

## Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Alicia Garza

**JVN** [00:00:00] In light of what's happened over the last few weeks in the United States of America, I thought it was really good for us to go back to one of our old episodes with a brilliant activist and thought leader, Alicia Garza, who is one of the founders of the Black Lives Matter movement. Since then, Alicia has founded her own organization, the Black Futures Lab. Our discussion entails all the ways in which we can be more anti-racist as Democrats, and originally, I had titled the episode, "Are Democrats As Inclusive As We Think We Are?" and that is so important to ask ourselves now more than ever, as we are protesting, lifting up, and amplifying voices from Black thought leaders, I thought it was just so important that we revisit this episode. So without further ado, 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. On today's episode, I'm joined by Alicia Garza, where I ask her, "How Can Democrats Be Anti-Racist?" Welcome to "Getting Curious," this is Jonathan Van Ness. I'm beyond, like, just so honored and so excited to meet, in real life, Alicia Garza. Welcome.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:01:09] Thank you.

**JVN** [00:01:10] If you've been, not have the pleasure to know who Alicia Garza is, she's the co-founder of Black Lives Matter. In addition to, like, you're doing a lot, like in addition, too. Which give us, like, a gorgeous PowerPoint presentation of like because we're doing the National Domestic Workers Association.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:01:29] Alliance. But that's good.

**JVN** [00:01:30] Alliance. So.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:01:31] You've got the "A." It works for me.

**JVN** [00:01:35] But the, which is. So there's that. Then there's?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:01:39] Super Majority, which is a new home for women's activism.

**JVN** [00:01:44] And?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:01:44] Pretty excellent. And the Black Futures Lab, which works to make Black people powerful in politics.

**JVN** [00:01:52] Your Instagram feed must be so gorgeous and so lit.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:01:55] I think it's OK.

**JVN** [00:01:55] I lean back, I swear. The sound engineer. It must be so lit.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:02:00] I mean, we do our thing.

**JVN** [00:02:02] So I told, usually on "Getting Curious," I find myself doing my normal approach into life, which is just like hurl yourself into it. And.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:02:10] Well done.

**JVN** [00:02:11] But I am, when I find myself really respecting or being nervous to interview someone, I do, I notice upon listening to more of my own episodes, I talk too much. So I told you that I'm trying to, like, I gave you a little overview right before we started recording of my quick little three bullet points but it was all like of two minutes. So it wasn't too much like nasty pre-production.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:02:29] It's fantastic, don't worry.

**JVN** [00:02:30] But basically, you know, you are a co-founder of Black Lives Matter, which is a really important organization. And I basically wanted to start off with you, kind of giving the people a little bit of a rundown of like how Black Lives Matter, or how Black Lives Matter started and, and how you became involved in it.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:02:48] Sure.

**JVN** [00:02:48] What, you are the co-creator of it, so it's not really how you became involved. But how did you come into this?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:02:54] Sure.

**JVN** [00:02:54] Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:02:54] Well, six years ago this week, actually, Patrisse and Opal and I created what we thought was going to be a series of social media pages that was designed to bring people together who were upset and wanted to get activated after the man who murdered Trayvon Martin was acquitted of his murder. And if you remember, Trayvon Martin was killed by George Zimmerman in Sanford, Florida. He was a 17-year-old boy who during the break in a sports game, went to the corner store to get snacks for his brother and himself. And he never made it home. And there was a lot of controversy in the country, because initially, when we all found out that this child had been killed, the district attorney in Florida, Angela Corey, had refused to press charges against George Zimmerman, who was a self-appointed, like, neighborhood watch person who decided that day that Trayvon Martin didn't belong in the community that he lived in with his father. It took protest and pressure for Angela Corey to press charges. In Florida, as you know, there are laws like there are in states across the country that are, you know, versions of what are called "stand your ground" laws. And "stand your ground" laws basically say that you are allowed to, quote, unquote, "defend yourself" if your property is being threatened. In this particular case, of course, Trayvon Martin was walking down the street. George Zimmerman was fearful of Trayvon and, and murdered him.

**JVN** [00:04:45] And he actually stalked Trayvon.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:04:47] He stalked him. Yes. Because he called 9-1-1 to report somebody suspicious. And actually, the dispatcher said.

**JVN** [00:04:54] Don't follow him.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:04:55] Don't follow him and actually leave him alone. And he did what he did anyways. And that was a tragedy. But I think the real, and another gut punch, I should say, was that he was acquitted. And for me and Patrisse and Opal, I think what we felt as organizers was that this was really an opportunity for people not just to be outraged on social media, but to be able to connect with each other, to do something together. What we know is that these kinds of killings happen more frequently than they should. We have laws on the books that protect people who take racist action. And so in order to change that, we need to have an anti-racist movement. And that's really what Black Lives Matter was started as. It was started to fight back against what we call state-sanctioned violence and anti-Black racism. But it was also designed to bring Black people together with our allies to build the world that we want to live in. And so, again, we started as a series of pages. We had a Tumblr page, I don't know, does that even exist anymore?

**JVN** [00:06:06] Well, I think, you know, since they canceled porn on it, I think that it's, you know.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:06:10] It's done.

**JVN** [00:06:13] Wow.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:06:14] Mmhmm.

**JVN** [00:06:15] Yeah. George fuckin' Zimmerman.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:06:17] George fucking Zimmerman, who has continued to be in the news.

**JVN** [00:06:19] Well, well, first of all, thank you. So there was, so four, like, main founders of Black.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:06:25] Three.

**JVN** [00:06:26] Three. Who.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:06:28] It's OK.

**JVN** [00:06:29] Taking it again, three main founders of Black Lives Matter. And, and one thing that I think is interesting that resonates with me about what I was reading in my gorgeous notes about the foundation, or the starting of it is that it's, like, you are big on the intersectionality of how Black lives matter work, because even though it was started around these in tragic and totally not okay unjustifiable murders of young Black men, but it's not, there's also Sandra Bland and there's also so many trans women who there, whether it's rape or murder or attempted murders are, like, not investigated, under investigated, maybe not even reported like it's a very intersectional issue for people of color.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:07:14] That's right.

**JVN** [00:07:15] And I think that's really good that you guys have, well, important that you, sometimes I struggle to make good words, but.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:07:23] I understand, me too.

**JVN** [00:07:24] But it's really important that you guys approach it in this way. It's like, you know, it's very intersectional. One thing that I think is really that I just want your, it's the force of the Black Lives Matter movement is so wide and so important. And it's something that, like, everyone knows about. But then when we think about, like, George Zimmerman, like he became, like you said, continue to be someone who is in the news. He's become a lightning rod of people on the right. And there's like the opposite of Black Lives Matter, which was Blue Lives Matter, which how do we combat-? Because I was just daydreaming last night when I was going to bed about how do we combat the clickbait of the right to make them understand the truth of, like, what is a cultural pain body that has been inflicted, inflicted on people of color in this country? Eckhart Tolle calls it like a pain body.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:08:20] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:08:20] Like but it's like there, that exists. Like there is racism that's like baked into every single thing. And I feel like there is this, like, equal and opposite reaction that happens when I feel like it makes sense. It makes sense to me. It makes sense. But how? Like or do we not even try to quell that and just keep talk-? Does that make sense of what the question is?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:08:40] It's perfect.

