

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Senator Elizabeth Warren

JVN [00:00:02] Welcome to "Getting Curious", I'm Jonathan Van Ness. And every week I sit down for a 40 minute conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. Buckle up, everybody, because today I am joined by Senator Elizabeth Warren, where I ask her, "How will you win the White House in 2020"? Ah! I can't believe it. Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh. Alright, without any further ado, let's get to this gorgeous interview. Oh, my God, Hi! I'm so excited to meet you. How are you?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:00:41] I feel like I already know you. You look fabulous.

JVN [00:00:44] Thank you, so do you. I can't believe you're here. Do you want to take a seat?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:00:46] I'm delighted. You bet.

JVN [00:00:46] Oh my god. Senator Warren.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:00:50] Elizabeth. Thank you.

JVN [00:00:50] Okay. Are we gonna do headphones? I do 'cause-

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:00:59] Oh, 'cause we look so cool in headphones.

JVN [00:01:01] Well then 'cause you can really see yourself. Or hear yourself. I just said "see yourself" instead of "hear yourself" because I'm so nervous.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:01:06] That's all right. We got it.

JVN [00:01:07] I feel more nervous than-, here. Do you?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:01:09] I got a bigger head.

JVN [00:01:09] It's ok. Oh, my God. No. If you need to adjust the size, honey.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:01:13] Oh, there we go. There we go.

JVN [00:01:13] I was like jumping. Of course you do.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:01:16] Thank you.

JVN [00:01:17] No, well, thank you so much for taking your time to come here. You're so busy. I think you're the busiest person.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:01:26] But you know, this is important. Because you're important. It's true. And because we get to talk about things that are important.

JVN [00:01:34] We do. And, you know, every episode of "Getting Curious" is like a question. And so the one that I was like, okay, if I ever was blessed to get the time to get to have a chance to talk to Senator Warren, I will eventually-.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:01:44] Elizabeth. If you don't stop this.

JVN [00:01:45] Ok fine.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:01:47] Ok.

JVN [00:01:47] It's gonna be, I respect you so much, it's like hard to call you by your first name, but I'm gonna be comfortable with it now.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:01:51] Yep.

JVN [00:01:51] So I was like, how are we going to win this election? Not we. How are you? How are we? How are, because we're obviously a strong coalition.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:01:59] Right.

JVN [00:01:59] You know, you've you've really got a strong coalition going.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:02:02] Yes, yes.

JVN [00:02:02] So, you know, really, how are we gonna do it? I think the first question that comes to my mind for listeners are if they don't know, maybe you've been living under a rock and you don't know who Elizabeth is. Or Senator Warren is. Or just the everything that, it's okay, it's just one little door, not a big deal. Everyone, if you heard that that was a door. It's not a big deal. It's not the first time. Not the last. So. I mean, your, your career is incredible. You are an educator. You are a lawyer. You-. I just want you to have a moment to-, and I'll stop talking from nervousness any moment now. I just wanted to have-. Who are you? You know, tell the people who don't know who you are, who you are.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:02:44] Good. So I was born and raised in Oklahoma. I am the baby in the family. I have-.

JVN [00:02:49] In what city?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:02:50] In Oklahoma City is what's ultimately. But my family's from Hughes County.

JVN [00:02:56] I have a bunch of family from Enid.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:02:57] Oh, Enid is where my brother took flight training.

JVN [00:03:00] Really?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:03:01] Vance Air Force Base.

JVN [00:03:03] Oh my gosh, I had family from there too. They went to the Air Force there, too.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:03:06] Yes. Yes.

JVN [00:03:07] Interesting, so anyway, you're the baby.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:03:08] So I'm the baby. I have three much older brothers, including the brother who was in Enid. And I'm what used to be called a late in life baby. My mother always just called me "the surprise". And my three brothers to this day are still referred to as "the boys", even though they're all retired, all back in Oklahoma. And that's to distinguish them from "the surprise". And when we were growing up, our daddy had a lot of different jobs. He sold paint, he sold car bits, he sold fencing. And then when I was in middle school, the boys were all gone by then. They all went off and joined the military. And Daddy had a heart attack. And this was a, an important moment for me. I'm, I'm just a kid, and yet I remember when we lost the family station wagon. I remember how my mother used to tuck me in at night and give me this big smile. And then she'd leave the room and close the door. And I knew what was coming next. She'd start to cry. Never wanted to cry in front of me. And I remember the day that I walked into my folks' bedroom and laid out on the bed is the dress. The one that only comes out for weddings, funerals and graduations. And my mother's in her slip and her stocking feet. And she's pacing. And she's got her head down. And she's saying, "We will not lose this house. We will not lose this house. We will not lose this house". She was 50 years old. She had never worked outside the home and she was terrified. But there's no money coming in. And so she walks to the Sears, pulls that dress on, walks to the Sears, and she gets a full time minimum wage job answering phones. And I always think of it as the first lesson my mother taught me. No matter how scared you are and no matter how hard it looks when it comes down to it, you reach down deep, you find what you have to find. You take care of yourself and the people you love. And years later, I came to understand, it's what millions of people do across this country every day. No matter how hard it looks, no matter how scared they are, they reach down deep. They find what they have to find. They take care of themselves and the people they love. But it was years after that that I came to understand. That story is also a story about government, because when I was a kid, a full time minimum wage job in America would support a family of three. It would, it would pay a mortgage, it would cover utilities and it would put food on the table. Today, a full time minimum wage job in America will not keep a mama and a baby out of poverty. That is wrong. And that is why I am in this fight.

