

Not In Our Town

[00:01 – 05:15]

Noelle: What's uuupp!

Miranda: Welcome to the Unpacked Project.

Noelle: We're your hosts, I'm Noelle.

Miranda: And I'm Miranda.

Noelle: We're here to explore all things social justice, it's through casual conversations interviews and storytelling, that we hope to inspire others to take action towards a more compassionate and equitable world.

Miranda: Because honestly it kind of sucks here sometimes.

Noelle: For real, we can do better people.

Miranda: Alright, let's start unpacking.

Noelle: Today we are speaking with Patrice O'Neill, filmmaker and CEO of the Oakland-based non-profit strategic media company, the working group, and leader of not in our town, a movement of people across the country working to build safe, inclusive communities for all. Her film not in our town began as a half hour PBS special and turned into a dynamic movement that thrives in communities across the US and around the world. Her work in collaboration with hate crime victims, civic leaders and law enforcement, has made her a nationally recognized leader in the anti-hate movement, who has counseled countless communities and individuals. As a filmmaker O'Neill has focused on stories about people in local communities working together for change. Her work seeks to embolden and honor unsung heroes whose everyday actions can lead to a larger impact. Patrice's storytelling seeks to push people out of their comfort zones while providing a narrative road map for change. Patrice thanks you so much for being here today with us. Can you share more about yourself and just more about how not in our town began?

Patrice O'Neil: Well, first of all, thanks for inviting me and thanks for doing this podcast. I really appreciate it. I know all of your listeners do as well. So, I was a filmmaker and I found a story

that really changed my life and changed the life of our small non-profit company. It changed the way I tell stories and it, you know, I'm so honored that the story and this short PBS film that we did really helped start a movement that exists 25 years after the film first aired. And I think I should tell you a little bit about that story because it will ground all of us in this discussion about what Not In Our Town is and the role that each of us can play in standing up to hate. So, back in the 90s, there was this organizing drive, not unlike what we're seeing now of white supremacists and it was becoming increasingly violent. There were groups that wanted to declare the Northwest to be their homeland and there was white supremacist organizing and activity in Billings, Montana and it was the largest city in Montana. But, the attacks became increasingly alarming that started out with graves being overturned in the Jewish cemetery, Latina... Latinos were attacked, gay people were attacked on the street, there were KKK flyers at the Martin Luther King celebration and there happened to be a very active human rights committee at the time and a police chief who had witnessed the murder of an African student in Portland, where he was working as a lieutenant and he said 'I'm not going to let that this happen in my town'. He was an early adherent to community policing, so he went to the community and said we have to work on this together, this isn't just a law enforcement problem, this is a community problem, so when there was a very small African-American church, skin had started showing up, standing in the back of the church, intimidating the congregation, members of other denominations showed up and to support them, the skinheads went away. When a Native American woman's house was plastered with racist graffiti, including the terms 'Indian go home', which is kind of unclear on the concept, right? They members of the painters union came to paint it over and a hundred neighbors were there to watch. So the town was learning what to do together, what can we do together to respond, every time something happens, we have to be there for each other. So, when a six-year-old Jewish boy placed a menorah in his window for Hanukkah, he felt safe, right? But then a brick was thrown through the window and it landed on his bed and that was a signal that things were becoming more violent and more dangerous. So, the groups met and people said 'what if we're all Jewish', so they started printing these paper menorahs and they just copied them and putting them in their windows. And then the local newspaper printed a full page menorah urging people to place them in their windows and that year, ten thousand people put menorahs in their windows. And the white supremacist organizing stopped, that is not to say that hate went away but that story was a successful example of what each of us can do.

