

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Professor Dorothy Roberts

JVN [00:00:00] Welcome to Getting Curious. I'm Jonathan Van Ness and every week I sit down for a gorgeous conversation with a brilliant expert to learn all about something that makes me curious. On today's episode, I'm joined by Dorothy Roberts, where I ask her: is America's foster care system really rooted in care? Welcome to Getting Curious. This is Jonathan Van Ness. I have such an exciting guest today who is an award-winning author, an expert on the interplay of gender, race and class and legal issues concerning reproduction, bioethics, and child welfare. She is also the author of *Killing the Black Body*, which I'm sure you've heard of. Welcome to the show, Dorothy Roberts, whose latest book is *Torn Apart: How the Child Welfare System Destroys Black Families and How Abolition Can Build a Safer World*. Dorothy, thank you for doing, like, the Earth's work and helping bring so much knowledge to so many people. I'm so grateful for your time today. Sidebar. I'm trying to do this cool journalistic thing where I don't give everyone, like, physical compliments, but I would just be remiss. Your locs and your glasses combo is just so pretty. And just, I— I can't help, okay! I'm still a hairstylist. I don't have to, like, check that part of myself at the door, okay?! But you look amazing. How are you?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:01:17] I'm well and I appreciate all the compliments. Thank you, Jonathan.

JVN [00:01:22] Ah! So on the show, we've talked a lot about the connections between family separation, mass incarceration, and police brutality. When we did our episode about child separation at the border, back when Trump was in office, there was so much talk and anger, rightly so. And our guest said, "We've actually been separating families for way longer than just at the border." And that was the first time that I started to understand how mass incarceration can play a role in family separation. So that's part of what makes you so exciting for us, because you can shed a whole new light on what the, quote "child welfare system" is and what it needs and why it needs to be included in this discussion. because it's playing, like, a huge part that we really—, I don't really know about. But our guiding question today is: who does America's child welfare system really serve? So when we hear terms like, quote, "child welfare system" or "foster care" and "child protective services," who do these institutions seem to serve, on the surface?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:02:24] Well, thanks for that great introduction, Jonathan. You touched on a lot of what I hope we can talk about today. And one of the reasons why you weren't aware of how oppressive this system is, is that it's done a great job of propaganda and fooling people into thinking that it's this benevolent social service government program that protects children from terrible abuse in their homes, supports needy families, and is a child saver. And I think most people believe that even though it might have some problems with sometimes we hear about in the news that overall it is this needed service to families and especially to children who are being abused. And that false picture makes people unaware of

the harm, but also uninterested in learning more about it and not making the connections between the prison system and criminal law enforcement, policing, when in fact, this is a system that's really entangled with all those others, but it also functions in the same way. It is a policing system.

JVN [00:03:49] What other assumptions might people have about Child Protective Services, foster care, or other, like, buzzwords in this world?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:03:59] Yeah, well, think about those buzzwords and the labels for this system, "child *welfare* system." So it seems to be, to many people, to be a system that promotes children's welfare, that makes children better off, that comes in to rescue children who are in need. And then there's Child Protective Services. So people think this is a government agency full of kind social workers that protect children, where there's a report that they're being harmed in the home. So many people think of the child welfare system as mainly coming in to rescue children who are being severely abused in their homes. And that's why they think that even though we hear stories about corruption, you know, about children who are killed at home or in foster care, you know that, yes, there are these problems of missed cases or even abuse in foster care. It's still needed because there are all these children being abused at home and these are the people who saved them.

And then there's the word "foster care." You know, this is where children who are being abused at home go. And many people think that they mostly go to homes of, you know, loving caretakers who treat them wonderfully and it saves their lives. And they can now go on to be flourishing members of society, whereas they would have been ruined or maybe killed if they were left at home. And again, even though there may be problems with it, it's still this caring network of wonderful families who take better care of children than their families do. And so those are the assumptions about this system, all of which are false. You know, not to say that we can't find individual cases where children were safe from abuse or where there is a kind foster parent. But that doesn't describe the purpose of this system. The main way it operates and it completely leaves out all of the harms that are inflicted on children and their families by the system.

JVN [00:06:31] Yeah, I think a lot about differences between a system and an individual, or like an individual story within a system and how a lot of times, we often conflate the two. Maybe there is someone who is doing right within a system. But that doesn't mean that the wider system is not super flawed and problematic and needs, like, upheaval or, you know, something more than a little makeover.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:06:46] That's so true. That's so true. So that is the case here. And I think this is part of the propaganda of this system, is that it focuses on individual stories of social workers who want to help families or individual stories of a child who found a caring foster caregiver. But that doesn't tell us the truth about this apparatus. This is a huge government apparatus that spends tens of billions of dollars a year. And most of what it does

is separate families. That's what most of the money is spent on, let me put it that way. Most of the money is spent on that, but it also centers on family separation. It only operates with the threat of taking children away or actually taking them away. And in too many cases, completely severing the relationships between children and their family members. Legally, anyway. So you have to understand the history of it, the foundations of it, and how it operates. What's the function of the system? The function of the system isn't to support families. It's not to make children better off. It's actually to accuse and blame and investigate and separate and cause trauma and divert our attention from the real needs of children and families. Divert our attention from what is the real cause of hardships for children in America. It's not their parents. It's all the policies we have in America that do not actually support people's needs. In fact, that's—right?—that try to divert our attention away from what would really be needed to care for children and their families.

JVN [00:09:03] What is the reality of the family policing system in the US today? Like, how many children are removed from their homes each year, like, on average?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:09:11] So there are officially about 250,000 children removed through judicial means by the family policing system in America.

JVN [00:09:23] A year?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:09:24] A year. There's another 250,000 children who are moved in some way by caseworkers who don't officially go to court to supervise this. They threaten families to say, "If you don't do what we tell you to do and place the child with a neighbor or a relative or some other way reconfigure your family, we're going to take you to court. And then guess what? You might end up permanently losing your children." And so families sign what's called a "safety plan" that's supposed to be voluntary, but they've been forced into it. So that's an estimate. We don't even know the exact numbers who are forced into it through these more informal plans. But I think there's good evidence that about 500,000 children a year are removed from their families, reassembled in some way. But the official, official count is bad enough of 250,000 children.