**JVN** [00:08:41] Like how do we quell that equal and opposite reaction in our approach or is it like not even our fucking problem to do that because, you know, I'm saying?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:08:48] I don't think we want to smash it. And here's why. Because.

**JVN** [00:08:50] Well, not smash it.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:08:52] Not smash it. You're right. I think that change is not linear, but one of the ways that we know that change is happening is when backlash occurs. So if we weren't a powerful message that was resonating with everyone, not just Black people, but everyone who's going to say like you did last night, "That makes sense to me. Racism is baked into every single thing in our society."

**JVN** [00:09:18] Well, that's been making sense to me for way more than last night.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:09:20] You know what I'm saying.

**JVN** [00:08:20] Yeah, yeah. Last night, I was just like, how do we get these assholes to stop writing these articles that just, like, make no sense and are so inflammatory and filled with misinformation, which further seems like that, right evangelical?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:09:31] Exactly.

**JVN** [00:09:32] Racist base.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:09:32] But they're trying to win you back. So I think it's important for us to look at it that way, that when the right starts to move a counter message, movement, etc., they're responding to what they feel like is losing ground.

**JVN** [00:09:50] Oh.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:09:51] And so when we see things like Blue Lives Matter, right? They're playing on particular things that people are conflicted about. So policing is something that people are conflicted about in this country. Black people, too. So when you hear things like, you know, "Black Lives Matter is, you know, demonizing police officers." Well, it's pulling on the heartstrings of people who are themselves police officers or their families or their loved ones. Right? And for people who have police officers in their lives, I mean, my, I do, people start to say, "Well, that's not a somebody that I don't know. That's somebody that I'm close to. And I love them and I want to protect them no matter what." And all of a sudden, the conversation changes. It's not actually about whether or not individual police officers are good people or bad people. It's about a system, right? That is broken. Or some people would say it's working exactly as it's designed. We could have that conversation on another episode. But I think that what the right does really well is that they message issues in such a way that people get confused about what their values are. And that level of chaos and confusion is actually what they depend on. They do it with abortion. They do it with policing. They are doing it with immigration.

**JVN** [00:11:16] And trans rights.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:11:17] Trans rights.

**JVN** [00:11:18] Now.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:11:18] Everything.

**JVN** [00:11:19] Now, you know what this reminds me of?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:11:22] Tell me.

**JVN** [00:11:22] Blue Lives Matter vs. Black Lives Matter is the false dichotomy of scarcity versus abundance.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:11:28] 100 percent.

**JVN** [00:11:29] Just because Black Lives Matter, there's enough space for everyone to matter.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:11:33] That's right.

**JVN** [00:11:33] You don't need to fucking say Blue Lives Matter, though, because that's all. It's like, it's like, it's like, Tina Knowles said in "A Seat at the Table" that like, that's all we've ever been taught, that like first, obviously first responders lives matter. And obviously, we respect people that enforce the law. And obviously it's scary. And yes, of course. But there is also a system where like people of color have been like unduly targeted in their cars, walking down the street, just like all over the fuckin' place.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:11:56] And there is no such thing as "Blue Lives."

**JVN** [00:12:00] Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:12:00] It's a profession, policing is a profession. It is a job that you choose to do. You're not mandated to do it. You can take it off at any point. I can never walk out of the studio and decide today I'm not going to be Black. I don't get to take this off. Right?

**JVN** [00:12:15] Yeah. Also, when people think of really good arguments against things that I never even thought of in that way, it makes me get so excited. And I wanted to just throw that tripod that's it's in this recording studio out the window. I had to physically hold onto my seat.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:12:28] Yes.

**JVN** [00:12:29] Also, b.t.dubs you guys, we are in Philadelphia. It's my, it's my first episode of I've ever recorded from here.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:12:36] I'm excited to be a part of it.

**JVN** [00:12:38] I'm so excited that you're part of it. So, but basically it's, so it's six years ago, so it's 2013. You three decide that we're going to start this movement. We're going to start these social media pages. They end up becoming household names.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:12:49] And we didn't know we were star-. We didn't, that wasn't our intent was to start any movement. We just wanted to create space for people.

**JVN** [00:12:54] It was a resource.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:12:56] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:12:56] Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:12:57] And then, and we didn't even talk about it, like that it was us. We just created it.

**JVN** [00:13:01] But it led to incredible protests. And it, I mean, like, I feel like I remember like massive, gorgeous protests.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:13:08] Yes.

**JVN** [00:13:09] Of freedom of speech in-. But you, I think Black Lives Matter has been really successful and harnessing the inertia of the, of the launch and continuing it because I feel like I still hear about it. I feel like I still hear organization around it. I feel like I still hear, hear consistent messaging coming from Black Lives Matter or from Black Lives Matter. So what's going on now? Like what are you excited about within the organization of Black Lives Matter, how, like how is it going? What's happening now?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:13:36] All of the things. Let me say that what helped to catalyze Black Lives Matter across the nation was the uprisings in Ferguson, Missouri, when Mike Brown was killed by Darren Wilson. And I think that that amplified the work that was happening. We were not the only people to be creating at that time, Black Youth Project 100 formed literally the day of the verdict, and they are responsible for things like kicking Anita Alvarez out of office. She was, like, a corrupt prosecutor in, in Illinois.

**JVN** [00:14:09] She was, wasn't she the D.A. of? Ok wait. We're going to take a really quick break.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:14:15] Ok, break.

**JVN** [00:14:15] We'll be right back with more "Getting Curious" right after this. Welcome back to "Getting Curious," this Jonathan Van Ness, we have Alicia Garza, co-founder of Black Lives Matter, and just an all around, incredible person. So bac-, so, so that sprang up in Ferguson, and that, keep telling me.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:14:32] So there was a lot of things that were happening at that same time. Black Youth Project 100 was formed. Same year, same time as we were. And they built an organization that now has chapters across the country. I think five. And they've been incredibly, you know, important in terms of advancing a Black queer feminist lens into our movement. At the time when George Zimmerman was acquitted, organizations like The Dream Defenders and Power You in Miami, Florida, took over the state capital for 30 days, demanding an end to "stand your ground" laws. So I think what we saw in that moment was that a lot of organization was catalyzed, which then we all start to kind of meet each other. Right? And that is actually what builds movement. And so when Michael Brown is killed in Ferguson, Missouri, a year later, there is, like, a tiny bit of a roadmap, but also Ferguson, I think, put its own stamp on what it meant to build this movement. Right? And said, "OK, we're we're actually bringing a different flavor to it." Today you have the Movement for Black Lives, which is a coalition of, you know, at least four dozen Black-led organizations that put out an incredible document in 2015 called "The Vision for Black Lives," which is really a statement as to how you make Black Lives Matter in policy and law.

**JVN** [00:15:56] Where can we find that?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:15:57] You can find it at [VisionForBlackLives.org](http://VisionForBlackLives.org).