JVN [00:06:39] Because right now, the federal minimum wage is like like 8 or 9?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:06:45] 7 and a quarter. They haven't raised it and they haven't raised in over a decade.

JVN [00:06:50] \$7 and 25 cents is the federal government.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:06:52] Yeah, just give me a break here.

JVN [00:06:53] That is not-. Even in small towns that is not living.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:06:57] In fact, it is so bad that I read not long ago that there is no county in America. So we're not just talking you like what you can't do in New York or Los Angeles or

Chicago or San Antonio. No county in America where somebody making minimum wage, working forty hours a week can afford a two bedroom apartment. The median two bedroom apartment. Think about that. And this is about why the shift, why when I was a girl, is it different from how it is now? And here's the answer. When I was a girl, the, the basic question asked in Washington was, what does it take a family of three to survive? They, they're thinking about the minimum wage and they say, what does it take a family to get a toehold in America's middle class? What does it take a family to have something solid they can build on today? The question asked in Washington is where do we set the minimum wage to maximize the profits of giant multinational corporations? Well, I don't want a government that works for giant multinational corporations, I want one that works for our families.

JVN [00:08:10] So what about-. Yes. What about for people when we hear like giant multinational corporation, what are some examples of that?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:08:17] There are so many of them. I mean, that's part of the problem right now, is that companies you may think of as American companies, you know, companies that build cars, companies that build farm equipment. Google and Amazon. The truth is they're all around the world. So they may have headquarters here in the United States. They may have their papers that show them to be an American company. But understand this, Jonathan, they don't have any notion of loyalty to the United States. They're not patriotic. These, these giant companies, they owe loyalty to just one thing, and that is profits.

JVN [00:09:03] Yep.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:09:03] The bottom line. So, man, if they can save a nickel moving a job outside the United States, they'll do it in a heartbeat. If they can save a nickel by laying off some people the week before Christmas, they'll do it in a heartbeat. And that's why when you've got a market economy, a capitalist economy, you got to have rules and the rules have to be enforced. And among those rules is those who are rich, those who make it big, have to pitch in some so everybody gets a chance in this country.

JVN [00:09:41] Yes. Let's, which that leads us perfectly into the wealth tax.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:09:45] Yes.

JVN [00:09:46] And I think that the wealth tax is something that is a really fundamentally amazing idea and the one that will become law, it's gonna be amazing.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:09:55] Let's do it.

JVN [00:09:55] But I think it's like I had several things I wrote down when you were talk about that. What do you think has, I mean, so essentially what I hear you saying is that the 70s, 60s, 70s, like 80s, like there was, there was a question in Washington which was like, what would it cost the American average family of three to like get a toehold in the middle class economy?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:10:15] Right.

JVN [00:10:15] And I know that there wasn't like a switch that was flipped when that-.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:10:17] Although it's pretty close.

JVN [00:10:18] Was it? What was it?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:10:19] Yes it was. So what you see is basically about the time Ronald Reagan gets elected. Now, there's a little run up to it in the late 70s. But Ronald Reagan gets elected. And one of the very first things he does after running on, you know, Dow, it's all going to be great. He breaks the backs of one of the main unions. It was called PATCO, the air traffic controllers. And when he does that, the importance of that is not just that he destroyed that union and he did. He broke a strike. But it's that it's like he held up a giant sign to big corporations, and said, "You know what, if you go after your unions. You're not going to get any trouble from the White House. If you decide to start moving jobs out of the U.S. good union jobs that are providing a good middle class life for families. You're not going to get any trouble from this White House". And you watch it just start happening an inch at a time. And particularly moving jobs out that were union jobs. And you know why? It's not just that those jobs paid well so that they could save money by having that job done somewhere else where wages were a lot lower. It's also about power. Think about an economy where you've got big corporations and, and workers who have equal power. Think about the difference between that kind of an economy and an economy where those union jobs, many of them have just disappeared. So the proportion of workers in the workforce who are union workers goes down and goes down and goes down. And here's the thing. We, we actually know, you can track the numbers on this, that unionization not only helps the folks who are in unions, and it definitely does. Wages are higher, working conditions are higher, jobs stability is higher. It also helps every other worker. In other words, when unions get out and fight for better pay, it turns out everybody's pay goes up. When unions get out and fight for more respect in the workforce, everybody gets a little more respect in the workforce. And so much of this battle between the giant corporations and the unions was over who's going to be calling the shots.

