

## Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Pascale R. Bos Part 2

JVN [00:00:00] Welcome to "Getting Curious," I'm Jonathan Van Ness. And every week I sit down for a 40-minute conversation with a brilliant expert all about something that makes me curious. Today, we're jumping right back where we left off with Associate Professor Pascale R. Bos, from the Department of Germanic Studies at the University of Texas at Austin, where she goes on to answer what happened after World War Two. Welcome back to "Getting Curious," this is Jonathan Van Ness. So as, as these-. So, in recapping World War Two, I was, I guess the point that I'm trying to get to is that Germany was committing genocide and work, and, you know, genocide against Jewish people, LGBTQ people, the-?

PASCALE BOS [00:00:44] Disabled. That's where they start actually as several years early, the so-called T4 program, taking people from all of these different clinics who they considered unworthy of life. And they were people with sometimes really quite minor disabilities, you know, develop mental or physical. And this is also the group on which they tried out gassing as a method of killing. They did that in Germany proper, but they got enough pushback from the Germans to say, "Hey, this is my nephew. Sure, my nephew had these and these issues. But where did he go to?" And the clinics would just say, "Oh, he died" and so forth. And the rumors started going around. You know what? It looks like these people are being killed, the so-called euthanasia program. Euthanasia, I say so-called because euthanasia, of course, presumes that you give permission. Nobody gave permission. This is murder. So is also because of the pushback of these German relatives that the Nazis realized we better do the murdering somewhere else. So they very deliberately create the places to murder people, primarily in Poland. A number of camps in Germany at a later point when the full, the war was in full swing and nobody can actually check what the Germans are doing anyway, also have gas chambers. But the majority of the murdering by those methods happens in Poland and off-site and out of sight of the Germans. This is also one of the reasons why Germans after the war could claim, you know, [German]. "We didn't know what happened." Which is true and not true. They knew what the Nazis and what they had, you know, what that group was up to. And they didn't protest it and they didn't say anything when their neighbors disappeared. But would they have known exactly that there were camps in Poland where Jews were gassed to death? True. They wouldn't have known the details.

JVN [00:02:35] And also, I would I mean, not to defend, you know, but it's like 0.75 percent of the population is like you maybe wouldn't, like you maybe wouldn't necessarily like all of the people who are just, you know, thinking about like going to work, doing hair, doing this, doing that, it's like something you hear about on the news, but it's like you don't or but like they didn't have TV. It's, like, just, like a different-. So I guess I understand, I understand how it could some would say I didn't necessarily exactly know. But obviously the rumors, you know, that is really. So, but I guess the other point that I was going to make is it isn't until Pearl Harbor. It's not like America was like this is fucked up. What they're doing to Jewish people and to disabled people and to certainly LGBTQ people. I was probably not crossing anyone's lips at 1945, but it's like it was Pearl Harbor that really got us into it. It wasn't that there was, like, some moral imperative on the American public that, like, spurred us into helping.

PASCALE BOS [00:03:29] No. And actually, what's important to keep in mind is that even once the U.S. gets involved in the war, the entire purpose is to defeat the Nazis. And even when the Americans get more and more absolutely reliable intelligence from the British, but also they themselves take aerial photographs, for instance, of Auschwitz, where if you look at these photos, they're so detailed, you can see literally people standing in line for what we now know is the gas chamber. So even when they had that kind of intelligence. They decided that it was more prudent to use their bombs and their military personnel to defeat the Germans than to try to rescue the Jews of Europe. And I think this is something that we for a long time did not know. But there's