**JVN** [00:16:00] I hate that I don't know that.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:16:01] It's OK. You also see Black Lives Matter and organizations inside of this movement getting much more involved in shaping democracy. And that is what I'm really excited about. We launched a new organization in 2018, and by we, I mean me. You could just call me the HBIC of Black Futures Lab. And really, that organization came out of a desire for us to be powerful in politics. In 2016, after three years of this movement being incredibly powerful.

**JVN** [00:16:39] Yeah, because I think just to give us that timeline. So it's 2013. Obama has just secured a second term.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:16:50] Correct.

**JVN** [00:16:51] And then, 2016 is approaching.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:16:55] Right.

**JVN** [00:16:56] I do a recap in my stand-up comedy comparing this, like fierce artistic roller skaters to the election of '16 and '18, and they had like a fierce Transformation Tuesday like they get way better in '18. It's, not to self plug, but it's me, but yeah, the 2016 election, as their short program was, was a disaster.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:17:18] Right. It really was. And what we found was that we were being locked out of the conversation while also being told that if we didn't participate, then we didn't have a right to complain. And that was false choices all over the place. Number one, because nobody was engaging us around, "What can we do to change laws?" There were laws that were changing, but they weren't engaging the people who literally were creating the pressure and the momentum to make that happen.

**JVN** [00:17:49] And I think you see that specifically when you, when you, when you think about also, like, now, do I wish that Clinton had won in '16? Yes.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:17:57] Don't we all given where we are right now?

**JVN** [00:17:59] Yes. But even then I did. But even then.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:18:01] Fine.

**JVN** [00:18:02] But when you see. Well, I mean I'm not saying in reference to primaries that I'm saying, like, in reference to Trump like given that choice like.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:18:07] Period. Dot. Hundred percent.

**JVN** [00:18:09] Yes. However, I think that the proof is in the pudding in what you're saying when you have states like, you know, Minnesota and Wisconsin and, well, I know Minnesota, Wisconsin, off the top of my head, we're not campaigned in at all. And I know that there's lots of disenfranchised people of color and marginalized community in these states that are affected with all sorts of, like, hardcore police brutality, like racial profiling.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:18:30] That's right.

**JVN** [00:18:31] And I'm from Illinois, and I've seen racial profiling from police officers my entire life.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:18:37] That's right.

**JVN** [00:18:37] Front row.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:18:38] So you know what's up.

**JVN** [00:18:29] I've seen it in cars. I've seen it in where I was in cars with people of color where, like, they were searched. They were frisked. I was not even asked to step out of the car.



**ALICIA GARZA** [00:18:46] Yep, yeah.

**JVN** [00:18:47] I've experienced this like because I come from a small rural town and, like, police will be on like a fuckin'.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:18:52] On the next level.

**JVN** [00:18:53] Oh, my God.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:18:54] Yes. Yes. Yes.

**JVN** [00:18:54] But especially to people of color. And so I think that you see that in '16, like I understood. I think I understand what, so but keep explaining to me what that means.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:19:03] So, like, for example, you saw between 2013 and 2015 more people mobilized than at any point in the last period of civil rights.

**JVN** [00:19:14] Ever.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:19:15] OK. So. And prior to the Women's March, we were the largest mobilizations that had ever happened in the history of the nation. But yet when we, in early 2016, approached the DNC and said we want to have a debate on Black Lives Matter and issues that matter to Black communities, they said "No, thank you." But yet here it was, this movement, right? It's capturing the country, but yet the party that supposedly represents the interests of people on the progressive side of things refuses to have a conversation about the biggest thing happening in the country.

**JVN** [00:19:57] Can we? I mean, I'm cool if you want to edit this out later.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:20:00] I be naming names too.

**JVN** [00:20:01] Debbie Wasserman Schultz.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:20:02] Debbie Wasserman Schultz was like, "K, no thanks." And I have those receipts.

**JVN** [00:20:06] And then what were the, so then what was like the follow up? Like "Really"? And so do you feel, was it the same between like the Sanders campaign and the Clinton campaign? Was the Sanders campaign anymore like?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:20:16] We'll see here what was so complicated.

**JVN** [00:20:18] Or it's just crickets across the board?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:20:20] It was crickets. Or it was like weird stuff. So it's interesting that we're here and Netroots Nation is happening just down the street.

**JVN** [00:20:28] And I know I'm not supposed to judge people for how they look. I know I'm not.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:20:31] Judge.

**JVN** [00:20:31] And I know I'm not. I know I'm not. I really work on this. But here's the thing about this. I'm going to get so much fucking blowback for this but since you took a chance to be vulnerable, honey, I'm going to do it too. I feel, here's the thing about the Bern. Here is the thing for me about the Bern. Here is the thing for me about the Bern. Here's the thing for me about him. Here is a thing for me about him. It's this. I, if you cannot get a haircut and put in some pomade starting in the back of your hair, working forward to just, why is it that I have Kamala in a full blow dry to perfection? Why do I have suits laid out? Why? Why is it that everyone is holding them? And you don't even have to spend a lot of money on that. We could go to and get an environmentally sustainable, locally sourced organic pomade made right in Burlington, Bernie, for \$12 and make it look like you give a fuck. You know, how am I supposed to imagine you going into the G20 and trying to negotiate something for me? And it looks like you've got mothballs for your breath. I cannot. I cannot. And why are we holding up all these people to these expectations to look presidential, and talk about not looking presidential.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:21:39] You understand.

**JVN** [00:21:40] I cannot.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:21:41] Well.

**JVN** [00:21:41] So that has always kind of been how I feel. And I just unleashed it. I'm gonna, I did. And, but would I support him if he gets the nomination? Of course.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:21:50] OK.

**JVN** [00:21:50] But I would also just say this and I want your feedback on this since we're gonna go back to this.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:21:54] Let's take it there.

**JVN** [00:21:55] So I had this, I had this boss tell me this one time, this colorist that I used to work for, in the salon, and he was like, "If someone ever tells you free anything, this is a free something. Someone paid a lot for it."

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:22:11] Correct.

**JVN** [00:22:12] So like that, I do feel like, I'm like, like I feel like I love, like, a free local, give me a free local community college.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:22:20] Yes.

**JVN** [00:22:20] I mean, give me for like for families that don't make-. But I do feel like when you say, like, I don't want to pay, I've been doing here for 13 years. I have had a lot of shitty clients with shitty kids that were little shits and I had to bite my tongue.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:22:34] And handle business.

**JVN** [00:22:35] And just do their highlights and, like, not judge them for like what shitty fucking decisions that they were employing and just being assholes or just try to like have done their hair for long enough before I gave them some constructive feedback. You know what I'm saying?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:22:49] Yes.

**JVN** [00:22:49] But, like, I don't want to pay for some of these rich people's college k-. And I think that's a problem when you say free tuition is that it gives really, really, really, because I mean the, when you think about the 1 percent getting ri-, that is true. But there's the 1 percent still like a lot. Like, that's, like, a lot of rich ass people to send their kids to college if they so choose. I don't like that story.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:23:07] You know, it's it's we have some good time to actually get into some of the real talk of the proposals that people are putting on the table.