JVN [00:10:33] And so that's, like, individual children, or is that, like, families?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:10:36] No that's individual children. Some of them may be in one, in the same family.

JVN [00:10:41] Right. But that's really high!

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:10:43] That's it's very high. [CROSSTALK] That's extremely high.

JVN [00:10:49] That's like six of my hometowns, like I think my hometown has, like, 40 or 50,000 people. So that's like all of the people in my hometown of, like, 50,000. Like, times, like, five.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:11:01] Yeah, it's a huge amount. So 3.5 million children are investigated or have some kind of alternative response by child welfare systems as a result of a report to the child welfare services. 53% of Black children, so more than half of Black children, will experience a child welfare investigation by the time they reach age 18. So just think about that. More than half of Black children in America at some point during their childhoods will experience an investigation by Child Protective Services. What kind of nation is that that investigates half of Black children? And one in ten Black children will be removed from their homes by the time they reach age 18. So for Black children and Indigenous children, it's extremely high. But you're right, just for all children in general, including white children, it's an astronomically high number. There isn't any other Western nation that takes so many children from their families. And that's why when the nation was up in arms about Trump's policy at the border, absolutely, we should recognize that family separation is an institution in America that's ongoing right now. It's not just a fact of some right wing extreme policy. It's the norm in America that this is how families are treated, especially, again, marginalized families, whether we're talking about Black, Indigenous, impoverished or queer families. It's a weapon that's been used. That's why Governor Abbott in, in Texas, you know, he's thinking up, "How can I go after trans children?" Through the child welfare system! It has historically and continues today to be used as a government weapon to disrupt and destroy and terrorize the most marginalized families in this nation.

JVN [00:13:19] If you're a queer person listening to this or a queer family listening to this, and this has not already like sent chills up your spine, we already have the governor and attorney general of Texas militarizing and, like, incentivizing the Department of Child and Family Services to go after parents of genderqueer children or gender non-conforming children to be investigated for child abuse. There's just, like, several states who are starting to look at Department of Child and Family Services. And when you have people like Lauren Boebert and Marjorie Taylor Greene saying that it's child abuse and it becoming so normalized from people like Brittany Aldean that are saying like, "Oh, this is child abuse."

Like, for me, I talk about in *Over The Top*, like, growing up wanting to put on evening gowns, that was very natural for me and getting, like, torn, actually physically abused because I was gender non-conforming from a very early age. And so this is just, like, this is really, like, ominous and scary. Because this is like a state sanctioned way to disappear queer people. As we've seen through history, at some point when societies get too far right, like, it doesn't matter how fucking rich and white you are, if you're queer. Bye! You know, look up Paragraph 175, honey, we had an episode about a few weeks ago, so it's scary and this is a huge reason, like, why you should care about this.

One term that I learned about from your work that I had not heard of but is genius, is "family policing" and how really family policing is a much better way to describe child welfare. Can you explain what family policing is?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:14:50] Yeah, I like to call what the child welfare system does "family policing" because it polices families rather than supports families. And by that I mean it functions to accuse and investigate and supervise and surveil. And based on that, threaten families with separation or actually take children away from their families. So all of that is policing families. It's a punitive approach. It's an accusatory approach. It's not an approach that says, "We're here to help you with your needs. We're here to help meet your children's needs." It's blaming parents for failing to meet children's needs and then approaching it in a very surveillance and punishment approach.

JVN [00:15:48] I think one of the assumptions is if a parent has wound up intertwined in child protective services or child welfare, that that parent is automatically bad, is automatically criminal. The child should be taken away. It's this very, like, absolute thing. Like there's no spectrum. Maybe that parent was dealing with poverty. Maybe that parent was dealing with a mental health thing. So it's, like, that binary thinking we see at play here.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:16:14] So one of the key assumptions of our so-called "child welfare system" or family policing system is that parents are to blame for the hardships that their children face, and they are to blame because of something defective in the parent. This is an assumption of pathology that underlies the explanation for why children have unmet needs. And so the way in which this system approaches, that isn't to say, "Let's support this family to be able to meet their children's needs." It's, "How can we blame the parent for having a pathology that causes them to fail to meet their children's needs," or, in the case of abuse, to abuse their children. "And let's approach it in some therapeutic way." So, for example, you find a family in a homeless shelter. They don't have secure housing, and the family has moved into a homeless shelter because they can't find affordable housing that's decent to live in. The child welfare system's approach is, "We will blame the parents for not providing housing for their children, investigate them, mandate that they find housing, and in the meantime, take the child away and put the child in foster care." That looks at the problem of houseless families as being a pathology of the parents. They'll tell the parents, "You have to go to parent training classes to teach you why it's important to provide housing for your children." That's not the family's problem. The family's problem is caused by the structures in our society that make it difficult for many people to find secure housing.

JVN [00:18:08] If you're listening to this right now and then you think about having this conversation with, like, a rabid Republican in your family's life and you're, like, "Well, at this point, that person would say, like, "Why don't they have a house, like, they must be doing..." But it's, like, the average one bedroom apartment in cities with minimum wage is not tenable. Like you can't afford electric, cable, food, the rent in a one bedroom. And then I was also going to ask if a child does get taken, doesn't that also cost more money? Like, don't you get

to get like a lawyer or, like, like take time off work to go get your kid back and then you're even more behind the eight ball because now you've missed time at work. Maybe you've lost your job, maybe you can't afford a lawyer. The hoops that they make you jump through set you even further back.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:18:50] Yes, that's exactly what it is. The child welfare system does this more than any other system because it literally blames parents and other family caregivers for hardships caused to their children that are not their fault. They are caused by systemic structural inequities. And the system is set up to blame the family caregivers, to punish them, to separate the family, and to fool the public into thinking that this is somehow helpful for the children. To me, this is even worse than what prisons do in terms of this false ideology, because people understand that prisons are punitive. You know, they may try to justify punishing people in this inhumane way of caging human beings, which I also think should be abolished. But at least people understand that prisons are there to punish.