enough research done on that. It's clear that high up in the American administration at the time, some people were really, really trying to get this, this disaster of the European Jews at least seen. And shouldn't we intervene on their behalf? But there was so much pushback with this idea that either this was propaganda. This is not really what the Germans are doing. How would they be doing this? This was the big question. "How could they possibly be killing that many people"? And it's true, if you think about shooting people one by one, millions is a lot of work. And that's also how it started, of course, the Nazis were killing people one by one. At least half of the six million Jews in Europe were murdered by being rounded up at these so-called police battalions that followed the ordinary Wehrmacht soldiers into towns and villages. The Wehrmacht would like sort of select out the people who were a Jewish, Sinti, Roma or otherwise undesirable. And then there's these police battalions that would shoot them one by one. And this got, quote unquote, so cumbersome, it took much too much ammunition and so forth. That, that's when the Nazis would streamline the process, first came up with gas trucks, then with actually concentration camps with gas chambers. So it is important to keep in mind that to a certain degree, it was unimaginable even for the people high up in government in the US to realize that the Nazis were doing that. If you have never used a gas chamber on people, how are you supposed to picture that that's a real thing? I think it's still boggles the minds that you put all of these people in the gas chamber, put Zyklon B in the top and then, you know, half an hour later they're all dead and then you cremate them and you use their ashes and the gold from their teeth and whatever else. That boggles the mind, it should still boggle the mind now. But then certainly nobody, people say, "Ah, that's, you know, that's just propaganda."

JVN [00:06:14] But when you say that they were using it to beat the Nazis, not to free the imprisoned people, like does that mean that there's research done since it says it like there were people in the American or British army that were saying, like, "No, we need to like go to Auschwitz and like free them now. Like, we can't wait for the Nazis to fall. Like, we should go attack those-," is that what you're saying? They were-.

PASCALE BOS [00:06:32] Yes. Well, what they were particularly looking at is this question of make, does it make sense to bomb the railroads to Auschwitz? Because you can only bring people there and then kill them at the rate that they were killing them if they were brought there by train, because that's how that happened. So the big question also among British historians has been, "Why did the U.S. not just simply do that"? Like drop a bomb on these tra-, train tracks? Would have maybe only delayed it with a few weeks, a few months. But at that point, we're talking about 1944, when within the span of absolutely a few weeks.

JVN [00:07:10] They accelerate the exterm-.

PASCALE BOS [00:07:11] Exactly. The majority of Jews that are killed in gas chambers and places like Auschwitz. This is by '44.

JVN [00:07:19] So why didn't they do it?

PASCALE BOS [00:07:23] I wish I could give you a less cynical answer, but I think fundamentally this was not the priority. They felt like it was wasted effort. And I have no doubt that some people really didn't care particularly about the so-called Jewish cause. So I'm not saying that there's a deliberate "let them die." There was sort of a disbelief mixed with "We need these planes elsewhere. What's the point"? And so forth. But it was absolutely devastating for the people who were in these camps because we know a number of them, because they've written memoirs that they could see the American fl-, planes flying overhead and they were thinking, "Oh, my God, this is it."

JVN [00:08:02] We're going to get liberated.

PASCALE BOS [00:08:03] This is it. Or, or even the hope, bomb our camp.

JVN [00:08:07] Let us run out the fucking thing.

PASCALE BOS [00:08:09] Half of us are dead, but the Nazis are also dead. And in the chaos that, your odds would have been better. But of course, it's 2020, right? We look in hindsight and are like, yes, anything would have been better. It was simply not really the priority and partially not believed. The combination of all of these things. So the narrative that develops after the war and it's really strong in the U.S. that we, quote unquote, Americans came to liberate, came to Europe to liberate the Jews from the concentration camps is patently false. To the extent that Americans at all liberated concentration camps is because they stumbled upon them.

JVN [00:08:47] Yes, so what, what because it's like they don't, we don't hear about like Auschwitz getting liberated until like after Hitler is dead. Like the Reich has fallen and then they get liberated. Right?

PASCALE BOS [00:08:55] Well, what actually, what happens with Auschwitz is actually interesting. It's quite a while before, it's several months before Hitler commits suicide.

JVN [00:09:03] Oh.

PASCALE BOS [00:09:03] It's in January of 1945. And it happens, why we don't hear about is because it's the Soviets who liberate Auschwitz. They ultimately pushed the German front back into the west, right? Into Germany properly. And so that is why the majority of the camps where Jews were held were liberated by the Soviets. And then of course you have the Americans, the British, the French, also partially the Canadians who come from the western side, like after D-Day, who push back with much effort at the front on the west. So you kind of have the Germans squeezed on the right and on the left by these two forces. And so it's the British and the Americans that literally, by coincidence, while going into a town, realize, "Oh, wait, what is this production next to the town? Oh, wow. That's the town's concentration camp." And they found this again and again and again. And they had no idea in the beginning what they were seeing, whereas it seemed that the Soviets had much more of a sense of "This is what they're doing and this makes sense."