**JVN** [00:23:18] I took a right, I wanna go back to '16.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:23:19] And I'm glad you did.

**JVN** [00:23:20] Because I think this is really gorgeous. And so '16, so basically was kind of crickets or weird stuff, which that's where I got it on the pomade, because I'm, like, if you're going out here with this, if this is your personal grooming choices I feel like-.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:23:29] The moth balls though it took me out. So here we are at Netroots Nation. And you know, five, four, four years ago, candidates were onstage in, I believe in Arizona, and they were being asked if they believe Black Lives Matter. Clinton didn't show. Bernie Sanders.

**JVN** [00:23:53] Wait, Clinton wasn't there?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:23:54] Clinton didn't even come. Bernie Sanders, the largest progressive Democrat gathering of, like, ever.

**JVN** [00:23:59] And it was that other guy? So it was Bernie. And then it was that other Democrat, that.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:24:03] Martin O'Malley from Baltimore.

**JVN** [00:24:04] Yeah, who was there from Maryland. Yes.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:24:07] Martin O'Malley says "White lives matter."

**JVN** [00:24:09] He does not.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:24:10] He literally did.

**JVN** [00:24:11] No, he didn't.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:24:11] He said "Black lives matter. White lives matter. All lives matter."

**JVN** [00:24:14] Oh, God.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:24:16] Bernie Sanders had a hard time. And you know-.

**JVN** [00:24:22] Something about like political revolution.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:24:24] There was just a, you know, he-.

**JVN** [00:24:27] Not even that?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:24:28] It took him, it was just hard for him to say it. And it's not, I don't think that it's that he doesn't believe it. I think that he, his framework does not allow him to really deeply understand why race and class matters. For him, it's class. For him, it's the economic structures of society that create all problems. And I'm like, "Cool, but the economy is racialized. The economy is gendered. The economy is sexualized." Right?

**JVN** [00:24:55] Yes.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:24:56] So you can't actually pull those things apart. But those are just examples of what 2016 was like. So I think that the, the tactics that were being chosen by the movement was like, "OK, you guys aren't gonna invite us into a conversation, so we're gonna storm into one."

**JVN** [00:25:12] Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:25:13] You're gonna to have this conversation no matter what. And then they start getting pissed off, because they couldn't go to campaign stops and spew the same B.S. that they spew all the time because there would be somebody who would stand up in the crowd with the banner and be like, "Hey, I want to understand why you called Black children super-predators in the 1990s."

**JVN** [00:25:31] Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:25:32] And Clinton would say things like, she said a lot of different things. She eventually apologized for making those comments and said, "I don't actually believe that. And I shouldn't have said it then," but it took her a really long time. But that is the context under which Black Lives Matter was under pressure during elections and for me, when I look back on that, I realize that that's not a new dynamic that Black communities often have to like kick down the door to even be considered when it comes to what's getting talked about on those stages. What's getting prioritized in those campaigns. And that's why we started the Black Futures Lab, because we actually think that time is up on that.

**JVN** [00:26:15] Well, we're actually seeing, I mean. Well, first of all, I want to a-, I mean, I don't having anything to do, well, I guess I do have something to do with the DNC because like I, you

know, want to vote left and I want to think that there are people that have like better answers to so I want to say, like, "Sorry." That that was like an experience that, that, that, that was had.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:26:34] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:26:35] And I also feel like even just hearing you exp-, like, I just wanted, like, a well, I just wanted and I was, like, curious about what your thoughts were around that. But then like it almost like you don't need to qualify or you don't need to qualify like why you felt like the way that you felt. I think I was at the time just so scared that Trump was going to win. I was like, by that point, I was like pressing alarms because, like, everyone in my life was like, "She'll probably win. Like, I'm pretty sure we got this. Like, she's 9 points up." And I was like, "I don't know. This is really giving me like the Walking Dead vibes. I really am. I'm feeling droves of White people going to church and voting. I'm really feeling, like, I really got a chill in my bones."

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:27:17] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:27:18] But just back to what you're saying is, like, people of color don't need to-. Well. I guess, it's like that is the tricky part. Because it's, like, if you want people to understand, maybe you do need to explain, but then it's like there are certain people that even if you do explain, they're still going to be dumb. So whatever. But what I was trying to.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:27:34] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:27:35] But what I was trying to say was is that that dichotomy I think is still plaguing the left because we're still seeing it now.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:27:41] A hundred percent.

**JVN** [00:27:41] Like we're having that same thing with Pelosi and with The Squad, kind of like.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:27:46] Bull's eye.

**JVN** [00:27:46] And I also think that like referring to, it's like kind of lazy and silly to refer to like new freshmen anyone as like "The Squad" or like, I just feel like it's ew. OK, we're going to take a really quick break. We'll be right back with more Alicia Garza right after this. Welcome back to "Getting Curious," this is Jonathan Van Ness. Yeah. It's like I, because when I think about that, it's like I feel so-. Because I interviewed Nancy Pelosi last year.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:28:16] Oh, how was that?

**JVN** [00:28:17] It was pretty cool. I feel like I got to interview her life for, like, "Getting Curious Live" at Bentzen Ball in Washington, D.C.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:28:24] Great.

**JVN** [00:28:25] And one thing that was I was taken by that I didn't understand is like she actually came into office like in the like late 70s, early 80s, and she was, like, a major champion advocate

for like HIV/AIDS at the time, because. like, the Reagan administration was like laughing about it in news conferences.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:28:39] Correct.

**JVN** [00:28:41] And so, but the point of what I was going to say was, is that I will, that like I guess I really feel like I, I understand not airing your dirty laundry in public as a caucus and the difference between like power and whatever. But the thing that really troubled me, that really worried me from her is what AOC said, was that she hadn't talked to her since this winter.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:29:02] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:29:03] And that is like, that's the biggest thing where I'm like, Madam Speaker, like must talk. Must be talking to our people.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:29:13] Yeah, it's complicated, because what I think we're seeing and this is also why we exist, is that politics are changing by force. And, so, if on the right. Right? You had the reason that Hillary Clinton lost the election, two big reasons. One, Donald Trump stole it. And two, she didn't actually deeply engage the new American majority, which is how demographics are changing in this country. So when you look at it that way and by engage, I mean deeply engage.

**JVN** [00:29:47] Can you do, what's new American majority?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:29:49] New American majority is, like, basically voters who are not White. Right?

**JVN** [00:29:54] Yeah. Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:29:54] And so Latinx voters, Asian, Pacific Islander voters, Black voters, New America majority, meaning these groups are becoming the actual demographic majority of this country and are becoming increasingly politically active. And what's happening with these campaigns is that they don't really have a good sense of how to engage these communities because most of these campaigns are being run by White people.

**JVN** [00:30:19] Right.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:30:20] So you keep having the same problem. That's why every single candidate goes to Sylvia's to eat a fried chicken dinner and half of them don't even eat fried chicken.