Now, with the child welfare system, people don't even understand by and large that this is a system designed to punish families. So they're fooled into thinking that somehow this is helpful to children. And it masks even better, I think, than police and prisons the structural reasons for children's needs, their unmet needs. Another point I want to make, Jonathan, is that wealthy people also have problems in their families. They also have parents who are neglectful. They also have parents who use drugs. They also have parents who don't deal with their medical and mental health needs. Impoverished families are the ones who have more of an excuse for it – they don't have the funds for it. And the child welfare system targets them, especially Black and Indigenous families in America. But this is a system almost exclusively for impoverished, for low income families. It's very rare that a wealthy white family would get involved in the system. It's not because they don't have problems. It's not because their children don't have unmet needs.

But it's because this is a system that targets the most disadvantaged, marginalized families because it functions in order to divert our attention and resources and advocacy away from those families, and instead prop up a society that benefits the most elite and those people. Do not have at all any risk of getting involved in the system so they can promote this abusive, horrible, traumatic system for everyone else while they stay immune from it. Now they do have more resources. If you would say, "Well, what happens to their children who have eating disorders and suicidal tendencies and where their parents have substance disorders?" You know, what do they do? They have private resources to deal with it. And child welfare rarely, rarely comes after them. So let's be honest, this is not really about pathological parents. The pathological parents come in all colors and all socioeconomic backgrounds.

JVN [00:22:30] Ashlee Marie Preston once said to me, like, "What people don't understand is that like white supremacy will eat its own young." It also affects like a lot of poor white people or disabled white people or, like, queer white people like anyone who falls outside of, like, that cishet Euro-Christian ideal. And I think that there's some people who the second they

hear about, like, race, they're like, "Well, it's not about that." And then they go back into all the institutional things and like being like, "Well, what are we supposed to do about crime?" "What are we supposed to do about abusive parents?" Like, they just fall into these tropes. And it's like just this, like these systems affect really, truly everyone. *And* they also affect some people more. And that's okay to say! That it affects some people more than you and it still affects everyone. They don't have to be mutually exclusive.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:23:13] That's absolutely right. The way that these systems operate is they do affect the most marginalized people more, like the family policing system. It mostly affects impoverished, low income families, almost exclusively. It very disproportionately affects Black and Indigenous families. And it functions to do that. It's not just an accident, you know, it functions to affect them the most. *But* it shapes policy in America in a way that harms everybody. So it helps to shape our policies in America to say, "Families, you know, especially parents, have the obligation to provide all the care for their children. So we're not going to invest in public education. We're not going to invest in universal health care for everyone. We're not going to invest in affordable, decent housing for everyone. You know, we're not going to invest in truly addressing sexual and physical abuse in families." You know, not the way we do it now, that obviously doesn't work, right, through punishing people, certain people, but allowing it to go on unaccounted for.

Okay. So we're not going to do all that because we'll focus on this so-called "child welfare system" to punish the most marginalized people. And then everybody else thinks, you know, can satisfy themselves, fool themselves by thinking that we have a nation that actually cares for children. But you can look at the facts and see that our nation is abysmal when it comes for caring for children. We have the highest childhood poverty rate of any Western nation, but we take away more children than any other Western nation. We incarcerate more people, including children, than any other Western nation. So the way the U.S. is doing it is backward. It's backward. And those policies harm everybody, except for perhaps a very tiny white male elite, you know, cisgender, heterosexist white male elite that wants everything to stay the way it is.

JVN [00:25:36] Because if that guy was beating the shit out of his kids they would just, like, ship that kid away before he could get them reported or, like, who's going to believe that kid anyway?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:25:44] They have their own ways of dealing with their issues, but it doesn't involve these systems of mass incarceration and mass family separation that are terrorizing and traumatizing and oppressing the most marginalized people. And that's how white supremacy operates. It convinces white people that they have some investment in opposing policies that are going to benefit other people and what those policies would benefit them as well.

JVN [00:26:14] Yes!

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:26:15] It's, it's, it's, it's the most devious—, talk about pathological, you know, it's truly pathological. But many, many white people, including working class, impoverished white people, have bought into this because as long as has been recognized, W.E.B. Dubois recognized this idea 100 years ago, that the white elite from the time of the slavery era have given white people what he called a “psychological wage,” you know, of investment in whiteness to satisfy them so they wouldn't join, you know, with Black, Indigenous, immigrants, people with disabilities, queer people, you know, who have a stake in toppling the racial capitalist system. And the child welfare system, again, plays such a crucial role in that. But people don't see it.

JVN [00:27:15] I feel like my brain shit its pants when you said that one in ten Black children will face family separation.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:27:22] Yes.

JVN [00:27:23] And then that made the three sentences that you said before that, like, erupt from my brain because it just, like, cleared it out. I know that you were saying, like, Black, Indigenous, impoverished, marginalized, like, those are the families that have the most interaction and have the most oppression from the family policing system. But then you said something about, like, 53%?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:27:44] Yes, so, let me be clear. We're talking about two things. One is investigating families and not all of those families experience family separation. Some of those children stay at home and some are taken from their families and put in foster care. And then we're talking about as well the child removal where children are actually removed from their homes. And I'll just mention a third important aspect of this, which is termination of parental rights, an even smaller percentage, then, have their rights to their family relationship legally terminated by judges. So the 250,000 that represents every year the children who are removed from their homes, you know, under court supervision. And as I mentioned, there's even more we don't know the exact figure for sure, but even more who are informally removed by a so-called “family safety plan.” But even more children are investigated by Child Protective Services, and we shouldn't downplay that, even if they're not taken from their families. The investigation itself is extremely traumatic. These are strangers coming into your home. And in Black neighborhoods, caseworkers often bring police officers with them or a police officer into the home to effectuate this search, which, by the way, is a government search which we should be protected from under the Fourth Amendment. There should be a requirement of a warrant, but caseworkers rarely go and get a warrant.