JVN [00:12:45] Which is a really good time to take a really quick little tiny break.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:12:49] Oh let's do it right.

JVN [00:12:50] We'll be right back with more Senator Warren, who I'm allowed to call Elizabeth right now.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:12:52] You better.

JVN [00:12:53] I am. And we'll be right back with more "Getting Curious" right after this. OK. So I wrote down like several things and I do want to talk about the wealth tax, but I originally what I wanted to ask or when I was saying, you know, who is Elizabeth Warren? And when I was fighting back tears because like, oh, my God, I can't believe you're telling me like, I can't believe I'm like, it's too much. But I love it. But. Well, not that you had hardships in your family, but I love that you took your time to share a story with me. But, what, the part that is kind of trying to get to is that you, you know, people now that are maybe new to the Elizabeth Warren party, are like, "Oh, she is the candidate who has a plan for that". But there's a reason that you have a plan for that. And that is because you have like some, because on "Getting Curious" like, I live for a resumé. I live for like an expert, a lawyer, a PhD, like a doctor. And you are a, prior to becoming a senator, you are a leading expert on studying the economy and health care. And I think that's something that a lot of

people maybe don't, they're like, "Why does she have all these ideas"? Well, because she's been doing this for a hot minute. You know?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:13:59] Yeah.

JVN [00:13:59] So that's why I kind of wanted to set the stage. And, and there's some pretty cool like you have some pretty fierce titles. Which you probably-. You-. Yes, yes, yes. Yes. But the 2007, 2008 financial crisis and then becoming appointed to oversee the Obama's institution of the-

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:14:19] TARP.

JVN [00:14:19] Yes. And then you go on to win the Senator race in Massachusetts, you become the first female senator ever elected from the state of Massachusetts. Which is so incredible, so cool. And then you won in a landslide in 2018.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:14:28] And that was fun. We have to talk about that.

JVN [00:14:30] Ok. Can't we talk about that. But it's like, so basically you are saying that it was kind of like a switch that was flipped, like Reagan coming in after, because Carter was very like, you know, solar panels, like, I feel like he was probably pretty pro-union, like. Good for, you know, people. And then Reagan, that was like a hard shift, obviously, like the HIV AIDS crisis.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:14:50] Yep.

JVN [00:14:51] Like how was a huge blemish on the United States like history and how people were treated. And Reagan had a huge part to do with that, which I've also talked about on this podcast a lot. So but that was the era where you feel like it became much more about like corporate interests.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:15:07] Yep.

JVN [00:15:07] And what I think is interesting about that is just the dynamics. So you were like think about an economy that has like an equally strong like corporation people and then union people. So what's like what did that do to our economy? We're just like losing our middle class over a long period of time. The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer sort of a thing.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:15:26] It's not only the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. It's the rich are getting richer. And everybody else is feeling the stretch, is getting squeezed. So this is about America's middle class, America's working class, America's working poor, America's poor poor, America's homeless. It's about everybody. And here's how I look at this. It's that just inch at a time. Most of the time, not in a big visible way. The government worked a little, in Washington, worked a little better and a little better and a little better for those at the top. For those who make campaign contributions, for those who hired armies of lobbyists and lawyers, for those who had bought and paid for experts and, and these so-called think tanks. And you just watch it an inch, an inch, an inch until what we have now is we have an economy that is still in great. Stock market is up. GDP is up. But all of that wealth is getting sucked to a smaller and smaller group at the top and less and less to anyone else.

JVN [00:16:35] And do you think that that could, 'cause a lot of young people may not remember the financial crisis of 2007 and '08? I was a 19 year old. I was just out of hair school. And it was insane because I went to, I moved to Phoenix and I got really busy, really quick. Like there was money aplenty. The Super Bowl was coming. It was like, I had clients, like it was the era of the salon where you could just go sit in the back room. And if you knew how to cut yourself out of a paper bag, you were going to get clients. And within, then January of '08 happen. And it was the Super Bowl had came and it was really, really busy. And then all of a sudden, like it was March, which should be really busy in Arizona. And all of a sudden there was no clients. Like people were, like suicide rates, like went up. Like it was like, I mean, you couldn't find a client. I mean, the curtain went up. And because usually, like you were prepared for summer in Arizona, like when you're in a service industry, you know that like summer is not where-, when everyone is going to come to Phoenix. But it was unprecedented. And that was actually part of why I moved to Los Angeles, because in that time it was like the whole like, like mortgages, subprime lenders, I think that's like a bigger thing that I don't really understand all of but weren't, correct me if I'm wrong, but weren't there a lot of similar factors going on at that crisis that there are now?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:17:48] Yes.