**JVN** [00:30:27] Right. Do you think we're seeing a less racially charged sub current, like with this election than-?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:30:33] No. And I think that what's happening is that campaigns are starting to get that they at least have to signal to communities of color and women and queer people that they like see us. But they ultimately believe that it's White old people that are going to get out and vote. And so when you hear their messages, they're way more moderate, right? Because they're like, "Well, you people who are, you know, growing in size. You guys don't vote. So we could talk

to you all day, all night. But it's that 65-year-old White dude who's actually going to send in his absentee ballot. So we're talking to him and we're talking to him about what he cares about." That's the tension that you see. And that's even the tension that you see with Pelosi and the new freshmen senators who were elected. The challenge with Pelosi and I can say this because she's from my state and she is a major powerhouse, but also she's old school. People inside politics are really wedded to the way things have always been.

**JVN** [00:31:37] Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:31:37] And it's interesting, as somebody who came in during a time when there weren't a lot of women in Congress. Right?

**JVN** [00:31:45] Yep.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:31:45] And probably she was talking about things people didn't want to talk about. And she learned. Right? How to be effective in the things that she wanted to get done. I think maybe she's forgotten what that experience was like. And when I see people like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ayanna Pressley, Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, I'm like, look, they didn't win by a fluke. Ilhan Omar was elected by the largest majority of any congressperson ever.

**JVN** [00:32:13] Really?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:32:124] Ever, ever, ever. Like, in history.

**JVN** [00:32:15] That's major. I love that stat. That's major.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:32:16] So my thing with Nancy Pelosi, with Senator Pelosi, is I'm like, "Look sis, you've got to put some respect on their names. You might not like what they're talking about. You might not like the fact that they are not willing to go along to get along, but that is how politics change. And at the end of the day, even if you disagree with them, put some respect on their names, because you know what? They got there. They got there on their own merits. They got there with wide margins. It wasn't no close elections. And frankly, they represent a growing discontent, not just in the party, but in the country. And the right thing to do in this moment is to figure out 'How do I ensure that there is collaboration between the wings of the party?' That is what a leaders should do." Attacking those women, in the era of "Me Too." In the era where women are mobilized as we've never been before, attacking those woman was absolutely unacceptable. Period. Dot. Hands-down.

**JVN** [00:33:14] Yeah, I think.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:33:15] Period.

**JVN** [00:33:16] Well, I, I, I. Just where?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:33:21] She was being a bully.

**JVN** [00:33:23] Yeah. I mean that, well 'cause AOC has been saying that they're, that she's been like repeatedly singled out. I feel like what Nancy Pelosi was responding to most recently was

AOC's chief of staff calling the conserve-, or the more moderate Democrats, like, the new White segregationists.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:33:41] I mean, look, then address the chief of staff. That's number one, cause you're a grown up. And-

**JVN** [00:33:47] And he deleted the tweet.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:33:48] And also address them or not. I mean, you're the boss in the business.

**JVN** [00:33:52] And she's really good at like not addressing people when she doesn't want to.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:33:53] So when you're addressing people, then that means that what they said matters to you. So that's where I think she made a mistake. She did too many interviews from the winery talking about people she said she didn't have time for. But obviously, if you do long profiles where all you talk about is the people you don't have time for, then you have time that day.

**JVN** [00:34:11] Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:34:12] So there's that. But also, let's just keep it a buck. There's been some really unfortunate mishaps. And I don't know if it's how people are reporting it or if it's actually what's being said. But when this woman came forward, who is now in her late 60s, early 70s, alleging that Donald Trump raped her in Bergdorf's, and Nancy Pelosi, the leader, says, "I don't have time for that. I'm thinking about kids in concentration camps." That's a problem. You know, segregationists did say things like that. When people were talking about the fact that Black people were being blocked from voting or Black people were being blocked from equal access to public accommodations. Segregationists said things like, "I don't have time for that. Those are local issues. I'm focused on what's happening nationally." Or they would say things like, "You shouldn't get in the business of what's happening locally. You're, you, outsiders are creating trouble." I don't know that I agree with the metaphor that the chief of staff was using, but I can say there is a problem inside of the party. And I think that party leaders recognize that. What they are trying to do is make sure that the party stays center when there is energy and momentum and power being built from a left-wing flank. This isn't unique to Democrats. I mean, this is what happened on the Republican side.

**JVN** [00:35:38] With the Tea Party.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:35:38] And that's now why we now have Donald Trump. Right? I mean, just to keep it a buck.

**JVN** [00:35:42] I think, well, I think my worry there is is that like, OK, there's several. First of all I'm like obsessed with this conversation. I love you so much.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:35:48] Me too, me too.

**JVN** [00:35:48] And I'm like, I'm really excited to talk about this.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:35:59] Me too.



**JVN** [00:35:51] And I really respect you and, like, yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:35:55] Ditto.

**JVN** [00:35:56] So, OK. So, yes, my this therapist always used to say that, like, "The truth is usually somewhere in the middle."

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:36:01] That's right.

**JVN** [00:36:01] And I think that that is true. Usually. I think that when we're talking about. Because basically. Ok, well, first of all, it sounds to me like the DNC sucks with certain things. And it also feels, like, it is a little frustrating that there should be all of these things that should be fairly straightforward.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:36:21] Especially now.

**JVN** [00:36:22] That aren't. Like, like when I think about like the Kavanaugh hearing and, like, when all that stuff happened with those, like, fumbled e-mails and trying to get her to come testify publicly and, like, all the mismanagement in communication.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:36:31] And then like outing her basically.

**JVN** [00:36:33] Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:36:34] When she didn't want to be outed.

**JVN** [00:36:35] Yes, there was a lot of things. And I think also, too, like it's never, it should never be coming out of our mouth, like out of our party leader's mouth that we don't have time to hear, you know, a valid complaint of a sexual assault against a sitting president of the United States. That shouldn't nev-, even in, even in light of all the other things that we're focused on like that is a bedside manner, that is like uncalled for.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:36:54] Correct.

**JVN** [00:36:54] That reminds me of kind of when Hillary Clinton said that Nancy Reagan was a pioneer in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Which is still something that, which is still something that really, it sticks with me, though. So when you do have activated people that are on the ground fighting and you do have leaders that say things dismissive like that. And I think that people do know I've gone to bat for Nancy Pelosi on Twitter. And like I, like, I do respect her as a leader and I do respect the things that she has done, because I think that she is in a tough position.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:37:21] Yep.

**JVN** [00:37:21] But I do think that this is like a very major point of reckoning right now for the Democratic Party and for the left to find that common place and really come to the table and sit down, because the fact that these, that that The Squad and Nancy Pelosi haven't spoken since

really-. Well first of all, I was there in April, and we were all in the same room. So that's weird that, like, we're not like y'all are in the same office all the time. So we really do need to be talking more.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:37:51] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:37:52] But when we think of like the 65-year-old White guy that will go out and vote. I think that in 2018, we definitely have new returns on who went out and voted.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:30:02] Definitely.

**JVN** [00:38:02] So I do think that was like a, that was one point where we saw in some respects that if we, you know, when I say, gamble on, what is the term that you said the new, the?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:38:13] New American majority.