JVN [00:29:32] Can the parents refuse the search?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:29:35] So, yes! Parents have a legal right under the US Constitution, the Fourth Amendment. To refuse the search, there would have to be a court order, a hearing

about it, and a court order to allow to search. The parents should be able to have an attorney to consult with. So the parents should say to a caseworker who knocks on the door, this happens—could happen—in the middle of the night, without warning, knocks on the door and, “Let us in. We have an allegation that you are neglecting or abusing your child. We want to come in and investigate.” A parent should be able to say, “Please give me your card. Or show me your warrant. You don't have a warrant. Give me your card. I'm going to consult with my lawyer.” That, that hardly ever happens in the neighborhoods where most caseworkers go into. These are impoverished, low income families. They don't have lawyers. They don't know who to call. And they don't know their legal rights. And maybe the most important thing is they feel threatened because the caseworker will say, “Let me in or I'm going to take your children away from you if you don't let me in. You're proving to me that you're guilty of this accusation,” which could come from an anonymous tip to a child abuse hotline. We know that landlords have done this to drive tenants out. We know that ex-boyfriends and girlfriends have done it, you know, to get back at a former partner. We know that our neighbors have done it just to start or have beef with a neighbor. So if we don't know the origins even for political purposes. There's cases where people have come after a family for political reasons. By calling the child abuse hotline.

JVN [00:31:33] I mean, a little boy could wear tights in the state of Texas.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:31:37] Oh, absolutely.

JVN [00:31:39] And be investigated now.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:31:40] That has been happening. It could be whatever a teacher thinks that a child is dressed inappropriately, wearing shorts when the teacher thinks it's too cold out, wearing a coat, when the teacher thinks it's too hot out, or if it happens to be a homophobic teacher or one in Texas that has been told to be alerted to “suspicions,” you know, of a trans child. It may be what the child is wearing looks “gender inappropriate”. So, yes, all of these people have to understand mandated reporters, teachers, doctors, social workers, they are told to report their suspicions, their *suspicions* of child maltreatment. And remember, child maltreatment isn't just physical or sexual abuse. It is also neglect. And most children who are investigated and who are taken from their homes are taken for reasons of neglect, not physical or sexual abuse. It's mostly handling accusations of unmet needs of children. And this is mostly impoverished or low income families who simply can't afford it.

So all of these “suspicions” can be the basis of an investigation and they are, routinely, a basis of investigation. I just imagine you get a knock on the door and there's a caseworker standing there. If you don't let them in, sometimes they'll come back with a police officer. And I know, you know, cases where this has happened. They come back with the police officer, “Okay, now let us in.” You are an impoverished Black mother, single mother at home with your children. They're telling you, “Let us see in or we might arrest you because you're on suspicion of child abuse, or we're going to go to a judge to take your children away.” Most of these moms let

the caseworker in and then they can go upstairs or in the back of the apartment. Wake up children. Tell them to undress in front of the stranger to check for evidence of neglect. They search your cabinets. They look in the refrigerator, they look in your closets. They look under the bed, wherever they want. They sometimes have the parents sign blanket releases for confidential information. They just say, "Sign here." And then they fill in later what they want released hospital records, medical records, school records. This is massive invasion of families' privacy and surveillance. Now what happens? They can come back over and over for supervised viewing of how you interact with your child, more searches of your home, and they can get mandated what's called a service plan. You know, it's supposed to be serving you, but it's mandated tasks you have to fulfill. You had to go to parent training classes. You have to go to therapy. Therapy, by the way, with therapists that *they* order you to go to so you can imagine in the families with trans kids, who are the therapists that they are mandated to go to? Who do you think the state of Texas approves as a therapist for a trans kid? I mean, this is sick, right? This is sickening. And then that therapist can testify against you in a court that you're not a good parent.

JVN [00:35:23] They're not there to help you heal anyway, like, they're there to, like—

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:35:27] They're not there to help. They're on the payroll of the very agency that's investigating you. And then they can say, "They can take your children away." Okay. "We have evidence here that you're not adequately caring for your children. We're going to put them in foster care. And you have to fulfill each and every one of these mandates." Drug treatment. Even if you don't have a drug problem. "We'll put you in drug, drug treatment program." And then if you don't, let's say you miss a meeting to visit your child or you miss a therapy session. There can be grounds to terminate your parental rights because you haven't complied with the mandates of the agency at that. We're ordered now by the judge. So this is how the system operates. It's why I call it a family policing system. It terrorizes families. And it doesn't at any point say, "What would be the best way to actually meet this child's needs at home with their family caregivers who are mostly trying their best to care for their children but maybe have not been able to meet them." On the other hand, there are also lots of cases where there's nothing wrong in the family. It's just that the family doesn't meet the norm of what a family should look like. You know, maybe there are disabilities in the family. Maybe there's trans children or parents in the family. Maybe it is an impoverished family who just can't find secure housing or adequate health care or mental health care or maybe there is a substance disorder in the family, but that's not a reason to take rich white kids away from their parents. So why should it be? This family needs support, and that's what's wrong with this system. The system is not designed to support families and children. It's designed to accuse and separate and punish and disrupt.

JVN [00:37:39] So in the mass incarceration system, one thing that we know is that, like, private prisons, like, each butt in the bed is, like, 47 bucks a night. And then these families who own these, like, private prisons just get super fucking rich. So, like, who's getting rich off

of separating families? Like, is it like, foster care, like, houses that get a bunch of money or something? Like, who's getting rich?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:38:02] Well, where do I start? So as I mentioned earlier, this system is tens of billions of dollars of federal and state and local money, upwards of \$40 billion a year. When you combine the budgets.

JVN [00:38:19] "Just throw money at it!"

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:38:20] Well, there should be more money spent on caring for children. I prefer that money to take that money and write checks to impoverished families. I guarantee you that would improve children's welfare far more than what it spends.