JVN [00:17:48] And oh, and one other thing. That oh my god, everyone hold on to your seats for this, because this is like, OK. One thing I heard you say that kind of reminds me of one thing that Voldemort's says, Donald Trump. Is, and this is a concern of vote-, voters, so I think that this is really good, is that the jobs are going away. And one thing that I think people fell for with him is that he's going to bring them back. Like he was saying, like we're going to bring them back. We're going to stop these loopholes for when people move things offshore, you know, like we're going to make, we're going to bring, we're gonna make America great again. And if you notice, it's still car companies are closing, still factories are closing. Like that part doesn't seem like it's changing. But you also said there's these loopholes, where like these multinational corporations, like, you know, it's like you're not going to get any trou-, so like there's these laws that are in place. Like obviously, you don't want that to happen. But I'm just saying that, like we, both sides recognize an issue that jobs are leaving. But it's like the approach to fix it are wildly different because it's like, well, I guess that's cause they don't really have an approach. But they would say that they have an approach, don't they?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:18:52] But they don't.

JVN [00:18:53] They don't.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:18:54] They don't. Because that's not their concern.

JVN [00:18:56] Because they're just like stock markets, yay, so it's fine.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:18:57] They're concerned about profits. That's exactly right. And if you start out rich, this is a great, great economy for you, because you can just get richer and richer and richer and richer. And it really is about who government works for. Let me take a quick story about government.

JVN [00:19:13] Yes.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:19:14] So back long, long time ago. Back the 70s. I'm a young mom, right? And toaster ovens could start fires. And here's how it worked. Those little toaster ovens with the slide out trays, they didn't have automatic shut off switches. So you could put four slices of bread in it, stick the thing in, turn it on, go off and do something else, come back. And the flames would be leaping up like eight inches in the air. You could catch the kitchen curtains on fire. You could catch cabinets on fire. Ask me how I know.

JVN [00:19:45] Yeah.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:19:45] Yes, you got it. My daddy for Christmas, one year, along in there, bought me a fire extinguisher. So Consumer Product Safety Commission comes along and says, "Enough, you're not doing that anymore. You can't sell toasters that could have a one in five chance of burning down your house". Bang. They put a safety switch on it. We're done. That's government that works for the people.

JVN [00:20:05] Yes.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:20:05] So by the early 2000s, this is the time you're starting to talk about earl-, but earlier, what's happening is mortgages have gotten so complex and dangerous in America. You ready for this? That a 1 in 5 chance of costing people their homes. Not obviously from fire, but from foreclosure. Only this time the government was deep in the pocket of the big banks, so they let them keep selling it until they crashed the whole economy in 2008. So there's government on one side, government on the other. So I go to Washington. I'm not in, I'm not an elected official. I go and I say, "I've got this idea for this consumer agency, kind of like the one on toasters. You shouldn't be able to sell mortgages, and credit cards, and payday loans that cheat people. Student loans, shouldn't be able to do that". And people in Washington told me two things. The first one is that it's a really great idea. You could make a real difference, structural change. Second thing they tell me, don't even try. Because Wall Street will be against you and the big money will be against you and Democrats will be up against-, some of the Democrats. All the Republicans will be against you. So don't even try. Change is hard. And I get it. Big structural change is hard, but it was the right thing to do. So I got in that fight, got others into it. We took on Wall Street, we took on the big banks. And in 2010, Barack Obama signed that agency into law. And it has already forced big banks to return more than \$12 billion dollars to people they cheated. It's handled a million and a half complaints. That's how you can make structural change. So for me, what this is all about is to say we can make government work for the people, but we've got to do it. It's on you and me, Jonathan. It's not on any-, nobody else is gonna do this. If we're going to leave this to the billionaires. 'Scuse me. Government is just gonna work better for the billionaires. So, hello, you know. No surprise here. So for me, it's all about we've got to build a grassroots movement. So when I made the decision to run for president, what I said is I'm spending exactly zero time sucking up to billionaires, to corporate executives. I'm not going to do any closed door fundraisers, I'm not going to sell access to my time. I'm going to fund this entirely grassroots. And I hope anybody who's listening, who thinks that's a good idea goes to ElizabethWarren.com, pitch in, five bucks. Fifteen bucks. But this is our chance in a democracy to be able to build a movement to make the kind of change so that health care works for people. So that education works for the people. So that we get the jobs that work for the people. So we get housing, I've actually done a great housing plan, bring down the cost of housing by building more housing. We can do these things if we make the government work for us. But if we're gonna let it all be about billionaires and

people who suck up to billionaires, we're going to have a government that just keeps working better for them. It's really kind of an either or here.