**JVN** [00:38:14] New American majority, honey, I love that, honey. She's a the new America majority.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:38:16] Yes.

**JVN** [00:38:17] Yes yes yes. So because I think that that's a gamble to say because previously up until '16, we, I think that the reason why Nancy Pelosi wants this, the party to stay center is it's, it's not. And this is where I've always come from and get nervous about. Like my mom. She's fierce. I love her so much. She definitely voted for Hillary over Trump.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:38:38] Yep. Yep.

**JVN** [00:38:38] She's not a Trump supporter. However, when and I don't think that no matter who gets the nomination, my mom will vote for them. But like on the Democratic side.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:38:47] Yep.

**JVN** [00:38:47] But like when you say things like "free college" to someone like my mom or someone like anyone in my family, they're, they recoil. Like it's, it's, and there, at the end of the day, I feel like a lot of middle of America, whether or not, and it is sixty-five-year old White men, but it's also thirty-year-old White men. And it's forty-year-old White men and women. They vote with their wallet.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:39:09] Yep.

**JVN** [00:39:10] And when they hear about taxes going up for anything.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:39:13] Yep.

**JVN** [00:39:13] Like, when I was in high school and junior high, like, there is this referendum every year to like raise the taxes for our school every. And our, the shit was crumbling.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:39:20] Yep.

**JVN** [00:39:20] And it always failed because, and it was, like, not even that expensive of a tax increase.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:39:24] But see, that's a problem.

**JVN** [00:39:26] But so, but so that would happen then. So I'm just saying that, like, historically, if the, if the in, if the incoming like return numbers are like that, these people kind of show up and put particular people in office. I'm, like, I guess my question is, it's like, how do we ensure that the new American majority comes out to vote in '20 to ensure that we make even bigger strides? Because, because the blue wave in '18, while it did deliver us some majority of the House, we also saw, like, some really important losses, like losing Claire McCaskill in Missouri was a huge loss for our-. I mean.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:39:56] It's complicated. Yes.

**JVN** [00:39:59] It was a huge loss in the sense that there are votes that would not have happened since.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:40:01] Correct.

**JVN** [00:40:02] With her vote.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:40:03] Correct.

**JVN** [00:40:04] And it would've at least been closer. And the fact that that guy who beat her is in there. And I lived in Missouri when that, when that election went down. Like, I was living in Kansas City shooting "Queer Eye" when that happened and like I saw so much crazy sexist, gendered pointed attack ads run against her that actually had talking points. That, I, so I think that's what Nancy Pelosi is saying, is that, like, when we publicly really fucking, like, like we just, because I think it's also it's a hard cause. Like we've never really, the new American majority is like never had the power like historically. So it's, like, I always say like I'm really bad at things when I do them the first time. Or like but not that like the new America.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:40:44] But it's not the first time. So we, history doesn't start at 2016. Where we saw the new American majority actually demonstrate power was in 2008. It's the only reason we were able to get Obama elected.

**JVN** [00:40:57] But in 2010 we lost. It was the single biggest loss.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:41:01] Sure. And you know why?

**JVN** [00:41:02] Of state houses and, and the Congress and Senate in history.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:41:04] And I'll tell you why. Because all of that infrastructure that was built to get Obama elected, people abandoned it in 2008 when he won. Forgetting, of course, that there was a midterm coming. Right?

**JVN** [00:41:17] Right.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:41:18] And so here's my thing. When I think about ideas that people get scared or nervous about, what it shows me is that we are not yet comfortable taking and holding power. So, for example, in a situation like the one you just described, where in your school district, there was a tax that was failing over and over again, even though your school was crumbling. That is ridiculous to me. You deserve to go to a school that is not crumbling around you. And yet there are these values, right? That we are told that, like, anything that comes from the government or anything that is forced by the government, which is how people think about taxes.

**JVN** [00:42:06] Yep.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:42:06] Is bad, even though at the same time, right? We do still have to figure out how do we make sure that everybody gets the things that they need. And unfortunately, it's the people who are poor. It's the people who are of color. It's the people who are queer, who get the short end of the stick when people are deciding where money goes.

**JVN** [00:42:25] Right.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:42:26] Right? If we want to change that, the notion isn't just to act like that's not a thing. And I think that's the issue that people have with the Democratic Party. And even looking at it from a neutral-ish perspective, 'cause I don't consider myself a Democrat. But I know what I need to do to get the things I need.

**JVN** [00:42:45] Do you, like, I mean, not that you have to identify, are you like an independent or something?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:42:48] I'm not an independent. I vote Democrat, but I don't, I don't see the Democratic Party as my party.

**JVN** [00:42:54] Are you like a gorgeous libertarian or something?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:42:56] I'm definitely not a libertarian.

**JVN** [00:42:58] What are we? Like, I want to join your party, queen.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:43:01] I'm somebody who believes that the only way to make change is by figuring out how to make the impossible possible. Now, when Nancy Pelosi started in politics, nobody thought that there was gonna be funding for HIV and AIDS. And if all we had done was talk to people who were like, "Well, I want it for, like, White middle class people who have AIDS, but not Black and Latino and Asian people who have AIDS," we actually wouldn't have gotten that far right. People didn't like the idea of interracial marriage for a very long time, but because people pushed people's minds and their values changed. So I guess my thing is, one of the things I worry about in this moment, moving into 2020, where everything is actually possible, is that if we kind of hold onto this notion that we only have to talk to the, to the people in the center, because that's where the country is. I think that's wrong. I think that actually we're talking about two different things, which is that the middle of the country has been ignored by politics for a very long time. They have not been ignored by the right. So the people who tell us that government is encroaching on your life, the people who tell us that business should not be regulated. The people

who tell us that at the same time, they tell us government is encroaching on your life. They also tell us that they don't want a separation between church and state.

**JVN** [00:44:34] Yeah. And they want to regulate marijuana, regulate people's bodies.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:44:36] All the things, all the things. But they don't want to be regulated.

**JVN** [00:44:38] Right.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:44:39] Right?

**JVN** [00:44:40] Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:44:40] Those people are winning the info war. Right? But yet, at the same time, we're not countering with anything different. We're just saying, "Well, let's just meet in the middle." And actually for a majority of the country, people need different things. There's more schools crumbling now than they were when you were coming up. Right? And there are more and more people who, literally entire towns that have been decimated. And I guarantee you, if there was organizing infrastructure in those towns, people's values are actually much more closely aligned to what people say is, like, the radical flank. These aren't radical ideas. They're just radical in relationship to the extreme right.

**JVN** [00:45:22] Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:45:23] So, let me give you an example. My friend George, who is from Medora, Indiana, which is like a town, sounds like the town you're from, has been doing this project where he's deeply engaging and investing in White, working class people in rural areas and bringing them together with working class people of color in rural areas and really thinking about where do our values align. And I can tell you, one of the things that he tells me and that I hear from the stories on the ground is that people say, "God, none-, nobody's ever talked to me like that before. Nobody's engaged me on that level before. The only people engaging me are people on talk radio and the Rush Limbaughs of the world."