[05:16 – 10:19]

Patrice O'Neil: It wasn't just one thing or one heroic action and I think all of us feel that when we think about this daunting force of hate that we are up against, right? I mean we are not Rosa Parks, we are not Martin Luther King, we are not Gandhi, we are just people. And the actions of all of those individuals in Billings had a much larger effect and that is what Not In Our Town all is about. And I think what was most surprising to us is, what happened next. Of course we were so

pleased to see the initial reaction, we thought 'let's do a screening and see what happens' and in that first conversation we did in Healdsburg, California, there was a whole diverse group of people from the town and they started talking not about what was happening in Billings, but their own town, right? So, we thought we'd do 10 town hall meetings in communities across the country and see if we could spark this discussion. What's happening locally in your town and what can you do? That turned into a hundred meetings, over a hundred that year in 1995. And it didn't hurt that, it was the year of the Oklahoma City bombing, when the entire country knew what was at stake, right? We can see where this kind of extremism and white supremacy and hate is going to take us, if we don't take action ourselves. So, the film continued and I guess the part of the story that is so important and I think was pivotal for us and the movement was when we got a call the next year from Bloomington, Illinois and Barb Atkins called and she said hello, we'd like to order 3,000 Not In Our Town buttons and we said well we're a film company, we did that and we're so glad that we did and we don't really have any more buttons. And she said you don't understand there are churches being burned across the south and we're going to have a march from the courthouse to one of the local Black churches and we need our buttons. And we said okay and we sent the buttons but we also sent our cameras. And that is really, you know, I would say that, the Not In Our Town movement, the story originated in Billings, Montana but the movement was born in Bloomington, Illinois because they took that message and they said what is happening here and what can we do to prevent acts of hate? What can we do proactively as a community, to prevent a hate crime from happening or church being burned? How can we act as a community? And that city Bloomington and its twin city of Normal, Illinois, they have been active in this work for over 25 years and their perseverance is I think part of what keeps us going and helps inform the rest of the movement.

Miranda: Thank you. That's such a beautiful and compelling story, you know, and I think, just such a testament to what happens when people come together and I think, so amazing that so many people from different backgrounds and experiences can come together for one, you know, common goal. And so, you know, we've spoken in previous episodes Patrice about how there's been such an increase in hate and violence over these past four years. The recent hate crimes and tragedies are just really more clear examples of the danger facing marginalized communities. So what are some examples of how Not In Our Town groups or branches across the country take action against fighting hate?

Patrice O'Neil: First let me set the stage a little bit and say that one of the most important things we need to do is build relationships and get a handle on how many hate crimes are happening, right? Our Asian brothers and sisters are in deep fear now because these elders are being harmed, they're afraid to go out of their houses, you know, the dangers of hate are often uncounted. And we know this by looking at statistics. So, I'm just going to geek out a minute but

it's really important to understand this. So, every year the FBI files the official report and they say we estimate in any given year, somewhere between 6,000 and 9,000 hate crimes happened and they count them up and that's based on what local law enforcement reports to the FBI. There's another arm of department of justice, the bureau of justice statistics that uses a different way to measure them and they estimate that at least 250,000 or more hate crimes happen every day. So, in the middle of that, there is so much pain and trauma, there's so much that we don't even know the harm, that is taking place that we don't know so, you know, trying to understand that and build those kind of relationships so people feel safe to report hate incidents before they turn into hate crimes.

[10:20 – 15:15]

