putting people in concentration camps and denying, uhm, people in, in need and, and deporting people to, to countries they've never been to. Like, there's, there's this cruelty in it that is, that is inhumane. There's also an economic argument that impacts all of us, right? That our food is more expensive, that our food has gotten more expensive full stop because of Donald Trump's immigration policy. And so sometimes we have to use the argument that personally affects the person that we're speaking to even when it's a different argument that motivates us. So I might be showing up because I don't think that people should be kicked out of the country because they speak Spanish or they're brown, but I might need to make an argument to someone that if they don't want their produce to be twice as expensive, that Donald Trump can't be president, that person, I mean, it's, it's to our point, right? That person just believes that it doesn't matter

who's in office them, and for different people, it, you have to appeal in, in a different way. And Democrats, people, believers in, in basic rights, human rights, the Constitution, all these things. I, I don't mean to overemphasize the, the big capital D, but- we need to remind people how they personally are impacted more often. And ask them to empathize less.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 52:06

And, and on that exact topic, I'd love for you and my dad to speak about what's happening at the Supreme Court, With the Voting Rights Act. I think we've seen so many headlines, I can quote the ACLU that they said, "The current ruling of the Voting Rights Act has completely eviscerated Section 2 of said Voting Rights Act." And that it is going to be significantly harder for black and brown voters to challenge discrimination for their district maps. and I think our listeners, Brian, are definitely, split between international and national. And really quick for our international listeners. I've had many, many people ask me, You can redraw maps? You can take away voting rights? you know, and Dad, you were constitutional law professor for 40 years? And, and Brian, the joke in the family is like, my siblings and I will call our dad and be like, But that's not constitutional. How do you do this? And how do you do that? And, and we understand civics 101. So, for you and my dad, could you pull back from the weeds of what's happening and just kind of give us an overview of the court ruling, the decision, and then we'll kind of dive back into it.

BERT LOCKWOOD 53:28

I think what's happening, is that court is permitting candidates to, uh, choose their voters, rather than the other way around. and so, the Voting Rights Act, was intended to address the discrimination against, uh, black voters that, even after the, uh, civil war amendments, you basically the establishment of what were known as Jim Crow laws that essentially, were able to, uh, uh, replicate, significant aspects slavery and to prevent, or blacks from, uh, getting right to Um, and, that particularly true in the South, but it was also true in the it just wasn't quite as But, um, uh, is blatant, if you will. the, um, The, um, Voting Rights Act uh, enacted to try to, uh, correct the, uh, And, to some extent, it, has been successful. the... Chief Justice, before when he was an aide, in the, uh, I think Justice Department, a long time had his eyes set getting rid of voting rights. this nothing particularly new in terms of a, a theme him. know, unfortunately, it's part of our original sin, uh, if you will, in this country. Uh, John Lewis obviously, uh, represented, a force said that, you know, you never can give up. Um, that you, th is going to be a uh, struggle, that's proven to be prophetic. and we're at another point this is going to be a major

BRIAN DERRICK 55:18

Yeah, I, I mean, I think that that's the primer that everybody needs. it's the most important, the VRA was the most important piece of civil rights legislation in the country's history. And the justices and, and really Republicans who have been bringing lawsuit after lawsuit after lawsuit have been chipping away at it for the last few decades. And what this did was basically declared it constitutional to gerrymander as long as it, as long as it was for partisan gain. And you could discriminate against black voters or Latino voters as long as you said that you were this, doing it for partisan gain. And that creates a situation where it's just

have the power decision on the VRA cuts both ways is what I'm actually trying to say. And that means that in Illinois and Maryland and Oregon and Colorado and, New York and New Jersey, where there are also majority-minority districts or, like, opportunity districts that are a large percentage black or Latino, the votes, it gets a little, this starts to get a little bit into the weeds, but the votes are not as efficiently spread as they could be for partisan gain for Democrats. And so the same ruling actually can unleash a lot of gerrymandering in blue states as well to get rid of Republican seats. And that's exactly what seems to be happening now, as, as states are already making moves to do this for 2028. It's too late for 2026 and all of these places. according to oaths math, Democrats, if we went full tilt, actually could gerrymander more Republicans out of their seats than Republicans could Democrats as a result of the VRA. It's expensive. It's hard to do. It's immoral. It's antithetical to what Democrats stand for and voting rights. But if that is the path to get to a national ban on gerrymandering, that seems like it is the path that Democrats are more likely to go. And Donald Trump might regret the phone call that he made to Texas demanding a new map. And, I mean, not that, but regardless, they, they might regret this redistricting fight that they started in the middle of the decade if we actually end up netting more seats than they do, the, when all is said and done in 2028.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:01:30