JVN [00:38:34] 100%. I more just meant the average taxpayer, like the average person, like, just is, like, "Oh, well we like, we spend that, like, it must be fine." It's not fine.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:38:42] Exactly. Now, so the money is mostly spent on separating children from their families and maintaining them in so-called "foster care." And here's where, you know, in addition to all the people that work for these agencies, the caseworkers, the administrators, the supervisors, all those who are earning salaries from it, the big money comes from running a business that—I pause on saying "cares for"—you know, that supposedly "cares for" the children who've been taken from their families. So many states are turning to privatization, private institutions and they may be for-profit or not-for-profit, but they're making money off of every day that a child is in their care. A child has been taken from their family and is put in foster care. And these can be companies that monitor—, they hire, they monitor individual families that are foster families or they may be running institutions.

And this is where you really find the extreme harms to children. And too many children in US foster care are put in what's called congregate care. So they're group homes or psychiatric facilities or what's called residential therapeutic treatment centers. These are like prisons. These are children who are put in there because they supposedly have behavioral problems or mental health problems. But many are put there just because they can't find a family, foster caregivers to put the children in. And this especially happens to Black teenagers and also to queer teenagers, because many foster families don't want a child who identifies as queer. And if they take these children and some of them treat the children horribly. As you know, I write about this in *Torn Apart*, the nightmare for many LGBTQ children in foster care. Either it was families or group home or institutions. These institutions are making money off of foster children!

JVN [00:41:02] Let's talk about that. In *Torn Apart*, you tell a number of stories about Department of Child and Family Services separating mothers and their children. I think we've heard a little bit about, like, the "justification" of these separations can be, like, failing to meet the needs, poverty, neglect, like, you know, all of those, you know, sort of justifications. But

can you tell us, like, what some of those queer children may have gone through? Like, how do you end up, like, therapeutic centers and, like, congregant homes, you said?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:41:29] So there's congregate care, which just means it's a group setting.

JVN [00:41:33] Yes, like, yes.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:41:34] So it's not a child placed with an individual foster family.

JVN [00:41:38] It's, like, a big ass dorm school.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:41:40] It could be a big ass dorm or it could be a big ass facility that's like a prison, these residential therapeutic treatment centers. And so, you know, there are lots of stories. These are research studies that have interviewed queer children who have been in these various settings. So I have quotes from studies where trans kids or queer kids, gay kids have been put in homes where the foster family wants to convert them to be heterosexual. You know, it thinks that they've got this sick individual in their home. I mean, I quote one foster father who says, I heard him talking on the phone with one of his boyfriends and I was worried about my grandchildren. And so I sent him back to the agency, you know, or children reporting how they're in fights constantly with other children or with the staff who bullied them. You know, I quote one gay kid who said, "I had to keep a knife under my pillow because I was scared that I was going to be injured." Who reports being beat up because of their sexuality, their identity.

And then the statistics show that queer children are at a higher risk of being placed in these residential facilities, as are Black teenagers. Imagine, a Black queer teenager is at very high risk of getting placed in one of these facilities either because the department thinks that their identity is a psychological problem and so they need therapy or because they can't find an individual home to place this person. These are the kinds of experiences that people routinely have, again, especially Black children, Indigenous children, queer children, children with disabilities. Often what happens is a family that is lovingly struggling to deal with problems that a child might have because of their identity or because of the way they're treated in school. Or maybe they do have a mental health issue that needs help. But if they can't afford to get the kind of care that their child needs, the system is set up to force them to put the child into foster care. One of these you know, foster care is just such a bad word for it because it could be a heartless, uncaring institution to provide the care that they need.

JVN [00:44:42] Which would ultimately probably make whatever thing they're going through worse because now they're, like, changing school, losing their community, losing everything—yeah.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:44:51] This is true in general for children in foster care. Foster care, it disrupts their lives. So you're absolutely right. They may now be in a new school system. They've, they've lost their friends. They've lost their family members. Their whole support network has been disrupted. And then many children are placed in multiple placements, not just one where, you know, this idea that they go to *one* foster home with a family that cares for them, that's not the norm. They may be placed in multiple placements. And even if it's family placements, this is disruptive of their health care, their education and just their, their social lives. I mean, come on, imagine what it would be like as a child to be taken from your family, your classmates, your neighbors, your friends, your siblings, maybe even. Right. And put into a stranger's home or put into a group home with all these strange children and. Worse yet, put into an institution where you're locked basically in a cell. Just imagine what that does to children. It's disruptive. It's traumatic.

JVN [00:46:14] So then in some cases, like, there might be, like, a service plan, kid doesn't get separated. Sometimes the child could potentially be separated and in more rare times it still happens a lot like the termination of parental rights. Like, completely like if you violate that plan or that plan doesn't happen in a way that your caseworker thinks that it should have happened. So, like, how often are children and their families actually reunited? And then like, what could an investigation entail? You adhere to the plan and then you, like, keep your kid and then, like, you're, like, on, like, a probation sort of thing until your like, kid's 18 or something?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:46:50] In most cases, children eventually are reunited with their families. But remember, that's what's supposed to happen. Foster care is not supposed to end in permanent termination and disruption of a family. But let's remember, though, that when the family is reunited, it is only after they've been extremely traumatized by the separation. And the family has had to go through all these hoops, which may put them back financially, emotionally, psychologically. So, you know, I tell the story and—in fact, I begin—Torn Apart with the story of Vanessa Peoples, whose child strayed away from a family picnic for a *minute* and a passerby called the police on her. And she ended up getting a ticket for child abuse because there's such a thing as child abuse when you don't harm a child, a misdemeanor in Colorado. A month later, a caseworker comes to her home, ends up with seven police officers coming to her home, hog tying her for 30 minutes, carrying her out of the house into a police car. She's now under the supervision of the child welfare system. She did everything they told her to do. She underwent these supervised visits. They didn't take her two little boys away from her. But her life has been totally disrupted by this encounter.