**JVN** [00:46:06] So how did it work? Like what does that look like?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:46:08] So it literally looks like talking with people about what they're experiencing every single day, asking them who they think is responsible for that. Asking them how they think it can be changed, inviting them into an organization that can help make that change, that can build a strategy to make that change. And then actually coming together across race, across gender and fighting together, which frankly, for a lot of the country is how people live already. So I think you would agree with me that there's a misconception about places that you're from. That everybody is racist. Well, actually, a lot of people are poor and those people don't all look like each other. And even though there's some segregation, right? People actually, if they have jobs, they go to work together. You go to work at the Wal-Mart together, right?

**JVN** [00:46:56] Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:46:57] Or the Dollar Store, the whatever. And you're not like, oh, those N-words or whatever. Except when it comes to starting to talk about politics. And it's because right? Our politicians are actually the wedge drivers and because they're the decision makers, we have to make a choice of which side we stand on. I think that that gap is about people not being deeply involved in politics, like leaving it to a smaller group of people to make those decisions. But they also shape how we understand why we're dealing with the problems we're dealing with. Why does everybody that I'm working with at the Wal-Mart not make anything for money, not get maternity leave? You know, not able to form a union? Is that the fault of immigrants or is that the fault of Wal-Mart?

**JVN** [00:47:47] Well, I think, ok, there's like so many things. Well, I think one thing that's important about like messaging when we think about it is like turnout in '16 was like under or like around 50 percent. I think on average, don't they say that like that usually for presidential elections, turnouts at like 50 percent.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:48:03] Sure.

**JVN** [00:48:04] So where do we drum up the extra per-? So if, if it's not about moving the 50 percent or just under 50 percent that came out and voted for Trump. And if it's about engaging the new American majority to come out. And at the same-. So. So because it's, if my therapist is right and it's all about balance.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:48:22] Yes.

**JVN** [00:48:23] Right? So it's like, ok, do we-? Because I don't think that Pelosi is trying to say that we need to come to the middle with Republicans, at least in my mind. I mean, she had to in certain points because of the Senate situation. In my mind, she's saying we need to come to the middle with each other within our own party. And how do you get the Democrats in the state Senate of, say Indiana, to go along with something that's going on, you know, on in California or, you know, New York? Because I know that, like the people that are, you know, progressive and the people that are in the Wal-Marts or, you know, just more rural places in the middle of America, like it's gonna be harder to get the Democratic voters in those places to get on board with Medicare for all.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:49:08] Sure.

**JVN** [00:49:09] To get them on board with-.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:49:10] You have to organize the voters in order to organize the party.

**JVN** [00:49:13] So my question is this is how do we-? That's, that's kind of my what I'm scared about is like I don't want anyone to get what my stepdad would have called the "Fuck Its" where they just like leave the table.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:49:23] People do.

**JVN** [00:49:24] And that's what I'm saying. And I, and I see the writing on the wall, that that is kind of, because we haven't really dealt with this within our party.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:49:29] Yeah.

**JVN** [00:49:30] And or, you know, the party or, you know, within the Democratic Party.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:49:32] Sure.

**JVN** [00:49:33] So it's like, how do you get the progressive, the more progressive side of things heard and get their needs met? And then get the more Democratic people or people that consider themselves Democratic in the middle of America and those more, like in those places, like how do you get them aligned?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:49:50] I think you have to, there's three things that I think are important. Number one, you need to make sure that the constituencies of the people who are elected are organized and engaged. And what I think has happened in the party, to be honest, is that it's become much more about the internal weirdness of the party and not actually building the power of the party. And the power of the party is the people.

**JVN** [00:50:15] Period.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:50:16] Point blank.

**JVN** [00:50:17] Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:50:17] So let me give you an example in my state in the 2018 midterms, state party raised about 30 million dollars for the election. They spent about \$50,000 on Black outreach. 30 million. 50 thousand. Right? But if you actually want change to happen, you need to increase the level.

**JVN** [00:50:41] And is that? Your home state is?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:50:42] That's in California.

**JVN** [00:50:43] California. Got it.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:50:44] OK. And California is has a sizable Black population.

**JVN** [00:50:48] Yeah, it's like way more than whatever the percentage of 50,000.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:50:50] For the West Coast.

**JVN** [00:50:51] Yeah. Now. 30 million raised for state Democratic Party in California and 50,000?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:50:56] \$50,000.

**JVN** [00:50:57] That is a slap in the face.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:51:00] This is happening also nationally.

**JVN** [00:51:02] This is a slap in the face. So how can the people of Indiana state Democrats say, like, "Get it together and come out and vote," when these are the-

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:51:10] This is my whole entire point. This is my whole entire point.

**JVN** [00:51:10] 'Cause we're voting with our pocketbook. And this is like what we're told we're being worth, this is not cute.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:51:14] Exactly. So in some ways, what we do is we kind of create our own destiny because we're like, "Oh, those people don't come out to vote," but we don't do anything to get them to come out to vote. But then at the same time, we also don't do enough to protect their votes when they do cast them. So I spent time in Georgia during Stacey Abrams' election. I went to a polling place that actually the federal government had to step in because Brian Kemp had voting machines delivered with no power cords and it was in a working-class Black community. And so, literally, there is a line wrapped around the building three times. Mamas with babies, elderly people inside this hot building. All the machines were empty. Only one had a plug. So one person can vote at a time. People are being told your polling place changed. You're not on the rolls. You're gonna have to cast a provisional vote. All of these things. Right? So, I mean, I think that when we're at the final analysis, it's like, well, if you don't protect people's rights to vote in the face of gerrymandering and redistricting and, like, this crap-

**JVN** [00:52:21] And the Supreme Court just rule- like enforced-. But we got like one good one and then one bad-

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:52:25] Right? 2016 was also the first election that the Voting Rights Act was not in effect. Right? Since 1965. So increase the level of protection for people's votes, period. Increase the level of infrastructure that we're investing in so that people feel like this is a party that cares about me. Right? Regular engagement, not this stupid symbolic fried chicken dinner and a reverend stuff.

**JVN** [00:52:55] Yeah, on the ground like real interactions.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:52:57] Like town halls and kitchen table conversations.

**JVN** [00:53:00] What we see the AOC doing like this every day.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:53:02] There should be millions of dollars invested in that. And I guarantee you, you mark my word.

**JVN** [00:53:05] Yes And we have the money for it.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:53:06] July 11th, 2019 at 2:00 p.m.. I said if we did that, we would 100 percent win in 2020, because you know what? That's what Republicans are doing.

**JVN** [00:53:16] So. OK. So 'cause really like this, because we do need a political revolution. I mean, and I do think that one thing like because I was thinking about this long time ago, there was a,



there was a White kid who was, like, 18 who got shot by police in a sting operation to get a dime bag of weed.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:53:31] Yep. Yep.

**JVN** [00:53:31] And I remember back then thinking when that story happened, I was like, this is, this is a militarization of the police force issue.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:53:39] That's right.