JVN [00:23:30] So with the wealth tax, would that be done by like law or by executive action?

JVN [00:23:34] Well, you got to do this one by law. But I love this word. Let me tell everybody what the wealth tax is. So this is so much fun. So this says your accumulated wealth. You know, you add up everything you've got. If you're under 50 million dollars, you're cool. You're free and clear. But on your 50 millionth and first dollar, you've got to pitch in two cents on a wealth tax. And two cents on every dollar after that. And the whole basic idea. It's like property taxes on a home. You got this stuff. Only it says for the bazillionaires, it's not just their real estate, it's their stock portfolio, the diamonds, the Rembrandt, the yacht. So you count up how much they've got. They pitch in two cents for everything over \$50 million. And now here's the amazing thing, Jonathan. We asked them to pay two cents. And what can we do with two cents? Well, universal child care. Every one of our babies, age zero to five. Universal pre-K. Every three year old and four year old in America. Stop exploiting the mostly women, mostly black and brown women who do this work. We can raise the wages of every child care worker and preschool teacher in America. We can put 800 billion dollars of new money into K-12. So every school can be an excellent school. Quadruple the funding for Title 1 schools that are teaching low-income kids. Fully fund IDEA, so kids with with disabilities get the kind of education they need. We can do that for our babies, that for K-12, plus we can, we can pay for technical school, two year college, four year college for anybody who wants to get an education. We can put 50 billion dollars into our historically black colleges and universities and help level the playing field. And one more thing on that same two cents, all of that for our babies, all of that for K-12, all that for folks going to school, we can cancel student loan debt for 43 million Americans. It's our values, Jonathan. Is it more important to have that two cents stay tied up in those great fortunes that are already growing it, what, 6 percent, 8 percent, 10 percent a year? Say, come on, guys, pitch two cents in and then we can invest in an entire generation of young people. That's the America we could be, an America of opportunity, not just for some, an America of opportunity for everyone.

JVN [00:26:17] We're going be right back with more Senator Warren Elizabeth after the break. Elizabeth after the break. Just a few commercials and will be right back after this. Welcome back to "Getting Curious". So do you see the wealth tax as a way of kind of bringing the middle class and creating more of one by creating more opportunity for people to go to school and being able to get out of this student debt to kind of repopulate the middle class?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:26:50] Bingo. That is exactly the right way to think about it.

JVN [00:26:53] So let's say that just because I'm really at bad millions, let's say you have \$50, let's say like, or maybe I guess a million because I don't scare people. But it's like, how does that work? How would you like assess people's fortune? Would it be off like IRS records or something like?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:27:06] So actually, it's not so hard because the big chunk of that fortune is held in the stock market right now. So we kind of know where a big part of it is. And look, when someone dies, you have to do this anyway. They have to be able to identify their estates. And the big fortunes, probably unlike a lot of the folks. They actually have their own money managers. So they keep a pretty careful track of where the money is and where the assets are and so on. And yeah, it's got some startup costs until you get a hold of all this. But sort of once you've done it,

you've done it. If you had the Rembrandt last year, either better have the Rembrandt or the cash this year, right? One way or the other.

JVN [00:27:43] So is that how it would work? Like if you had a Rembrandt like that was like, would they always pay two cents on like the value of that Rembrandt?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:27:49] Two cents. Yeah. Once you're up at those high levels because that thing is appreciating. Right? That thing you know, there's an old saying it takes money to make money. And that's actually what's gone off the rails here is the folks who've got money just keep making more and more and more.

JVN [00:28:07] And don't do-.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:28:07] I'll tell you something about taxes in fact. So the 99 percent in America right now pay about 7.2 percent of their total wealth in taxes. 7.2. The top one tenth of one percent, which is what I'm talking about here. They pay 3.2 percent.

JVN [00:28:29] 'Cause mine is like 50 percent.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:28:31] Yeah, yeah. You're paying a lot. But the top they've got all the folks who advise them how to take care of every tax loophole. And that's the problem. These guys are not paying a fair share. And I'm not. Look, my deal is, there's some billionaires you're going to be shocked to hear this, who don't actually like my plan.

JVN [00:28:52] Yeah.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:28:53] I know you're surprised by this. And they're doing things like they're getting on the phone and talking to each other and say "Oh, will you run for president. You know, we got to do something". Another one went on TV and cried about how terrible it is if he had to pay a two cent wealth tax and-.

JVN [00:29:08] If you'd have to sell your 80 bedroom mansion for like a 60 bedroom mansion.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:29:13] Yeah. You know, the truth is, since they're growing these fortunes. It really mostly would mean it just wouldn't grow quite as fast.