Not only did she have the terror of police officers dislocating her shoulder and hogtied her at her home in front of her children, her children now terrified that someone is going to come in and take them away from their mother. But because she's on a child abuse registry in the state, she was training to be a nurse. She cannot practice her profession now because she's been labeled a child abuser, mind you, for allowing her son to stray away for a minute from a family picnic. She has trouble finding an apartment because landlords. See that she's on this

child abuse registry. So I want to emphasize that you might not have your children taken from you or you might get them back, but they have been traumatized and your life can be totally upended by this involvement of the system without the system doing anything to help meet your children's needs. And in fact, in this case, there was no need at all for intervention, and they did nothing but mess up her life and harm her children. There's no way that they helped two children at all through that encounter.

So, yes, most of the time children are returned, but returned after they've been traumatized by the separation and may have been abused in foster care. You know, their, their education, they may be sent back a year in their education or more, depending on how long they spend in foster care. And let me also point out, and I didn't raise this yet, that there are about 30,000 children in America every year who age out of foster care. That means that they were in foster care until age 18 or 21, depending on the state, and they haven't been returned home and they haven't been adopted. Many of them, their parents' rights have been terminated. That's why they haven't been returned home and they are simply booted out of the system. In many cases, they're left off at a homeless shelter. They might have a little change in their pocket, but they have nothing.

JVN [00:50:50:43] Don't have access to health care. Experiencing houselessness. Like, there's only so many things that I don't even think I necessarily need to say. That you're going to be forced to rely upon, like, unsavory situations, like, situations where you're putting yourself in serious bodily harm.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:50:59] Yes! Yes! Absolutely. Let's say it. Let's say it, Jonathan! Let's say it!

JVN [00:51:04] Yeah. It's, like, sex work. Yeah. Yeah.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:51:05] Sex trafficking of children who run away from foster care or in foster care. This is well known. I document in Torn Apart. There are people who prey on children who have gone through traumatic experiences, they know to find them in foster care. And there have been cases where a group home with foster children has been a known site for these—

JVN [00:51:32] Predators?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:51:33] Predators to exploit.

JVN [00:51:35] Fuckin' a, Jesus.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:51:37] And then runaways. This is a major problem. These children are called runaways. It's a term that anybody who's involved with this system or studies this system knows about, it's an intractable problem because how do these systems deal with it?

They call the police to track down children who run away from foster care because they're miserable in foster care. They want to go back to their friends and families or they're being abused in foster care so they run away there in the street. How do you expect an adolescent or a teenager to survive in the street? Many of them turn to sex work, and I'm not putting down sex work as, you know, vilifying it. But certainly when children are forced into it, that is a human rights violation.

JVN [00:52:28] When you have no choice. Like, when there's zero choice. There's no other recourse.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:52:32] Exactly.

JVN [00:52:33] Because, like, what are you going to do? Go to cosmetology school. With what money? And if you're going to work in a fast food place like that. How long does it take in a fast food place or, like, a minimum wage job to save up the money for like a first and last month's rent on an apartment that could be like 1500 dollars. Like, 2000. 3000, like. That's, like, three months of work versus if you turn a trick, that's like you can get 500, a thousand. You're risking your life, but you're going to get way more money faster. So it's like,

DOROTHY ROBERTS [TK] Yes!

JVN [TK] These are decisions that a lot of people just have not ever had to make.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:53:05] Yes, yes, so Jonathan, let's—, let's—, and I'll put it plainly, it's foster care. It's this family policing system that is forcing children, teenagers, young adults into these situations. It is totally a violation of their human rights. It's, it's abominable that this is going on. We're talking about adolescents and even teenagers who run away and have to survive in the streets. And then if they get caught by the police, are they treated compassionately? No, they're treated like criminals.

JVN [00:53:46] Solicitation, prostitution, it's, like, that's a serious, like, years in jail, like, on your record.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:53:54] Yes! They put them in juvenile detention. So there's so many children that go from foster care to juvenile detention. Again, there's a term for it, "crossover children," they're dually involved youth. You know, the fact that there is a term for it, that there's statistics on it, that it's studied, it shows you it is a routine phenomenon.

JVN [00:54:15] And in this case, it's, like, 30,000 people. If someone's, like, "Well, that's not that much actually." Like that's double the size of Hannibal, Missouri. Like, I think about like that's like, so many people who have not had the resources or not been prepared. Like that's just that is like a crisis in blinking. And a lot of these people who are so pro-life and are so rabidly, so pro-life would be the same people who would say, like, "Well, that's not my

problem to help those kids, they're 18. They can get a job. When those same, like, rabid Republicans were kids, like, a one bedroom apartment was like \$300 a month. Minimum wage could buy you an apartment. It could buy you junior community college. But, like, the economy has evolved in such a way, where, like, "No, it isn't." We don't have living wages now, so really people can't do it. But to better understand this—also sidebar, this is probably going to have to be, like, a two-part episode if you notice my voice like speeding up, we're not even into segment two so we're, like, we're going to have to like, have you back because, like, you just—

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:55:07] I'll be happy to.

JVN [00:55:08] Yeah, but I do want to get into the history before we don't have time. So if we want to better understand the hellscape of our current family policing system, where do we need to start? Um, question: is it at enslaved families separated at the auction block? Guessing based off of some of the work that I've read of yours, so just guessing, like, does it start there?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:55:29] Yes, absolutely. It starts with enslaving African people in the United States and the essential aspect of it of family separation. So family separation, the ownership of Black families, legally, by white enslavers and the ability of white enslavers to break up families at will—at any time. At auction, where courts allowed for family members to be purchased separately, or a family that was living on a farm or plantation could be separated by the enslaver at any time because it was economically advantageous or to punish a member of the family or as a gift, you know, they could give a child away as a gift. They claimed to own children from the moment of conception, so they could have in their wills that the future children of enslaved people would be given away or sold away. So family separation and the the lack of any autonomy that Black parents had over their children during slavery is the foundation of the way that families are treated now in the family policing system. We also have to add the treatment of Indigenous tribes and the way in which the US military used family separation as a weapon of war in order to try to decimate native tribes. So it was a deliberate form of genocide. And then, you know, after that period, both the settler colonial period and the period of enslavement, these policies continued. So with Black families after the Civil War, during reconstruction, the white supremacist backlash, you know, that now we know more about how incarceration became a weapon of white supremacists to incarcerate the newly freed Black people.