Patrice O'Neil: Because it could be, I remember working with One Town and they were talking about a woman who was jogging and, you know, every time she drove by a certain house that someone would come out and say go back to where you came from and they would scream this at her. And the harm of that right, the harm of those racist messages on people cannot be underestimated, right? That may not have been a hate crime, that may have been protected speech but she carries that for a long time and, you know, the largest number of hate crimes are racially based hate crimes. The highest, the population that is most targeted is Black people in our country, right? And people of Color, but that is not to diminish the hate crimes against LGBTQ people, people based on their religion, whether they're Jewish or Muslim or Sikh or Hindu. I mean, hate across the board and if you look at how it's defined in the hate crime statutes, it's targeting someone for their identity based on race, religion, gender, or disability and I think sort of keeping that as a frame, so you don't say, oh I hate you because you're, you know, you disagree with me about XYZ. Hate as we define, it is based on identity, you could be walking down the street and someone identifies you, correctly or not, and then chooses to harm you or target you. So, I guess successful? What's successful? First of all the groups that are most successful have built relationships over time, they get to know each other and they create an atmosphere in their town where people feel safe, where there are conversations, where people feel safe to report what's happened to them and that they declare like when you say Not In Our Town well. First of all people are saying why is your name so negative, it's like I don't know, we named our film that, our film was called not in our town and it was based on a sign, on a sporting goods store in Billings, Montana and it said no hate, no fear, no violence, not in our town and we thought that was a really good name for the movie and then communities, took it on. But, then I think we've gotten some response that people use the name because it declares, you know, we do not want hate in our town. At the same time I think the affirmation is important as well, what DO we want? We want to build a safe inclusive community, right? And so we need to define what that means, what does it mean for everyone to feel safe, right? What is that? Safe from the harm that we talked about earlier of being called a name or identified and facing a harm, the harm of racism or intolerance or bigotry that you can carry with you the rest

of your life. This is a public health issue, this kind of harm is so understudied and so when we get it out in the open in our communities, when we make a place to say not in our town, we stand for safe inclusive communities, we begin the process of building a set of shared values in our town that say yeah that's who we are, we are a community that's safe and inclusive for everyone and then you have to start taking the steps. And really listening to people about what that means, what is unsafe for people? Where are the places that are unsafe? And it's just, it really does start with relationships and building a sort of a group that holds and is responsible for carrying this work forward, right? And there will be people that come in and out of it but the groups that have been most successful, the ones that we've watched over time, include both the key leaders in our towns, they include-and it doesn't necessarily have to have all of them, but it has the key leaders in our institutions whether it's our schools, our cities, our libraries, our law enforcement, our civic groups, our businesses and communities who have been targeted. And diverse community members who feel this and they have to be along with ordinary residents, you know, people in religious groups, parent groups, neighborhood groups, all working together in a shared mission, right?

[\[15:16 – 20:51\]](#)

Patrice O'Neil: And that's harder to do than you would think, right. It's hard, it's a real challenge because people who have power want to hold on to it and they're used to holding on to it, right. And people who don't have power, quite often get into this understandable position where we can only affect change if we are in protest, when it's also possible to make change in other ways, right? There are multiple ways that you make change in a community, right? Sometimes protest is the way to go and you need to highlight what's happening, sometimes it is working together with some key leaders who share your ideas and just moving the needle on things that need to change. So, there are a variety of ways that I think groups can function and need to function and, you know, so often in groups like you'll look at some of the groups, that work with not in our town, there's a Black Lives Matter group that has members that are both in Not In Our Town and are also in the Black Lives Matter group. And sometimes the Not In Our Town group can be a conduit or a way to reach some other folks that Black Lives Matter is not necessarily like the police for example. And so there are multiple ways to function for not in our town groups, if I'm getting ahead of myself, please forgive me but...

Noelle: No, I mean that was, I was going to actually ask, you know, because I think for a lot of people they don't even know where to start. So, I know for Not In Our Town, you all have five kind of simple steps to action that can help people realize, how they can start preventing violence and fighting racism in their communities. So, can you explain those action steps that you're referring to actually a little bit more in detail for our listeners?