JVN [00:10:09] So but wasn't there also like a anti-Semitic vibe going on in Russia, too? Because I learned about that on Downton Abbey randomly, but like, wasn't they, like they also had an anti-Semitic vibe going on there, too. But is that why they were like, Oh, yeah, like they were trying to do some fucked up stuff, too, but at least we weren't killing them"?

PASCALE BOS [00:10:25] Well, this is really complicated. Yes. Stalin clearly was not a fan of the Jews. And you also see this after the war in countries that were under communist regimes, the Jews actually didn't fare particularly well. However, keep in mind that, very large number of Jews lived in the Soviet Union and weren't really identified as such because they were now, right? The Soviet Union was also, was atheists. Everybody was just a Soviet citizen. Ultimately, if you keep in mind that the Nazis biggest enemies warned us, not, not just the Jews, but the communists, the way the Nazis fought the war in the Soviet Union, so-called Operation Barbarossa was so unbelievably cruel and so unbelievably violent. They did not just murder people randomly and also, right? Not do the proper Geneva Convention take POWs, no, just murder officers, soldiers. A very large number of Soviet soldiers ended up in Auschwitz, murdered there. So they did things to Soviet soldiers. And then in addition, they came into the villages and towns and tortured people and committed mass sexual violence. So whatever motivated the Soviets, they simply wanted to push the Germans out of their territory and frankly slaughtered them on their way home. And if

that meant the liberating camps that the Nazis were very intent on keeping a secret about, all the better. So what the Soviets, for instance, did, they didn't just liberate those camps. They took all the administration from those camps to be able then later on be used. In fact, they used that evidence in Nuremberg. So I wouldn't say that, the, that the Soviets liberated these camps because they were particularly fond of the Jews. But it basically becomes right? This, this shared enemy. So now we are, in fact, on the same side.

JVN [00:12:30] So it's really a power struggle between governments.

PASCALE BOS [00:12:32] Yes.

JVN [00:12:33] And then like Jewish people were pawn-, like we're used as pawns.

PASCALE BOS [00:12:36] Absolutely.

JVN [00:12:37] We're going to take a pause there for a moment, but we'll be right back with more from Pascale after the break. So then one other thing I wanted to get to that I think another thing that people just completely don't know about and I wish I knew more about is that like so the allied forces going into World War Two was really the USSR. Like Soviet Union, America, Britain, France, like ever, like them all against Germany.

PASCALE BOS [00:13:02] Yeah. And then, of course, you have all these other countries that are occupied, like the Netherlands, Belgium, those armies were immediately defeated and not really, barely played a role in pushing back the Germans.

JVN [00:13:15] Oh then you had, like, Italy and Japan on the other side.

PASCALE BOS [00:13:18] Axis side. Yeah.

JVN [00:13:19] So.

PASCALE BOS [00:13:20] And a number of Eastern European states that also were sympathetic to or collaborated with the Nazis. That, Eastern Europe and the Balkan states are kind of a mix like either sympathetic or not. Yeah.

JVN [00:13:36] So then World War Two ends in '45 and the Reich falls and then Germany, does East and West Germany happen right away? And that's something I really don't know anything about like I mean, I know Reagan was like, "Take down this wall." But like, I don't really understand the East West Germany whole thing.

PASCALE BOS [00:13:55] Yeah. So what happens is, it's important you know the U.S. does not become a world superpower until World War Two. What you just described was the U.S. didn't, had no, had no desire to get involved in World War Two, of our losses of World War One. We just came out of our own economic crisis. We wanted to be isolationists. It is during World War Two that our, the weapons industry kind of revitalizes our economy and we become a world power. It's also the Soviet Union that is then at that point far enough away from its own early revolution, still very poor country. People sometimes forget that. That also have aspirations to larger domains of power, which are always coupled also with economic influence, not this ideological influence. So the two of them are not really at odds yet. So what we understand is the Cold War really, becomes this ideological war between the so-called free world, capitalism, free markets and so forth and then communism. That starts becoming an issue more explicitly indeed, by the end of the war and it is really this fight over economic interests. How do we get to recreate Europe that becomes immediately the Cold War. And you can see this already during the Nuremberg tribunals

because initially they're really trying to at least try these most important Nazis. And then very quickly and also, for example, they did de-Nazification, right? Like try to make sure that these Nazi get sort of rehabilitated and reeducated very quickly you see that the United States becomes less and less interested in doing that because as they become more concerned about what the Soviet Union is doing. They realize the most fervent anti-communists are these Nazis. So maybe they got a little course of rehabilitation and then we actually became interested in recruiting them to fight on our side.