Your team at Oath, if we had to play that game, and I wish we didn't have to play this game, we might have to play the game, even though it does feel like cheating, but would your team strategically look at said Democratic candidates that are willing to do that and help us donors know where that money should go? Bec truly what we do is we put our trust in you with all the polling data and engineering that you guys have.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:01:55

Oh, yeah. We have a page set up that does exactly that. The most important seats for us to win in 2026 in order to unlock that ability in more states in 2028 are state legislative races and gubernatorial seats in Nevada, Arizona, Minnesota.

Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania. Those are the states where if we secure a Democratic trifecta in 26, extremely achievable and very cheap compared to a Senate race like Tallarico, then that's five more states. . . . that could be redistricted for Democrats between 2026 and 2028. And Republicans fighting that fight, right? Like, they're in the South. They're doing all kinds of stuff. They're building ballrooms. They're doing—like, we actually have this amazing opportunity, an open goal, if you will, to use a soccer metaphor, where we can score some major, major wins and secure real political power for 28, but only if we act right now in 2028. . . .

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:02:59

And a major is Florida, for redistricting, demographic shifts, voter engagement. And I know in one of your recent videos I watched, Brian, that you noted, Latino voters could become one of the most important and under-discussed voting blocs in the midterms. now, could you give us more insight into that voting demographic, and then I that goes into just how important Florida is right now, and what's happening with gerrymandering.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:03:25

. Yeah. Latino voters have been, at the top of sort of a lot of, uh, res and polling memos lately because, in 2024, Latinos are not a monolith. I, I always feel the need to, to issue a disclaimer. Latinos are not a monolith, and there's many different communities within this, this community. Uh, we're talking in, generalizations that are only really useful in this particular political context. But when you look behavior, when you look at behavior, voting behavior in the Latino, large Latino community, uh, they swung a lot towards Donald Trump. He picked up a lot of support in heavily Latino communities across the country in 2024. and Republicans used that data, and Republicans used that data, that high-water mark, to draw their maps in Texas, and in Florida, and some other places. And so, if you built your house on a foundation that ends up, you find out later, being made of sand, your house might fall down and in this case that might be the u. s house of representatives because those maps those assumptions weren't as safe as they thought and so we've been doing all this research to find okay well look at the latino swing in 2025 and in 2026 in states like virginia and new jersey that had off-year elections in texas and north carolina that had primary elections and what we see is latinos swinging back towards democrats with a vengeance and that could be the thing that ultimately is republicans downfall which could turn their gerrymander into a what's known as a dummy mander which is when you draw seats for gain you try to steal seats but end up costing yourself seats because you it's it's imprecise you can't perfectly predict or you use the wrong assumptions in in your your map making so yeah potentially the most important voting block uh of the cycle will be how latino voters ultimately vote in in november but uh we could do the same exercise for young people as well

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:05:32

There's been a suggestion, um, I think recently that um the immigration issue, there's been a change in perception in the Hispanic community, which which, surprisingly to some of us, had been split. uh A significant part of the Hispanic community had backed Trump, um supported him, even on the immigration issue, but I guess the the cruelty that has been sort of exposed of his immigration policy is actually, the suggestion is, is backfiring. Have you seen that?

BRIAN DERRICK 1:06:14

i mean i think that it's a little hard to but we're seeing what we can say is like like we're donald trump's support from every community collapse that it's pretty broadly across the entire coalition that whether it is his overreach on immigration the and like the killing of Alex Pretti and Renée Goode and whether it is the cost of everything and his complete disregard for inflation and um people's everyday struggle or it's iran and him doing the exact opposite of what he said he was going to do on the campaign Young people, among men, among women, among Latino voters, like, it's just totally, uh, collapsing. His approval rating's the lowest it's ever been. And so it, it is genuinely hard to pinpoint exactly why, and what the cause of that is, because sometimes people don't even know for themselves. Getting an answer out of them is one thing. You can definitely get people to say something on a, on a poll, in a poll, when you offer them options, but, sometimes people can't even accurately put their finger on, on the why.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:07:25

Yeah, and on him not following through on campaign promises, I was going to see if you both could educate me a little more. I understand it from reading the news. uh, Trump's Trump's administration \$1. 8 billion anti-weaponization fund. fund, and that's a slush fund.