Patrice O'Neil: Yes, so if you go onto niat.org or Not In Our Town and put five quick actions on Google, Not In Our Town, you'll find them but I'll go through them. And I think, you know, ultimately every single one of these actions are about us showing up for each other, right? For us moving out of our both comfort zones and our complacency right, or our own fears right, our own fears that if I don't say anything even if I feel this harm, if I don't say anything it won't get any worse or if I'm watching this, someone's going to target me if I say, there are a lot of obstacles, I mean these are real right? They are real and we can hide behind them, you know, each of us in our own way, we can hide behind them or we can push through them and pushing through them when you see that feeling, that relief of pushing through it, it's so tremendous, right? Especially when you find others and I think that's the essential part and why Not In Our Town exists, none of us can fight this on our own, we can't, and I mean we all have to be brave, we all have to find courage but our strength is in numbers and in working to stop hate together, right? So the five steps, let me just, okay, so one is make your values visible, this is like okay who am I, you start with a yard sign right, there's some on our site, you just print it and put it out and then people start talking to you, it's like this is who we are, it's best if you have a group and you all agree about what the sign is going to be. And people start talking about it and there are multiple layers of how you can get the signage out but it's a way to begin. So, in our communities after Charlottesville 2017, there were a whole series of really horrific clashes in the street, white supremacists started coming to the Bay Area and marching through the streets of our towns and then there were sometimes groups that would fight them and the Mayor of Berkeley, California and his chief of staff were standing on the courts on the steps and they said there has to be something for the average person to do because I know we're all feeling this, we have to do something and so they started printing, these Bay Area united against hate signs and they started putting them all over and they're everywhere, they're everywhere you go in the Bay Area and you will see them everywhere. And that became such a... built such a sense of safety and relief for so many people. And then helped build the united against hate week movement that we do every year. And I hope people, whoever is listening to this will become involved in united against hate week later this year but signage--don't underestimate, you know, signage is something, it's not going to stop the problem of hate but it's a way to begin, right, okay. So, next it's like talk about how to stand up, you know, just having those discussions, I remember there's a group that was forming in southern California and there's a woman who got up and said, you know, what I did after I saw that movie, it's called Not In Our Town Manhattan Beach, you might want to check it out, again Google it Not In Our Town Manhattan Beach...

[20:52 – 25:20]

Patrice O'Neil: My husband and I went out on date night and we started talking about it and we talked about racism in our town and we realized that we never really had this conversation before and then we went home and talked to our kids about it and then we invited our

neighbors off and we started having this conversation and so it opened up this discussion and it led to this other discussion that became equally powerful. Then we invited our friends, LatinX couple and they said 'I'm sorry we're not moving to your town, we don't feel safe there' which opened up this whole reason and need to, like this is why we have to do this work. You open a discussion, you are brave with one person and then another and another and you start talking, the need for change becomes more apparent and then the force of change becomes more powerful, right. So, I think that's the next part, you start talking about it and we're going to talk about that in a minute, but using our films to prompt a discussion. So, it's not just 'hey let's just get together and talk about racism' that doesn't always work, right? Like let's have, you know, I think that's tough right, so using the story from one community to begin a discussion about your own is one of the deep lessons of Not In Our Town, the problems in Pittsburgh or Orlando or wherever you are, very different than those in some other communities, but one town can learn from another. So next, take the pledge. So some communities are building these pledges and we have sample pledges on our site that basically says I am pledging to stand up, when I see hate, when I witness it, when I see someone else being harmed and this is harder and you can't always ask people to do this but what if I am harmed myself, right? That is the tougher question when I am harmed. How do I stand up for myself? Or how do I ask for support from someone else? And that is not something that I think any of us can, we can't lay that responsibility on those who are harmed right, but I know that I am so grateful to people who find that courage to speak up but we can't make it their responsibility, we can't make it the responsibility of those who are harmed. But, find a way to take that pledge and I think, it seems like a simple thing, I've got this pledge but Bloomington, again a town that worked at this for a long time, they would go to this group, would go to the school, every year as parents and kids were registering for school and they'd say let's take the pledge against racism, like you're registering for school and then Not In Our Town group, had a table and they said let's take the pledge and when I went back to screen a film that we did about the attack on the Sikh temple of Wisconsin, the projectionist, he's an adult now right, comes up to me and he goes, I took the pledge when I was in middle school and I still have it, it's on my dresser now at home, right. So, all this, many years later, he sees that every day right? He sees that, he remembers it and I think part of the problem is that we do not give each other opportunities to think about this and to act on it. So, something as simple as a pledge, it's like yeah that's lip service, you know what it can be meaningful, it's meaningful if we make it meaningful, right? And then, you know, these are getting progressively more difficult than a Not In Our Town group or connect with a group that already exists in your community and say what can we do together because you have to systematize it, right? Like of course you want individuals acting, taking these actions but if you really want change in your town, it requires systemic change and you have to start working on these projects together and really sort of investigating and looking at what you can do together. And so how to start a not in our town group, again on our website, you can go and unpack it. I was just counseling someone

from Laguna Beach yesterday about how do I begin? It's like oh just start hear some advice, we're doing a new resiliency guide too that should be up soon, about how to do this in these very difficult times.