JVN [00:29:20] It's like no one is selling houses, no one is going to have to sell their dang Rembrandt. Like you're gonna be fine.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:29:24] You're going to be fine.

JVN [00:29:24] But also what is so disgusting about that as a, someone who lives in New York City and who's lived in L.A., how are we walking past people who do not have places to live? People are in danger, like homelessness is a growing issue in cities that aren't even near New York and Los Angeles. Like how are we, like where has our humanity gone that we don't care?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:29:45] You know, but that's what this is all about. I think of it as our values. What do we value the most? Do we really value letting those at the top keep a bigger and

bigger share of what they've accumulated? Or do we say, wait a minute? Think of it this way, when billionaires go on TV to cry and they say, "Oh, you know, I worked hard". Well, yeah, good. And so did a lot of people. And good for you. You had a great idea. You followed it through. You turned it into something terrific. But here's the deal. You built a great fortune in America. I guarantee you built it, at least in part using workers all of us helped pay to educate.

JVN [00:30:25] Yes.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:30:25] You built it, at least in part, getting your goods to market on roads and bridges all of us helped pay to build. You built it, at least in part protected by police and firefighters. All of us helped pay their salaries. We're Americans. We love it. We're glad to pay for it. We want to build opportunity. All we're saying is when you make it big. I mean really big. I mean, top one tenth of one percent big, pitch in two cents. So everybody else gets a chance to make it. Pitch in two cents so we can invest in a generation. I've got a housing plan. We need to build-

JVN [00:30:59] I want to hear about.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:31:00] Oh, and I want to talk about, 3.2 million new housing units across America. We have a housing crisis in big cities. We have a housing crisis in small towns. We have a housing crisis in rural America. And a big part is we just don't have enough housing supply anymore. You know, the, the developers that built the little two bedroom, one bath house, you know, like the kind I grew up in.

JVN [00:31:24] Yes.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:31:24] Garage converted to hold guy three brothers. You know, their bedroom. They're now building McMansions. And I'm not mad at them. They build that because that's where the profits are. And the federal government that once invested in lots of housing has basically pulled out of that. So what I want to see us do, it's it's just like you say, it's about our values. I want to see us build new housing units, and that means middle class, working class, working poor, poor poor. I want to see it for the homeless, for seniors who want to age in place, for people with disabilities, for people who are coming back from incarceration. We need more housing in America.

JVN [00:32:04] So, yes, now, you were in Atlanta a few weeks ago.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:32:09] Oh yes.

JVN [00:32:09] Yeah. And you were, I think you-. What were, what was your message in Atlanta if people didn't get to, if people didn't get to hear it?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:32:16] So we had a, what Atlanta was about is about how we've got to come together as working people and pick up each other's battles as our own. So I told the story of the black washer women in Atlanta in, oh, about 15, 20 years after the Civil War. How they were just doing this backbreaking work for just almost no pay. And how one day they decided enough and they laid down their washboards and went on strike. Can you imagine? And the strike grew from a few to a few more. Ultimately, they were joined by the few white washer women also in

Atlanta, and they exercised their power together. And eventually, much back and forth, the rich and the powerful in town backed down. And they got two things out of it. They got a little more pay, which was important, and they got a little respect. They were treated better. And partly what that's a story about is people working together. The importance of unions and the importance of working across race lines. Now, the next part of the story, as you know, is a bad part of the story about Jim Crow laws and talking about Jim Crow. It's not only a way to bear down hard on African-Americans, but to make sure that African-American workers always stayed separated from white workers. In other words, turn people against people. Encourage people to stand on opposite sides because when they come together, they got a lot more power. So I talked about that story and talked about what we need to do as a country. Donald Trump has a strategy. He's got a strategy. Turn people against people. Turn white against black and brown. Turns straight against gay and trans, particularly trans. Turn Christian against Muslim. Turn everybody against immigrants, because he hopes that if we all stay turned against each other, that nobody will notice that he and his corrupt cronies are stealing both the wealth and the dignity of this country.

JVN [00:34:58] Which I was, I've written that down a couple of times. I'm like "Trump. Trump". I was like, like why would a real estate developer who, like, is a essential landlord, want to help enact policies that make it harder to build houses? Huh.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:35:13] Yeah. Exactly right.

JVN [00:35:15] You know? It's like, 'cause I feel like there's so much-. There's so much corruption like that we don't actually know about. I'm just like waiting for for his-, for his tax, for this, the court that just said that-.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:35:28] Right.

JVN [00:35:29] Because I really feel like there's like I mean, obviously the impeachment hearings have been like. I think it's like a smoking gun for impeachment. I think every rational person does. But it would be great to have those e-mails from like Mike Pompeo and, and Giuliani. There's real-, just really, just really, I just want the tapes. Like I mean, already believe everything but just like, and I think that like his tax returns-.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:35:47] You really want to feel the grossness of it. Right?