JVN [00:16:01] When you say "we" you mean America?

PASCALE BOS [00:16:02] America. Yeah, we in fact. Really took care quietly of taking a number of these Nazi war criminals into the United States to have us work on, with our war industry and in intelligence and all sorts of production. So, you know, kind of most notoriously with the sort of rockets like we, we can't really think of NASA, if we don't think also of a number of these formerly Nazi engineers and scientists who we brought to the U.S. in this, you know, space race against the Soviet Union. So that's already a little bit later on. But what you see in the 1940s is this very quick switch from being allies to being enemies and then a restructuring of Europe, whereby because the U.S. tries to reform the currency of West Germany, it means also that West Germany or Germany as a whole then becomes economically linked to the dollar. That makes it much easier to create a market for all your new products and so forth. But the communists aren't crazy and they're like, "Wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. We know what you guys are doing." So it is actually the communists response to that currency reform where they're like, "Ah." So what you actually have by 1945 is the Soviets are mostly occupying what is now, what then became Eastern Germany. The French, British and Americans are in the West and that split then becomes more or less permanent for the next 40 years. Initially, it's a permise border. And then what happens is that so many people from the East tried to flee West. That East Germany really makes that border more permanent. And of course, Berlin, which remains the capital initially and is squarely in the middle of East Germany, becomes connected with a corridor to West. Really weird. This is why when people think of the Berlin airlift or they think about Kennedy, those are all sort of Western, particularly American ways of supporting that little bit of West Germany in the middle of East. So that lasts for 40 years.

JVN [00:18:18] Wait, there's a little piece of West Germany in Berlin?

PASCALE BOS [00:18:22] Yeah, because of course. Ber-, when we think about Berlin, you probably know about West Berlin and East Berlin. What people don't realize is that Berlin is, the city of Berlin is squarely in East Germany. So that's why you have this weird corridor that you guys as Americans, you couldn't just travel to Berlin but me with my Western passport, with my Dutch passport. I could just go from Amsterdam through the train through West Germany. And then at the border, sort of the Iron Curtain, I could show my Dutch passport. I didn't, you know, as a teenager that point. And so I could just travel on train to the East, but that corridor I could traverse, but nobody on the East could go West. And you as an American also would not have been let into East Germany. So then I would go to Berlin. I found it fascinating, super bizarre, but also really fascinating because it's like in one city you had these two completely different worlds. These totally different worlds because West Berlin became very Americanized and East Berlin became, of course, the sort of calling card of the [German] the GDR issue.

JVN [00:19:27] And it was like that until '86? '87?

PASCALE BOS [00:19:29] '89.

JVN [00:19:29] '89. Fuck me. So you would go to OK. So as a European you could go to West Germany. Then when it got to the border of East Germany it would, like, stop. Then you would have to go through a corridor, like, which is like a road?

PASCALE BOS [00:19:42] Yeah. Or sometimes it's either a road or in my case, I always went by train. And so those particular checkpoints were extremely tightly controlled. And I was just, you know, a super curious teenager. So I always had my camera with me. I would try to photograph and they would come into the train, they would see your camera. And they're like, "We're going to rip out that roll of film." And I would, of course, lie. And I would, I spoke enough German to go like, "No, no, no. I was just taking photos of my friends," just because I wanted to take the photo of all the, all of the guards and the posts and the guns. It was crazy. And to realize this is very serious. And then you got to Berlin and then you realized people were dying, trying to swim from one side to the other side. So in West Berlin, you had all these crosses near the wall of people that been killed by border police. You could check, you could look over the wall and you would see it. There was a minefield. It is really absurd. Yet, I have to say for me, as is again, this Dutch Jewish kid I also looked at it and I thought here at least is one piece where you can still see that something horrible has happened at the hands of this country. And yes, of course, it's crazy to leave this country divided in two. But it also kind of felt like this at least is a sort of a visible scar on Europe of this thing that happened after '45 because of what the Nazis have done.