[25:21 – 30:21]

Patrice O'Neil: And I think understanding the history of intolerance and racism and hate in our own community is very much a part of that. And then stand up to hate groups but not every community has a hate group, hopefully operating in their town but there are hateful incidents and attacks, right? And you have to take them on and you have to find a way to do this when it happens. Silence is acceptance right, that is a message, if you allow these groups to operate without responding and without really saying, you know, this is not who we are, not in our town, without saying that, then you're allowing them to operate. So, those are five quick things that it took me ten minutes to say but those are things, those are ways to begin. And then, you know, as your town, as your group develops, there are deeper ways, I think for a community to engage and really make the change that needs to happen in our schools and our cities and our businesses and how we interact when we go into stores and in public life. So, I hope that was useful.

Miranda: Yeah, no it was great. And I think, you mentioned guides I believe, and I think it's just so important as well and the story that you told about the pledge with the gentleman and seeing that every day and he really was introduced to that at a younger age and the importance of having these conversations with children in schools and really opening up that arena for them to have these discussions. So, I know that Not In Our Town, they also have these program guides and resource kits for schools that want to engage in this work. So, is there a cost that's associated with either of these and what do they entail?

Patrice O'Neil: So, first of all you could go into not in our town and go into the not our school site and you can find free resources and guides, there's not a pay wall behind a lot of this. Some material is costs money and there are, for example there's a video action kit that teachers can use and there's an identity safe school program, right? So, one of the things that we emphasize for schools is that every child needs to walk into a school, feeling safe in their own identity and who they are, right? And that's a big problem and it needs a significant attention but you can begin right, you can begin with those videos, those actions. And I think one thing that we've learned over this time, as we look at how to stop hate racism and bullying in a school. The young people in a school are the ones who are going to change things. And the adults need to find a way to give them that frame and that opportunity for them to make a difference peer-to-peer, right? And the community becomes a really vital player in reinforcing that messaging and so there's a group of parents on long island, who I think are tremendous, they're young parents and they saw swastikas on the school property of one of their middle schools.

And they said we've got to get ahead of this. And there was some institutional response from the schools but it was the parents who took it on and say how can we start to do something and they formed a Not In Our Town group and they wanted to send a message to their children and their communities like this is who we are, this is what we stand for. And I think we can't ask our kids to do the work if we're not ready to do it ourselves, right? We can't, you know, so the kids, the young people of our community go to school and maybe they learn, you know, how to stand up against bigotry and hate and bullying and then they come home and they see it in their family or they see it in the community and like the cycle doesn't end. And so parents play such a tremendous role. So maybe, you know, and this is true in many places, you don't have a school district that's necessarily cooperative. The parents start doing something and quite often the schools come around. And they organize in different ways right, and you start getting the mayor involved in city council and you start, you know, you call up the police chief and say hey we're a group of parents and we're really concerned about this and we want you to join us. And send a message that every child, every person in our town needs to feel safe.

[30:22 – 35:43]

Patrice O'Neil: So, it is schools are an essential part of our community, it's the place where it's one of the few places, I was talking to a woman from Los Angeles, a leader in civics and she was saying, in LA we're like this international city but there are very few ways for us to interact, we're always in our cars. And I find that schools are one of the few places left where parents are together with their kids, it's the soccer practice, it's the, you know, PTA meetings, it's the like we're going to those meetings with teachers and we see each other. And there are play dates, they're all those things that's--they are central to community. And so parents become and it's quite often that parents formed not in our town groups because they didn't want their kids to grow up in a town that was hateful.