**JVN** [00:53:39] There is all these weapons coming back from Iraq that are going to like all these police forces in like all these communities all across the country with with police officers that don't know how to use them.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:53:48] That's right.

**JVN** [00:53:48] So people are being like just brutalized. It's just it's, and that kid was a middle to lower class kid. And like-. So it's like there is a class and race issue.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:53:57] That's a hundred percent.

**JVN** [00:53:57] And to not see the intersectionality of the fact that there is police brutality and it is more often people of color first and foremost. But then there is a piece of classism there, too.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:54:08] That's right.

**JVN** [00:54:08] And there is a queer-targeting piece.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:54:09] A hundred percent.

**JVN** [00:54:10] All of those things together but people of color, first and foremost.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:54:13] That's right.

**JVN** [00:54:13] And I think that it's like we all need to do well, especially fucking White people, need to do a better job of like understanding all the forces that play.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:54:21] Yeah. Well, let's take a soft left, because I can tell you, that's what we tried to do with the Black Census Project.

**JVN** [00:54:28] Yes. We have to talk about that. So because part of what all this, this using powers is like the 2010, because of that midterm election, the census got set up really poorly and we're still suffering from the effects of that. So you one of the things that's happened from Black Lives Matter is what you're championing now, which is?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:54:41] The Black Census Project. And I should say, in 2017, I left the day-to-day operations of Black Lives Matter to start a new organization. Black Lives Matter is alive and well, 40 chapters in four countries kicking butt, taking names. And in fact, I just saw on my Facebook feed

that some of our efforts in California just passed a "use of force" law at the state level that is regulating how police police, which I think is important.

**JVN** [00:55:11] Yeah.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:55:11] So Black Lives Matter, alive and well, moving policies and states and getting people elected, closing down jails like my sister Patrisse is doing in Los Angeles. The Black Futures Lab was created as an organization that is focused on making Black people powerful in politics, and we wanted to change the way that candidates, campaigns, parties and our movement understand not only Black engagement, but what's at stake when we don't engage Black people. We conducted the largest survey of Black people in America in 154 years. We trained 106 Black organizers in 28 states across the nation. We invested \$500,000 in those organizations to be able to participate in this effort. And we surveyed people from across the political spectrum, across geographies. People who are incarcerated and formerly incarcerated, people who were homeless and people who were wealthy, people who were liberal, people who were conservative, Black people, to better understand, "What are you experience in the economy, in democracy, in our society"? And bigger than that, "What do you want to see for your future"? We released the reports. We've got a report out that looked at the most politically engaged respondents from the Black Census Project who said that low wages that were not enough to support a family was the number one issue that kept them up at night, alongside the lack of affordable health care and the lack of affordable housing. And then violence, either by policing or by racism was also a major issue that people are facing. You can find it at [BlackFuturesLab.org](http://BlackFuturesLab.org). This month, we also released a report on the respondents from our census who identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual. And next month, we will be releasing a report on gender because we understand gender and sexuality are not the same things. What we found, again, was that those same issues that the wide range of respondents were concerned about were even sharper amongst our 5,500 LGB+ respondents. So what you understand from these, from this data is two things that are important. One, even across our differences, Black people are concerned about the same things and we're concerned about the things that all Americans care about. So it's a huge issue when the party that wants to take Donald Trump out of office, but also that wants to move the country forward, is not engaging Black people in the way that we need to. You can't get healthcare. You can't get housing. You can't get the things you want without engaging Black communities. And one more thing. An overwhelming number of our respondents said that they believe that politicians don't care about us. That was across age, across income, across gender. And that is really scary in a moment where we really need democracy to work.

**JVN** [00:58:11] Well we see, I mean, we put our money where our mouth is. I mean, I just said that a million times.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:58:15] A hundred percent.

**JVN** [00:58:15] And I mean, when we think about the whole, what, Melinda Gates talks about, how, like, women make up 50 percent of the population. But like, we don't have 50 percent of women, like, anywhere.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:58:24] That's right.

**JVN** [00:58:25] People of color make up a huge amount of the population. And so to be for the microcosm of this, California state, Democ-, or a Democratic Party making 50 million, spending 50,000. That has to be mended like all across the country. And we really need to be talking about that.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:58:37] That's right. A hundred percent.

**JVN** [00:58:37] Do you think that the best suggestion for that is with how can we say to our elected leaders like, hey, we want more engagement with Black Lives Matter, with people of color? Like, how do we get our elected leaders to talk about this?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:58:48] Well we're not waiting for them. We are building a political agenda around the responses from the survey that will be out in August, and we'll be excited to share it. Senator Kamala Harris just shouted out our work at the Essence Festival. She's using it to develop her policy platform and other campaigns should be doing that as well.

**JVN** [00:59:05] Do we have an endorsement yet?

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:59:07] We will be endorsing, not as the Black Futures Lab, but as Black To The Future Action Fund will be endorsing, and we'll let you know when.

**JVN** [00:59:15] But your personal endorsement like we'll go along with that one.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:59:17] I will do my own personal endorsement, and of course, it will align with my organizational one.

**JVN** [00:59:22] Oh my gosh, I feel like such a journalist right now.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:59:25] It's gonna be fun. But the point of endorsing is to make sure that our concerns are being addressed. And frankly, I can tell you that we're also going to make sure that our policy agenda is being endorsed by our communities. So we're already in touch with 30,000 Black people, and that number is only growing every single day. And so whoever is being endorsed by us will know that they have the backing of people who are endorsing our agenda as well.

**JVN** [00:59:55] Alicia Garza, I am so grateful to have you.

**ALICIA GARZA** [00:59:57] Thank you so much.

**JVN** [00:59:58] Are you? Wait. I need to talk to you all the time. I wanna have you back, I wanna talk more.

**ALICIA GARZA** [01:00:01] Let's do it. I would love it.

**JVN** [01:00:02] Did I? Did we get to the past and present of what you're doing?

**ALICIA GARZA** [01:00:06] I didn't get to, I mean, there's more we could talk about.

**JVN** [01:00:07] There's so much more.

**ALICIA GARZA** [01:00:07] But we could do Part 3, 4, 5.

**JVN** [01:00:07] I accidentally talked about politics. I didn't mean too.

**ALICIA GARZA** [01:00:10] It's fine.

**JVN** [01:00:11] That's not even where my mind went, like my initial plan didn't work at all.

**ALICIA GARZA** [01:00:14] I'm so glad we did.

**JVN** [01:00:14] Love you so much. Thank you for your time, I really appreciate it.

**ALICIA GARZA** [01:00:16] Thank you so much.

**JVN** [01:00:16] Thank you.

**ALICIA GARZA** [01:00:17] Yay!

**JVN** [01:00:21] You've been listening to "Getting Curious" with me, Jonathan Van Ness. My guest this week was Alicia Garza. 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 for more coverage of all the topics that we've covered so far and continued coverage on what our guests are doing now and more news stories that we're keeping our eyes on, we're really excited about it. 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 Emily Bossak, Julie Carrillo, Rae Ellis, Harry Nelson and Colin Anderson.