JVN [00:35:49] I mean, I think it's like the Watergate tapes.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:35:51] Yeah.

JVN [00:35:51] I mean, it's on those tapes you had Nixon talking about using marijuana to suppress the vote of black and brown people. And I think he said hippies, but like, but I mean, to suppress the vote, I mean, this power like separate and divide tactic and then really like secret, secret, bad stuff is like something I think those administrations had very much in common.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:36:14] Yeah.

JVN [00:36:14] But it's like, I just feel like there has to be like a, so much like emoluments clause rolling over, his children doing so many like accepting gifts that like the, in the stopovers in

Scotland. There's just so many things I'm just, that is stressing me out generally. I obviously know we're at-

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:36:33] So. So think of it this way, Jonathan. I, I get why you're stressed out and you're right to be stressed out. It's horrible. But think of it this way. Go back to Reagan. This country has had just a little more corruption and a little more corruption and a little more corruption year after year after year, a little more of the lobbyists, a little more of the campaign contributions, a little more and a little more. So now we have a country that works great for giant drug companies, not for people trying to get a prescription filled.

JVN [00:37:04] Yeah.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:37:05] How you and I met.

JVN [00:37:05] Yeah.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:37:06] We have a country that works great for people who want to make money investing in private prisons.

JVN [00:37:12] The mass incarcerations, yes.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:37:12] And private detention centers down at the border. Not for the people who's lives are torn apart.

JVN [00:37:16] Do you have a plan for that?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:37:17] Oh, yeah. We got this. We got this.

JVN [00:37:21] Ok.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:37:21] We've got a country that works great for giant oil companies that want to drill everywhere. Just not for the rest of us who see climate change bearing down upon us. So when you see a country that works great for the rich and not for much of anyone else, it's corruption. But here's the thing. Worse, year by year by year, going back to the 80s. But Donald Trump has taken this to new heights. Heights like people never believed could happen, as you say, with his kids, with his personal, what he's done for himself. Amazing. Horrible. But what that's done is that's made a lot of people say, "Whoa, wait a minute, I've got to pay some attention here". People have come off the sidelines. We saw this in the elections of 2017. The few we had then. Remember in Virginia?

JVN [00:38:14] Yes. Yes. Yes.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:38:15] Then we watched it in 2018. Now we're watching it again in 2019. People are off the sidelines. And now this is the question in the Democratic primary. So what are we going to offer? Are we going to say business as usual after Donald Trump? Or are we to say, Wait a minute, the doors open a crack for big structural change. The doors open a crack that we don't go back to the old corruption. We say, nope, gotta be a government. It's going to work for the people. We're gonna put a two cent wealth tax on these guys at the top. We're gonna build

more housing. We're gonna live our values down at the border, not take children away from their families. We're going to offer more aid in Central America to help stabilize down there. So you got-.

JVN [00:39:03] We've talked about that on this podcast.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:39:05] Oh.

JVN [00:39:05] Yeah. Because we have, we've taken, we've done, we have so much, we have done so much in Central America to cause the destabilization that, that is causing this immigration crisis now. That, you know, the way the Donald Trump talked about that and the dehumanization that he has perpetuated on people that are fleeing violence that this country gave and kind of its-.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:39:27] You know-.

JVN [00:39:27] It's truly mind-blowing. But I think so people don't understand that. But I think another thing I just wanted to ask is, you know, primary. Inviting nominee and this whole divide and conquer tactic. I mean, I see you as the next president of the United States.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:39:42] Yay.

JVN [00:39:42] And as seeing you as the next president in the United States, it's like you would also be the leader of the Democratic Party. And its like, what would you say to, you know, Obama's recently come out talking about, you know, everything is nuance and things aren't perfect. And and I think there's a lot of wisdom in the things that he said. But what do you say to like young voters who are on Twitter who will be like, well, so-and-so didn't do this within us? You know? And like, well, how do we call must under bring out that coalition that did-? Because, I mean, Obama did win twice, so-. But I don't know, like what the electoral map that you're going to win is going to look like. I don't know what that grassroots coalition will come together to look like and how it'll different, I'm sure pundits on every single news cycle will, you know, talk about that. But it's like how do we come together and, and, and get that coalition together? Or even cuter one? Even better one.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:40:32] I like, I like that. I like that. And I think the answer is two part. One is that Trump has gotten a lot of folks to say, "Whoah, whoah, whoah, wait a minute, maybe we better rethink this whole thing", because we cannot hand this over to Trump. But far more importantly is the things we are fighting for. So think about what it means to say part of the, you know, the core part of what I want to get out there and fight for is canceling student loan debt for 43 million Americans. We cancel student loan debt for 43 million Americans. That's a huge difference. It's a huge difference in what people can do for, with their lives. It's a huge difference in the kind of futures they can build. And it's a huge difference for our economy. This is a boost in our economy that when we talk about universal child care for all of our babies, that's mommas and some daddies who are going to be able to finish school, who are going to be able to get a decent job, who are going to be able to hold that job down and know that their kids are not only well taken care of, they're getting a good start in life. Good early childhood education. When we talk about housing, it's about decent housing for everyone, not passing people on the street who, who don't know where they're going to be tonight. Not saying to seniors, "Sorry, there's no place for you to live because you're just going to have to go in to a nursing facility because there's no senior