Miranda: Yeah, well. And can you tell me... I don't know if you have any statistics or data or at least if you could speak to some of the benefits that you see in terms of school climates and bullying for these schools that participate in the Not In Our Town programming?

Patrice O'Neil: Well, so doing these long-term studies is really hard, they're one of the leaders of not our school did some long-term training with Carmel school district and they saw their bullying reduced by 40 percent right, which is significant in the school. So, I think when you pay attention, when you say every child needs to be safe in their identity and all of our staff is going to be trained in this and we are going to give our young people the opportunity to lead and help, support them as they reach out to each other, you're going to reduce bullying and hate, you're going to make a change. So, I think, you know, there are multiple ways you can do that but that messaging, I think the messaging that we try to share, there are lots of different curriculums, there's this group called Facing History And Ourselves that has a much more

advanced curriculum about these issues. But, I would suggest that people look at Not In Our School and what we're trying to do and think about how you can introduce them. Even if you start with a PTA, start with the parent's right, because the parents can have a huge influence on the kids. And eventually influence the district. So, we're starting more workshops, starting in the fall, in the aftermath of, you know, the past the election year has been really difficult and the rise in hate groups has been a lot of call on our organizations and we haven't done as much work in schools as we'd like to but, we're starting to build regional training again. But, it won't be until the fall.

Noelle: I really like you talk about how families can be empowered and then how it can be taken to a deeper level in terms of incorporating different systems in the community, schools that we just spoke about, you've mentioned law enforcement, so, you know, I'm curious, last season we spoke about defunding the police and really reallocating essential resources, so we can better serve communities. Your website actually references collaboration with the US Department of Justice Cops department, so I was curious. Can you tell us more about that? And do you see any law enforcement departments that are kind of raising the bar in hate crime prevention and working with communities to improve this?

Patrice O'Neil: There are indeed, you know, okay. So, I think in some communities, the relationships between communities of Color particularly and the police are a source of incredible harm and it's been such a painful—you know this is not new. What happened with George Floyd was just the most horrific blatant example of what we've seen for years and years. But, police law enforcement, it is their job to make everyone safe and standing up to hate is part of the job of law enforcement and we have worked with tremendous law enforcement leaders around the country in this endeavor. And the best of them are very much involved in the Not In Our Town groups, in their cities and I'll give you an example Novato, California, the deputy chief is on the steering committee of the NIOT group and he's one of, I think the most active members, I think he feels it himself, he's Latinx, grew up as an immigrant, he and his wife go and put posters in the windows in their town but in his job he helped do one of the first and that department did one of the first online hate crime reporting programs in Northern California.

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Patrice O'Neil: So that people can now report hates incidents and hate crimes online, right? So, they don't have to go up to the police station, they can report them online and it's an easier way for people to get a handle on this. That group is also forming a hate and bias response team which is part of the more, so if you get involved with Not In Our Town, Hate and Bias Response Team is one of the more sort of advanced things that you do in a Not In Our Town group, what do we do when we see an incident, how can we mobilize the community, not just to sort of maybe the Not In Our Town group can be an intervention and go to the police and say, you