JVN [00:21:04] And so the USSR at that point, up until '89, basically bumps all the way up into Eastern Germany, doesn't it?

PASCALE BOS [00:21:11] Technically speaking, yes, although you, it's important to keep in mind that the German socialists and German communists who run that country. So it's not like the Soviet Union. But if you think just like Western Europe was incredibly dependent on Marshall help and other economic connection to the U.S. and NATO, East Germany was completely reliant on the Soviet Union and all the other Soviet satellite states for its economy. So just to give you an example, West Germany, when it needed more labor because the economy's up, on the upswing in the 1960s, got people from Italy and Turkey to come as so-called guest workers while East Germany had so-called guest workers from Vietnam.

JVN [00:21:56] Oh.

PASCALE BOS [00:21:56] Right? So always communist.

JVN [00:21:58] Communist.

PASCALE BOS [00:21:58] Versus no. So it is actually sort of a similar system going on. But the reality is and I as a teenager, didn't realize that, of course, the Soviet Union wasn't functioning economically. So the fact that it was eventually doomed, I, I didn't know that. Like when the Soviet Union actually collapsed, or when the wall first falls and then a year later, Soviet Union collapsed. I think we were all in Europe shocked. Most of us assumed this was going to last another 50 years or another 100 years. We would, this would not happen in our lifetime.

JVN [00:22:31] And once it fell, was it like then Germany became unified at that point?

PASCALE BOS [00:22:35] Yes. But what's interesting in West and East Germany is that you continue to see profoundly the legacy of these two different countries and how they in very different ways dealt with World War Two and the Holocaust, because for all the horrible things that Germany did, West Germany in part took it upon itself partially very much motivated by wanting to be included in the West and NATO and again, the support of the United States to indeed rehabilitate. So, yes, it wasn't forced to do too much with these former Nazis. In fact, a

number of them, again, ended up in high government positions and so forth. And that doesn't really get critiqued till the next generation of Germans comes of age. So the '68 generation and are like "Wait, wait, wait. Isn't this this former Nazi who is now"?

JVN [00:23:25] Yeah.

PASCALE BOS [00:23:25] "You know, minister of this and that in this place"? So but overall, though, they do claim politically at least responsibility for what has happened. So when Israel and West Germany in the very early 1950s start talking about financial reparations. The West Germans, on the whole as a population, don't like it. In fact, the Israelis also don't like it. They feel like it's blood money. However, Adenauer then, as a chancellor, realizes this is how we sort of rehabilitate ourselves politically to say, "Yes, we are responsible." And so over all of these years continue to this day, the Germans have paid billions to these devastated Jewish communities, survivors and so forth. So that doesn't mean that any survivor got rich off that tiny little bits of money but divided over everybody else. So Germany took responsibility, also started, including certainly in its history classes over time, the history of the Holocaust. And in fact, Holocaust denial, for instance, is prohibited in Germany. As you get, you know, you get a prison sentence for it. So they're sort of maybe initially unwillingly, but over time, certainly very I think in a well-meaning way have embraced, not embraced, but have had to say.

JVN [00:24:51] Take ownership of it.

PASCALE BOS [00:24:51] Yeah, take ownership of it. German schoolkids are, I would say you're very well educated on it. Go to all these museums, see all these films. In East Germany, because the East German government consisted of formerly persecuted socialists and communists that either had been in concentration camps of the Nazis or had fled the Soviet Union or elsewhere and they've come back, they themselves did not feel that they had anything to do with the legacy of the Nazis. And of course, they didn't personally. The problem is that they claimed for East Germany a history of anti-fascism. Now, that was true for them personally. But of course, the general population, East Germany was no different than in West. These were also mostly men who had fought either in the Wehrmacht or had been part of the SS, they were just as guilty or responsible. So what you see, there are no reparations paid to Jewish families, no special consideration actually made for Jews. And that in part comes because of this sort of anti-, the communist sort of anti-Semitic way of saying, "We are all socialists now. Religion doesn't matter. We can't make exceptions for the Jews." So there is very little attention paid really to that particular history. And so, for instance, I visited Buchenwald, a camp outside of Weimar, in the very early 1980s and the plaques there, you wouldn't even realize that there was anybody Jewish who died. It was all anti-fascists and communists and socialists. That was the narrative.