JVN [00:57:41] So you guys, just really quickly, if you don't understand that, like, there is, like, a direct, clear line. Like, it's not Dorothy being hyperbolic. Like it's not being hyperbolic. There's, like, literally a direct line.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:57:52] Yes, yes, yes. So locking up Black people became the way to subordinated, oppress, oppressed black people after slavery ended. And so then fewer people know about how the apprenticeship laws were used to really virtually reassign Black children so white people could go to courts and claim that the parents were neglecting them.

These are now newly emancipated families and judges would order that the parents were neglectful and then order the children to go back into the servitude, it was called apprenticeship but servitude.

JVN [00:58:31] So this is 1865 to 1866 the Black codes were passed, allowing white planters to exploit apprenticeship laws already in place to wrest custody of Black children from their parents as a source of forced labor.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:58:43] Absolutely.

JVN [00:58:44] Out of about 90,000 emancipated Black people in Maryland, about 10,000 were re-enslaved under apprenticeship laws, typically to their former enslavers. So basically they get emancipated and then the enslavers can say, like, "Oh, that kid's neglected. They don't have the money. They can't teach their kid X, Y, Z," and then they could, like, petition. But then, like, were they're, air quote, "paid" like under the apprenticeship thing or no? No!

DOROTHY ROBERTS [00:59:06] No, of course they weren't being paid, nor were their parents. They were being so-called cared for by the former enslavers as apprentices. And that's how this system worked. They weren't being paid. They were. The idea is they got their room and board and care from the "master" who they were in involuntary servitude for.

JVN [00:59:36] So then that passes in North Carolina in 1866. Your research is so good, so good. Get out of here then. Not literally, like, never leave in 1867, just as they have in Portland, Chase, the chief justice of the U.S. Supreme Court who was nominated by Lincoln. How the Maryland Apprenticeship Law, violated the civil rights. It's overturned in 1866. His decision led to the release of most Black apprentices held by white planters in Maryland and the summer of 68. But that was, like, two and three years after people had been, like, under forced labor, separated from their families and, like, literally returned. So and then at the same time or almost concurrently, 1879. So, like, three nine. My math. Get out of here 12 years later. Right. '67 to '79, 11, 12 years later, the first off reservation Indian boarding school was commissioned by the Department of the Interior and the Department of War to Lieutenant Richard Henry Pratt, known for his notorious philosophy of, quote, "kill the Indian and save the man."

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:00:35] Right.

JVN [01:00:36] And so basically, as soon as white supremacy has, like, kind of been not literally thwarted, but they were just like, "Hey, you can't do this whole, like, apprenticeship thing." We turn to, like, quote, "civilizing" Native American people because like us. And really, you guys, this all works so hand in hand with the eugenics that we were learning about from Jacki Antonovich, about, like, the positive eugenics, the negative eugenics and about, like, who was I mean, all of these things were framed as "helping" Native Americans and "helping" kids, like, yeah, that's how these but this is not obviously what happens.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:01:13] Yes, I think it's so helpful to see these foundations and what are so clearly deliberate oppressive policies and how there's this trajectory to today where we can trace it step by step to the policies we have today. And do you think it's just an accident that it's the same people, Indigenous and Black people, who are the two groups that have the highest rates of child removal today? It's not an accident because it's a *result* of policies that, yes, have transformed to some extent, but are still with the same basic foundation, the same punitive, oppressive foundation as during slavery and the settler colonial era.

JVN [01:01:59] Your research that I'm reading, just, I already went through it earlier, but now as we're talking, it just gets, like, queer duality working here, like, better and better, but worse and worse, like, because it just keeps getting worse. So then in 1912, Children's Bureau was established by President William Taft, the first federal agency charged with investigating and reporting, quote, "upon all matters pertaining to the welfare of child and child life." That still operates today.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:02:28] Oh, yes.

JVN [01:02:29] That's established in 1912. So then according to a survey in 1931, this is really intense, like, chills. 96% of welfare recipients were white. Withholding welfare from Black mothers was to keep them working rather than caring for their children. The New Deal excluded most Black mothers from its Aid to Dependent Children program. So, like, some people get that in the New Deal, most Black women are *excluded* and those who qualify received less stipends because, quote, "Blacks needed less to live on than whites." That is, like, *written*, like, that's written in public records. Like, that's again, not hyperbole. Like that was just, like, "cuckoo cuckoo coo," I'm writing this stuff because this is normal for us to say in 1931, like, does it cost more to be white? Like come out that like, like my parents were born then, like their parents were born. So when we say like these things happened 180 years ago or, "This was wasn't my generation." Like we are all informed by what happened in the generations above us because like that's how the knowledge gets passed down. Like that's how, like, the cultural norms get passed down. So like this really, really is so, like, important to go over. So then and also you can like interrupt me like any time. Like I just feel like I need people to be able to understand this!

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:03:50] Well, let me just add that, that not, not only is it that this is recent—very recent—history, but it laid the foundation for the policies we have now. So we still have these policies that blame poor people for their poverty that are so resistant to providing any kind of support for people in need. And so what happened, though, for the New Deal—and by the way—you're absolutely right that people just said it, you know, but there was a Southerner in Congress who said, "Who's going to iron my shirts, you know, if Black women get welfare?" So these were very blatantly programs for white mothers who were seen as deserving of help for their children. And Black mothers and children were explicitly excluded. And then when they began to demand in the 1950s and 1960s with the

civil rights movement inclusion into welfare policies, again, people understand that these policies were developed, welfare was developed for white people. Black people were excluded from it. Okay.