know, this person may not feel comfortable reporting this but you need to know what's happening, you know, at least in this area if they want to be anonymous, right? Respecting the target of hate's wish to be anonymous and then how do we respond as a community because maybe it's not a hate crime where the justice system intervenes, maybe it's an incident, so how do we address that harm as a community, right? So, if there's an attack against the Asian center or Buddhist church, how do we sort of like let's get other denominations and other people to go to that house of worship and learn about the history and the engagement like how do we turn the crisis and harm into an opportunity to build relationships. And law enforcement can play a crucial role in that. And I would say that as an entry point, if the relationships are not necessarily the best, it could be an entry point for building those relationships in communities, you know, the parent group, for example in Long Island, didn't have a particular relationship with the police chief and then they went to them and said we're forming a Not In Our Town group, he went online and he saw all these resources for law enforcement. So, with the cop's office, we created a set of resources to help law enforcement group's work with their communities to prevent hate crimes. And we provided examples of those methods, what can you do and, you know, the original police chief in Billings is the perfect example, we can't do this alone, it's something that we have to do. And it's a way to start building relationships, right? So, to really have people get to know each other in a way, this is something that we know we are all against, we want to stand up against hate together, so how do we sit in the same room together and agree about that, right? And begin that relationship, building that, hopefully can address some of the other issues that emerge, you know, it is the racial profiling that happens that people report so persistently of being pulled over, there's also racial profiling in the neighborhoods, so there are, you know, the incident in Central Park that we all know about, right? Sort of like weaponizing the relationship with police that was a person that weaponized that, right? So, it is a problem for all of us in how we relate and think about the intersection of the justice system and people who are harmed by hate. So, you know, that whole community approach and we were in a zoom call, you know, a lot of these meetings that we usually do in person, we're in a zoom call with community members looking at one of our films about police reform and what it looks like. And in that zoom call, the one of the participants who's a young black leader, in one of the colleges, in Illinois he said, you know, one of my biggest problems is I'm walking down the street here and the neighbors call the police on me, right.

[\[40:16 – 45:55\]](#)

Patrice O'Neil: And he said he remembered like there's a Black officer who comes out to speak to him and he goes, you're walking down the street, you're Black and you have a poncho on, right? And so even he got it, right, so we've seen this problem with next-door persistently right, and how they had to change their policies because of the racial profiling. So, I think these are big problems and thinking about ways that we can work like what are the points of agreement

that can get us in the room together to solve some agreed-upon problems, so that we can build relationships, that can solve some of these other problems.

Miranda: How beautiful and I think that this work across the country is just so important, it's so essential right, because like you said earlier the average person kind of needs steps, right? What are some actionable items that they can put in place to really help combat hate and use their voice to combat violence? So, you spoke on it a little bit earlier but if someone was interested in starting a Not In Our Town group where would they even begin, you know, I know there's resources on the website but kind of what are the first steps for that.

Patrice O'Neil: I think you get a group of, when I say like-minded, I don't necessarily mean like-minded, like get a group of people who you think or, you know, might share this interest. So, I love this story, this is like a perfect example of how a group gets started, it's a young woman, she's South Asian, she moved to this town in New Jersey and she felt bullied in her school, she saw racism in her school and her community and she just didn't know what to do, she felt it was a community derived problem, not just in our school and so she read the instructions on the site and she found this woman who was a former mayor of the town and she saw her at a town meeting, she went up to her, she said I want to talk to you about Not In Our Town. And so these two women became leaders in forming a Not In Our Town group, these two unlikely allies, right. So, they're just, you know, I think it's like she understood that, she needed an another powerful ally who had access to like where's the power source in this town and how can we move this together and, you know. So, they started this and they started talking to other clergy and to some parent groups and so they pulled together some folks, they started, they did the five-minute version of Billings to say okay this is what it is, right, and if you look at the Billings story, I mean you're not, it's really hard to be against that honestly, right? I mean you could be politically, you could have a lot of different opinions but to be against that basic story of standing up to white supremacists organizing in your town and intimidating people and harming them, yeah. So they started...

Noelle: Seems hard to argue that somehow some people still do that.

Patrice O'Neil: Well, it's happening. Isn't it? It's happening. Yeah, but I think the point is that the vast majority of people can agree on that and that we have to think about how to leverage that force, right? And there are people who are reluctant, right. So, sometimes you find the groups form and there are town leaders who would just kind of rather do nothing but when asked, they can't really say no, you know what I'm saying?

Miranda: Yeah.

Patrice O'Neil: They can't really say no. And then there are people who are looking for an opportunity, I think there are leaders who are looking for an opportunity and want to do this work and need citizen resident action to push them on. And I think that's the idea of like pushing like how can we push and pull in at the same time, right? How can we like speak truth to power and gather power for as part of our force, right, so all this.