Transparently, I'm not that familiar with slush funds. I saw this, and I, as always, I'm like, how? Where are the loopholes? How is this allowed? How is he allowed to give money to his friends, his loyalists? Where this \$1. 8 billion is our taxpayers? I think that's incredibly important for everyday American citizens who are struggling at the gas station, who are struggling to buy groceries, who are struggling with their kids' education. That \$1. 8 billion, this slush fund, we pay for. And to quote Senator Raphael Warnick, there's no money for healthcare, but there's \$1. 8 billion for Trump's friends. And Senator Chris Murphy said, thi is outright theft. Brian, what is going on? Oh, and I should also mention that it's very unique for the entire New York Times editorial board to come out with an article. And the article came out on May 20th titled, There has never been an example of presidential corruption like this. I highly recommend people to take a look at that article.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:08:53

Yeah, this is, um, farcical, like something that you would honestly see in, in some sort satire. But it all stems from Donald Trump's taxes being released without permission by an individual person who was a federal contractor back in 2019, I believe it was. And Trump now, however many years later, fi a lawsuit against the IRS for \$10 billion while he was president. So that means he, as a private citizen, air quotes, was then suing the IRS, which he controls, for \$10 billion taxpayer money. That's all they have to spend. And this came out of a settlement of that lawsuit. And so that's why this has been such a side door, sneaky way of doing this without any oversight, without any congressional, uh, approval, that it was part of a, a settlement to a, to a lawsuit that he initiated as, as a private citizen.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:09:59

and he was on both sides.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:10:01

Exactly. Right. It's, it's, it's you suing yourself. But the only thing you have to pay yourself with is other people's money. Like that's, that is the situation. It is absolute corruption at its. most extreme?

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:10:14

How is it allowed to do this.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:10:16

Well, it's not clear he is,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:10:18

I, right.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:10:18

that he is. Okay. Yeah.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:10:20

I'm getting ahead.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:10:21

And well, right. And that's true. And that's the important part here is case itself, according to how our system works, came before a judge and was going to be potentially thrown out by a judge to say, you can't sue yourself. You are both the citizen and the government in this case, you cannot be both. And that's why he then used his power of over DOJ, which is also supposed to be operating independent of the president in this context. His extremely partisan and personal exertion of control over DOJ to force a settlement, which happens outside of the purview of the judge, right? That's not to, to avoid a judge tossing the decision. So not only is an abuse of the court case itself and an abuse of the courts, but then a further abuse of avoiding the actual review of the courts. And so it is, it is unclear if the, the money will be paid out. There are many ongoing lawsuits already, including from January 6th, uh, o who were attacked by. by criminals, by what I would call domestic terrorists, who are now being potentially paid out tens of millions of dollars each. and so we'll, we'll see what happens next, but again, it, it kind of goes back to our very early discussion of, over Trump's self-destruction, that he has no concern whatsoever for the political well-being of his party ostensibly, like, the coalition that he's supposed to be governing for. It is purely about, crony capitalism and, and how much he can profit for himself and set himself up to profit more after, uh, leaving office as well.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:12:01

Brian, I actually one thing I hadn't thought about came of this that was really scary, to me, and that is suggestion may be maneuvering to, have his follow him as president, Don

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:12:21

Okay. Cause Trump. Trump said when he was. Reporter asked. Your son's wedding. I think it's maybe this weekend. And Trump was like, well, it's not very good timing for me, so I'm not sure I'm going to make And I was like, wow,

BRIAN DERRICK 1:12:37

He'll

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:12:37

that's the.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:12:38

be there.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:12:38

Systic. Cancer. It's not good timing for

BRIAN DERRICK 1:12:43

He'll be there.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:12:44

But go ahead, Brian.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:12:46

No, he, he's definitely going. It's in the Bahamas. And I promise you, Trump will be there with, um, a golf club in his hand.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:12:53