living housing that's right for you". People with disabilities, "You can't live independently because there's no place that's set setup for that". People who have been incarcerated, "You're shut out of the whole thing because, boy, we don't want you in places where there's federal money being spent". No. We can be a country that says "When you do well, we all do well". We want everybody to just have a chance out there. And the thing is, we are a country that produces an enormous amount of wealth. We could do this. We just got to ask those at the top. We're just gotta ask those giant corporations that you got to pitch in a little money and you got to follow some basic rules. You pitch in a little money, you follow some basic rules. We could have an amazing country, not a country of the past. We didn't have that country. We could build something so extraordinary in this country. We could build the America of dream big and fight hard.

JVN [00:43:12] Love that. So it's really like a new coalition of people coming together that like that is what it is.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:43:17] Yep.

JVN [00:43:18] Great.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:43:18] Yep.

JVN [00:43:19] So you have a lot coming up. We have like Iowa coming up. We also have like a probably impending like impeachment trial.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:43:25] Yeah.

JVN [00:43:26] Do you, I mean there's probably not going to be like like enough Republican senators unless we really like, I mean, never say never.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:43:35] Just don't know. Never say never. Look at the end of the day, the impeachment for me isn't about politics. This is about everyone in the Senate. Everyone in the House took an oath of office to uphold the Constitution of the United States of America. We did not take an oath to a political party. We did not take an oath to a man who now sits as president. It is the Constitution and the Constitution is clear. No one is above the law. And that's what this impeachment is all about. But we can't let the impeachment take us away from the job we have to do every day, and that is not just to hold this president accountable, but to be building our coalition to get out there, reach out face to face, volunteer. It's why I ask everyone to go to ElizabethWarren.com. Volunteer online, volunteer an hour, you'll meet some amazing people.

JVN [00:44:33] Yes.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:44:33] Pitch in 5 bucks.

JVN [00:44:34] Yes.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:44:35] Be part of this because we've got to be building the movement now.

JVN [00:44:39] And unless we support other Democratic candidate for the Senate in Congress, like we can't get these big structural change passed.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:44:44] You know, it's that.

JVN [00:44:45] So it's really important.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:44:46] Absolutely, Jonathan. It's about the House. It's about the Senate. But listen, it's also about State House races.

JVN [00:44:53] Yes. State leg.

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:44:53] And a lot who is State Secretary of State. And it's about even town council. I am building a grassroots movement because we not only will have an advantage to win the White House with a grassroots movement and to take back the Senate and keep the House. But it's also about winning up and down the line. This is a chance for a major realignment. Think of it this way. Everybody who's listening to this, you got a chance to be part of history. Making the kind of history that builds an extraordinary country going forward.

JVN [00:45:30] Elizabeth, comma, Senator Warren, thank you so much for your time. I would just thank you so much. I can't wait to find out more ways that I can volunteer and more ways than I can help. And for just constant updates for where people can update, sign up to volunteer. Where can people find you? Like where all the resources?

ELIZABETH WARREN [00:45:46] Go to ElizabethWarren.com and you can pitch in five bucks. You can read about what's going on. You can see about events that are happening right in your neighborhood because people are building this grassroots movement and you can volunteer. Volunteering is the heart and soul now of how we're going to repair our democracy and make it work for all of us.

JVN [00:46:05] Thank you so much.

[00:46:06] Jonathan. You are the best.

[00:46:08] Thank you. You are.

[00:46:08] I love you.

[00:46:09] Love you, too. Thank you. You've been listening to "Getting Curious" with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was Senator Elizabeth Warren. You'll find links to her work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter at CuriousWithJVN. And don't forget to donate 1, 3, 5, 7 bucks to Senator Warren's campaign, honey. Also, our theme music is "Freak" by Quin. Thank you so much to her for letting us use it. If you enjoyed our show, introduce a friend and show them how to subscribe. "Getting Curious" is produced by me, Julie Carrillo, Rae Ellis, Chelsea Jacobson and Colin Anderson. Our socials are run and curated by Emily Bossak.

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