Noelle: I like that idea of like putting our energy there and not focusing on people who might try to argue but put our energy into people that are looking for change and looking for movement and want to see these positive things happening in their community because they see hate happening around them. And they want to do something about that. So, I just love that message that Not In Our Town has in terms of just trying to build this movement at a community level, bringing allies in, bringing community stakeholders in and trying to build this change from the ground up. So, I just really love that, you know, we clearly have a long way to go with this, in doing this work and the hope is really that one day, we don't all have to live in a world where there's hate and things are more just and equitable for everyone around us in our community.

[\[45:56 – 50:22\]](#)

Noelle: What do you foresee as needing to happen to get us there? Obviously the movement's one piece of it. What do you see us needing to do to try to get us to that space?

Patrice O'Neil: Well, I think that, first of all I think we have to look at hate speech, I think we have to look at gun violence, we're up against both the first and second amendment and how we interpret them, you know, just if you look at the big picture our constitution has changed over time, right? Women didn't have the right to vote, we were founded as a slave-owning state, we started with the genocide of indigenous people, we have built a democracy that can change and right now we are in a crisis with both gun violence and hate speech. And so how can we keep those rights which are essential to our democracy, many believe are essential to our democracy and yet keep them within the context of this current moment so that everyone can feel safe from the dangers of hate. I think that what happens locally will make all the difference in the world, I mean we hope that the federal government will do something, we'll provide funding, we'll provide the frame for people to take action, provide the messaging pulpit right, for something that is not hate speech on a daily basis, right? But engaging in inclusion but really what happens at the local level is those innovations and those changes can move from one town to another and create the real force that makes a difference in people's lives. So, I think where we are right now, local is where it's at, it's where we need to do the work. So, I'm really grateful to the two of you for the time and energy in thinking about this and supporting your listeners in this endeavor to think about what their role is in addressing this huge problem.

Miranda: Yeah, well thank you. And thank you so much for your time today, just the work that you're doing is so important, and really all the resources that you shared today, we always love kind of wrapping up our season with this type of information, just actionable items for people. And obviously we'll put that on our website as well but before we say goodbye to you and our listeners what are some organizations or groups that are doing this work that you recommend that we follow as well in addition to not in our town.

Patrice O'Neil: So, I would say for parents, Facing History and Ourselves has some important resources, I think there's a group called Welcoming America that does work for immigrant integration. I think that there are, you know, on a national level there are a lot of amazing civil rights organizations, so if you look at the leadership conference for civil and human rights, you'll find these tremendous resources. I think... let me think about that and send you some organizations that yeah that we follow and you know, I think in this moment, the people who are monitoring hate incidents, we need to pay more attention to that and people need to know sort of where to go, so they can report them. And in case I haven't said it, please know that on our site, there are films that people can use to launch a discussion. So that's something that's available to folks and you can go in find the films and we'll send you. I think I sent you a flyer maybe of a few of them that can start the discussion, so you're not just starting from scratch. You're starting with a story right, yeah starting with the story.

[50:23 – 51:48]

Noelle: Well, Patrice thank you so much for coming on with us today, you shared so much important information and I hope our listeners are excited to head to your website and like want to go on and get a sign and stick it outside and start some conversations. So, thank you so much. And to our listeners, we have one more episode coming up next week; it's actually our wrap-up episode for season two. So, please join us, it's going to be kind of, you know, a wrap-up of everything we spoke about this season, some pretty heavy topics with extremism, and white nationalism, and Christianity, and hopefully, you know, ending with this episode where we're learning what we can do at a community level to start fighting some of this hate. So Patrice thank you so much for that. Listeners, we'll see you next week, bye.

Miranda: Bye!

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Miranda: And if you enjoyed today's episode, visit our website [@theunpackedproject.com](http://theunpackedproject.com) where you can make a donation that supports the research production and operating costs of this work.

Noelle: Shout out to all of our listeners who unpacked with us today.

Miranda: See you next week.

Noelle: Peace!