JVN [00:26:35] All right, just one more break and we're going to be right back with more from Pascale after this.

PASCALE BOS [00:26:41] And so what happened then is that the Germans who lived there also really didn't really have to deal with their anti-Semitism. It doesn't really get corrected. It doesn't get, you know, really responded to and so this is why to this day you see far more xenophobia, racism, kind of surprising outbursts in Germany where when you closely look, it is nearly always in the former East.

JVN [00:27:12] Oh, that's so interesting because you do hear that like the right wing in Germany does have like it kind of comes up sometimes but it's always like, you know, resoundingly like what the fuck? Like, how is this possible? But so that's interesting it usually comes from-.

PASCALE BOS [00:27:23] Yeah. And of course, now it's also a little bit more West, but that's really the breeding ground for that. And that shows you that however forced and artificial reeducation is, it is quite effective in the long run because these younger gener-, that first generation that were still Nazis, maybe they weren't particularly willing, but their kids were.

JVN [00:27:42] Was, remember how you were talking about the mini series "Holocaust" at the beginning? Was that part of West Germany's willingness to talk about that? Like in your experience that like '78-ish that's like when things started to shift in the West too?

PASCALE BOS [00:27:54] Yeah. I mean, that's a, I think a really good example where that narrative of, "Oh, maybe we aren't as victims of the Nazis and of the allies" and so forth. But "Oh, wow. No, we really were ordination of perpetrators and the Jews are the real victims" that comes about in West Germany and changes that whole discourse forever more. You just don't hear that anymore with really maybe exceptional voices. Whereas people in East Germany held on to that. And keep in mind that if you lived in the East, you were also somewhat more likely to have been evacuated at the end of the war from the territories in the East that the Nazis had become, had occupied. So maybe you and your family actually had moved to these territories that later on became Poland and now you were actually forced out and brought to what became a much smaller Germany. So you also have this resentment.

JVN [00:28:53] Right.

PASCALE BOS [00:28:53] Of "Well, you guys actually took our land away." So in East Germany in general, the tenor of that is quite different. And I found that interesting. It's not very open because I'm sort of on the surface, of course, the East Germans were socialists. Again, good anti-fascists. They knew exactly what to say. But when you started talking about Jews, not so good. In fact, the situation for Jews who stayed in East Germany was so bad that most of them left to the West. And by the end, I think the communities consisted of several hundred here and there. So you just didn't even want to live there. So the legacy was not dealt with.

JVN [00:29:31] So, I mean, I definitely think that we have to have you back for another episode 'cause there's just like so much that we could talk about and I want to talk more about. But I think it's interesting in the beginning of the, of our conversation, you know, you said that, you know, when you think about like scapegoating and some of the things that led to eventually World War Two, it's like you haven't heard those things in so long. And then now, you know, it does. And I remember in the beginning of Trump's presidency, people were saying that already, like in '16 and '17. And even back then, I was like, "We really shouldn't compare, like, you know, a ban on, like a travel ban to what happened in the Holocaust." But as the years have gone on, it has gotten worse and it has gotten more alarming. And like the camps at the southern border and like and what, you know, we and I think it's also important to remember as Americans that like like with this whole thing with Bernie praising the Castro regime for the literacy program that they did. And then I noticed on Fox News they were cornering someone from his campaign saying like, you know, "How could you say that that's good? Like a regime that is tortured and murdered and then da da da." And then I think, like, what did America do to Native Americans? What did America do to black people? America, our government, has perpetrated mass genocide. Mass. I mean, we've done all sorts of fucked up stuff. And we think of ourselves as like absolutely fuckin' sparkly and fabulous. So it's like no one is innocent in this, in this. I mean, not, I mean, Jewish people obviously were in the Holocaust, but I'm talking about like a lot of people are fucked up and to paint history with this brush of like, "Well, we were all good" or no. And actually, like, it wasn't even that we went in to save Jewish people, it was more because of Pearl Harbor and other issues that kind of economically and, you know, so on and so forth with that. So I just think that's like, important to think about historically for us as Americans. Is that like, and just to, that, like those same things are very much happening that led to World War Two. They can happen and history