Of course.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:12:54

yeah, I've always thought, and I, I guess I should, like, be louder about it. Cause there's, everyone just talks about JD Vance and Marco Rubio, um, and now Tucker Carlson. But I have always thought that Don Jr. would enter the equation because Trump will be at the maximum of his power. as he's exiting office and he is, he an, he's an older guy. Like there's no certainty and, uh, whether he will be there to endorse in four years. should the Republican lose or have to wait eight years? Should the Republican win both in, in 28 and in 32? Like we're talking about a long time for Don Jr. To wait his turn. And it's obvious that they want some sort of family dynasty to just turn this country into a monarchy turn. and so I can absolutely see a situation where they just want to make the most of the moment and make sure that they juice a Trump endorsement of his son for all that it's

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:13:54

when I literally try to tell my friends abroad, like no Kings March, you know, I'll send them my photos and my videos. I go to everyone that I can. And I don't think people take, take it really that serious that no Trump wants to be King him and his family and his cronies want to make this a complete monarch. And that is why we left England. That is the basis of how America was founded. And it's just, it's just every single time. I did want to ask you and my dad, I saw that representative Summer Lee and good old Bernie, Bernie Sanders recently introduced legislation aimed at abolishing super PACs. Is there any chance that legislation could get passed or not where we're currently at?

BRIAN DERRICK 1:14:41

I think that it's tricky to try to eliminate super PACs through legislation. It's possible. Th are some interesting ballot measures up this year that basically redefine how businesses can operate in a given state to exclude political activity. And so there are some creative solutions going on. I think that we need like a major campaign finance reform law that either will require a new Supreme Court precedent or a constitutional amendment to enforce essentially to fix like the depth of our campaign finance problems in this country. there are certainly major

reforms that we can accomplish through legislation, The Supreme Court has made it incredibly difficult when they claim that money is speech to actually put some guardrails around how billionaires and corporate interests can, manipulate elections.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:15:43

And I think, pointless to talk about constitutional amendments, because it is so hard to amend the Constitution, that, uh, it really I think one's just spinning their wheels if they, uh, look in that direction. yeah, I, I don't have any, um, great insights into, whether it would be achievable or not to, limit you know, with the mix on Supreme Court, he's got a super majority now. of conservatives.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:16:15

Right.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:16:16

I see as, as an issue that likely to change,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:16:21

and, and, Dad, if I remember your stance on this, and perhaps it's always evolving as it probably you don't think we will pack the or should pack the court?

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:16:32

No.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:16:33

Brian, do you disagree?

BRIAN DERRICK 1:16:34

I believe in court reform.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:16:36

I do, too.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:16:37

I believe that the reality of the country has changed sufficiently that our structure of the Supreme Court has to be updated to match it. I actually think that there are different reforms that would stick more than a simple addition of seats.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:16:55

Okay.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:16:56

because the addition of seats invites the addition of more seats or the removal of seats or something. and so I think that there are, ways that you can actually get the American public on

board, making it harder for the next administration or the next congressional majority or whatever to immediately try to erase your progress.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:17:14

Brian, how could you do that?

BRIAN DERRICK 1:17:16

like term limits? Um, if you had 18 year term limits and lifetime job security uh, some other considerations to ensure that, Supreme Court justices remained unbiased.

And so I think that there's ways that you could build more stability into the system so that we weren't all holding our breath, waiting to see if someone died while someone else was in office. Um, to see whether we still have human rights or not. Like that just seems to me like a system that has outlived its original design.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:17:58

But are you suggesting doing that without a constitutional amendment? The

BRIAN DERRICK 1:18:03

No,

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:18:03

court?

BRIAN DERRICK 1:18:03

I, don't share your, um,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:18:09

Go ahead.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:18:09

pessimism.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:18:10

This is Multi-generational conversations. And, you know, he was a con law professor for many, many years.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:18:16

Totally, I am not, right? And I'm, I'm not a lawyer, um, I believe that there will be constitutional amendments in my lifetime. I don't think that it's like a, hey, by 2030, we're going to get this constitutional amendment passed. I, I, I don't think that that's true, but I do think that we'll see more constitutional amendments in my lifetime. Uh, and I certainly, that would be one.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:18:36

I the latest amendment, you know who the author of the, uh, 27th amendment, I think it is.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:18:43

Well, it's an, it's a weird one because it was written in the 18th century, correct? And then passed.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:18:51

It was, it was, uh, James Madison.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:18:53

Yeah.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:18:54

he 13 amendments to the original constitution. Uh, 10 were accepted. and, they're sort of, when one thinks of the original constitution, it's usually the constitution plus the first 10 amendments. and, so that was, Madison was the author of one of them. And it actually, I think it's, the amendment that got adopted gives a real insight into the wisdom our founding fathers. And what it says is... That if Congress wants to give itself a pay raise, that the pay raise will not take effect until after the next election. In other words, if the voters disagree, they can vote the bastards out, basically. And so, um, I think there's a certain, you wisdom that the, uh, the original founders had about the nature of man and, uh, you power,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:19:59

Emphasis

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:19:59

power,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:20:00

on man, emphasis on man.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:20:03

yes, but power corrupting, if you will.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:20:06

That's fair.

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:20:06

yeah, I don't women are less susceptible to that kind of corruption. But,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:20:12

yeah. Well, so generous with his time, overly

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:20:16

Yes, he has.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:20:17

my, my question for you, Brian, our last one on our closing reflection is what is giving you hope and what is making you put your dancing shoes on that you could share with our listeners?

BRIAN DERRICK 1:20:28

well, I think that times of of chaos and friction and sometimes fear can come before times of, change and a leap forward. Uh, and so I do feel like we're in a very dark period. But when you look at the energy of young people and people showing up to the largest mobilizations in, in the history of the country by, by some measures, what you see is a country that's uniformly crying out for change. And I believe in our ability to deliver that change and it's not clean, it's not linear, it's not straightforward, it's not fun sometimes. But, um, I do believe that it is coming, that we will come out the other side and be able to right the ship that has been so drastically maneuvered off course. And so that is giving me hope because sort of the, the breaking of the system allows and creates the need for the rebuilding of something better. And I'm dancing often these days because we are raising money for lots of candidates who really need the help. There's awesome, young, fresh, dynamic voices on their way to Congress from Christina Bohannon to Paige Cagnetti to Jonathan Nez to Sean McCann to Bob Brooks to there's this wide, there's this wave of candidates that make me really excited about what the next Congress could look like. and seeing so many people show up and support their campaigns, um, do what they can is definitely keeping me grooving in 2026.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:22:14

So for our listeners, last and final, Brian, how can our listeners get involved with your work supporting Oath? and I'm sure to link your Instagram, social site, all those good things.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:22:25

Thank you. Yeah. I think Instagram is, is a good way to feel part of the community and, stay connected on a daily basis. But yeah, Oath dot vote is where the heart of the operation lives. You can go and get personalized recommendations about where you can have the biggest difference. You can make the biggest difference this year. and we're always available to answer questions and help people get involved.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:22:48

And he does not It is such a

BRIAN DERRICK 1:22:51

Never.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:22:51

gift.

You know, I'll take 10 minutes and read it. Usually it only takes two minutes because they're pretty short. and speaking on behalf of my dad, we are going to adopt you.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:23:04
already Oh

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:23:04
We're If there's any chance you're in Cincy, November 5th and 6th, I think you would absolutely love to come to the International Human Rights Panel. It's going to be a two-day event. Dad, I'm not really speaking it up as well as you would, but it's really a wonderful thing, and there's going to be great voices.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:23:22
Totally, yeah, thank you. I appreciate that, and there's all, I'm always there in November, so I will definitely let you know.

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:23:29
All right. Well, Brian, again, you've been overly generous. Thank you, thank you, thank

BERT LOCKWOOD 1:23:32
you. Yes, this has been thoroughly delightful. Thank you,

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:23:37
Smartest minds I know, and I'm just so honored to have you on our humble father-daughter podcast. It means the world.

BRIAN DERRICK 1:23:44
You're far too kind. Thank you for having me on. It was really a thought-provoking conversation, and I look forward

MEREDITH LOCKWOOD 1:23:54
one more big thank you to Brian Derrick for joining us on Human Rights Conversations Across Generations. And thank you to our listeners for tuning in. you can follow Brian on Instagram. His handle is at Brian Derrick and you can learn more about Oath at Oath. Vote. Both are linked in our show notes. If you are interested in becoming a donor, Oath can help connect you with races and campaigns where support can make such a difference. If you enjoyed this episode, plea subscribe, rate, and leave us a review. Sharing episodes with friends, family, and colleagues goes a long way. Until next time.