will repeat itself, even if 22 percent of people in America, millennials didn't know. So it's like really important that we know. You know, some of these things, that, that happened. And so I guess one thing that we always do at the end of "Getting Curious" is like, is there something we should have covered that we didn't really get to? So that's one. Well, actually, that's a question one B. One A is what other, I mean, it does seem like there are echoes of things that happened in the beginnings of Nazi Germany that I feel like I'm seeing now, whether it's the wall, the travel ban on people from Muslim countries, the, it feels like there's a pervasive Islamophobia in America. It seems like there's a pervasive anti-Semitism that goes on in America. There's just a vitriol and it does seem like they're similar things and I guess, do you, do you agree with this? And then B, is there anything else that we, that we need to cover to, to end on this podcast?

PASCALE BOS [00:32:20] Well, I think very early on, when it became often clear that maybe Trump really might get the presidency, which I think most of us were still very surprised by, himself included. I became part of a closed Facebook group of mostly professors of Holocaust and genocide studies and called the "New Fascism Syllabus," where we among ourselves debated, is this the new fascism? And I think in the end that became the less interesting debate. Is it or is it not? But I think what I tried to instill my students and this is kind of the larger way that I look at it. What matters less is to think of whether Trump, Steven Miller, those guys are fascists or not, but what matters more is if there's anything we learned from history is that we can't just stand by. So what I think is extremely disturbing and it's been disturbing from the beginning is that I think the way in which this particular government resembles the Nazis the most is really in its complete utter disregard for any kind of truth. So the fact that we have a president that spouts between 10 and 20 lies a day, gets caught in a lie. A journalist will say, "Look, wait. 10 minutes ago you said this other thing" and he'll lie again. That is crazy making. And that is literally out of a perfect fascist textbook of propaganda. Tell them whatever. Say it with enough aplomb. Say it often enough. Find yourself a radio and a television station that will broadcast your lies often enough and a certain portion of the population, population will believe you. That is exactly what has happened in this country. So I don't mind to have a political adversary. I don't think it's, it's bad that we're polarized. What I do think is deeply disturbing is that we have absolutely blatant lies told every day, repeated by the news, not clearly called out, for example, by more neutral news, news sources. That is deeply disturbing. Whether it's about what happens at the border, whether it happens about the environment, right now, the Covid-19 virus, we in the United States are more poorly informed, informed about what is going on than nearly anywhere in the world. I recommend to anybody who wants to check on that. Go read other news sources about what is going on in our country, about basically on any topic. And you'll find, "Oh, wow, we are not knowing enough." And so fundamentally, I think in history we don't really get to identify with the side of the victims, even, you know, whether we are LGBTQ or my case, I'm Jewish and I have double identifications everywhere. That's not my position. I'm fundamentally a bystander, just like so many other people were during World War Two. And what do I have to say about myself five years from now? Did I stand up? Did I do anything? Did I stick up my neck anywhere? Did I inform people and say, "Hey, go read this article, instead of this trash"? That is my role and I think we can all do something somewhere. You know, whatever your passion is, whether it's Planned Parenthood, whether it's with animals, the environment. Go do something. Don't just sit there and go, "This is horrible." And post another thing on Facebook. Find something to do that also, you know, fuels you and makes you feel like you're not just standing by and become passive and turned off, because I think that is really, really dangerous. We can't afford that.

JVN [00:36:13] Pascale, I want to talk more about media and all of your studies and everything that you do and how we have like romanticized and fucked up coverage of the Holocaust after the fact. Please let me have you back over the next couple of months and just thank you so much for your time.

PASCALE BOS [00:36:27] I'd love to.

JVN [00:36:27] You've been listening to "Getting Curious" with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was Pascale R. Bos. You'll find links to her work in the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. 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 please show them how to subscribe. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter at CuriousWithJVN. Our socials are run and curated by Emily Bossak. "Getting Curious" is produced by me, Julie Carrillo, Emily Bossak, Rae Ellis, Chelsea Jacobson and Colin Anderson.