When Black people demanded inclusion, what happens? The policies changed. They become punitive. We see that less money now goes to families to help intact families and we see the huge skyrocketing of foster care. So foster care becomes the main service for Black families. The approach to Black families is take their children away from them, whereas prior to that the approach of the child welfare system was provide—not adequate—benefits, but provide benefits and services to white families. So this is a racist approach. It's always been classist. It's has always been ungenerous, stingy, blaming poor people. But when it gets to Black people, it becomes a punitive approach. And we see this huge, skyrocketing of foster care from the time of the civil rights movement until today.

JVN [01:06:06] And what we've left out here is that, like, reparations never fucking happened. 40 acres and a mule thing never fucking happened.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:06:14] Right, right.

JVN [01:06:14] There was never reparations. Then Black women are systemically excluded from voting, from welfare. And then when they get there, all of a sudden they're being accused of manipulating the system? Like, get the fuck out of here! And then in Jacki Antonovich's episode we did talk about this, like, forced sterilization law from, like, North Carolina but it was, like, a little earlier?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:06:34] The Supreme Court upheld forced sterilization as a eugenic law.

JVN [01:06:39] Yes. Yes. Yes!

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:06:40] Oliver Wendell Holmes in, in *Buck v. Bell* in 1927.

JVN [01:06:43] Yeah, yeah. *Buck v. Bell*!

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:06:46] I absolutely agree with you that eugenics is so tightly connected. That's why, you know, my books, *Killing the Black Body* and *Torn Apart*, can be read together. *Killing the Black Body* was all about the way in which Black women's childbearing has been punished through sterilization abuse, through welfare policies. You know, these stereotypes about Black mothers having too many children, passing on depraved lifestyles to the children. These have supported the extension of eugenicist policies. So North Carolina is a great example. The case *Buck v. Bell* had to do with the Virginia sterilization law, but at the same time, North Carolina also had a eugenics board which was implemented in the 1930s. That eugenics board operated until the 1970s. It continued past World War Two. I

mean, again, this is recent history. People who were sterilized are alive today in North Carolina.

JVN [01:07:40] No, not the seventies!

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:07:43] Yes! The seventies, only because a local newspaper broke open the story. And finally, these people who were sterilized, some of them are getting reparations today. But what happened? Look at who was sterilized. So originally it was those so-called “feeble minded people,” which, as you said, had nothing to do really with their cognitive capacity, had more to do with they broke some kind of gender stereotype or class standard. Carrie Buck in the case, *Buck v. Bell* was raped and became pregnant. That's why they put her in that institution and sterilized her. So what happens, though, is during the eugenics era, there was mostly white people who were being sterilized, impoverished white people. And then over the course of the sixties and seventies, you see a turn to sterilizing Black women who were on welfare as part of massive sterilization abuse through federally funded programs across the South but also in other states.

JVN [01:08:52] That '58 sterilization bill in Mississippi like. Can you tell us more about that?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:08:58] So in Mississippi they wanted to link—I'm thinking I'm talking about the same bill, but I might be mistaken. But there were efforts in Mississippi and other southern states as well to condition welfare receipt on sterilization.

JVN [01:09:14] Right.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:09:15] and this was targeted at Black women who relied on welfare, but know, it's entirely connected to what was going on with child welfare as well, because at the very same time, Black mothers were demanding that they get the benefits that white mothers got through welfare benefits. But this is where we see the change. And in fact, it was a rule called the Fleming Rule that said, if it's not a “suitable home,” and you can imagine how racist and biased these ideas can be of what's a suitable home.

JVN [01:09:51] Especially back then.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:09:52] Especially back then. The family cannot get welfare. And then they added, if the home is so unsuitable, they can't get welfare, that means they shouldn't be able to keep their children either. And this is when these children began to be put in foster care. So that by 2000, the largest group of children in foster care in the United States were Black children. Black children have only made up like 13, 14, 15% of the U.S. child population. They were the largest group. They were four times as likely as white children to be put in foster care. And we can connect the welfare restructuring, abolition of the entitlement to welfare in the United States in 1997, signed by Bill Clinton, passed by a Democratic Congress.

1997. The Adoptions and Safe Families Act that sped up termination of parental rights and incentivised states to get children adopted.

JVN [01:10:52] Woah woah woah.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:10:44] But let me just mention one more! One more, because we've got to put this in to the crowd control bill that intensified police occupation of black neighborhoods. So, you know, we got to understand, these are all connected policies where you started out, Jonathan, talking about how they're connected. We can see so clearly through history and today how these policies are connected. Now, we've got to see family policing as part of it. It's not some benevolent social service program

JVN [01:11:16] No.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:11:17] It's punitive and it works hand-in-hand with these other policies as well.

JVN [01:11:21] So, Dorothy, like, we really need to have you back for a part two because, like, I had done research, but like, this is like one of those times where, like, this is like top 1% of our, like, 300 episodes ever. Like, I just have learned so much. Sometimes I do notice on episodes like this I'm like, "Oh God, like they're just my inner, like, coming from a cornfield and not knowing." Like, this is kind of the smoking. Like a lot of it happens.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:11:45] Yes.

JVN [01:11:46] It's right here. Like it's there was this whole thing that, like, I didn't even really realize.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:11:48] Yes, but you will see it now. This is true for all of us. It's true for all of us. We all have to be informed and enlightened and conscious of what's going on.

JVN [01:11:58] But we're basically leaving off at 1960-ish. In our part two we're going to go from 1960 to now. In the meantime, if you guys listening to this have just been, like, fucking mind blown, like, in a way that I have and you want to do a little bit more research on this episode for our part two. Jacki Antonovich, I already said that because literally, like Dorothy got a shout-out in that very episode. Steven Thrasher on the viral underclass. Listen to that one. Mehrsa Baradaran about inequities in banking. Mónica Ramírez On family separation. Sonia Passi on intimate partner violence. Jake Newsome on Pink Triangle Legacies and Dean Spade on mutual aid, referenced by name Dorothy in in the book. So listen to those if you're waiting for part two on this because it will give you even a little bit more fuller picture because that's what I was kind of thinking about. Are you on the 'gram? I like we where when we we need to talk. Okay. We're on the Twitter.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:12:58] Yeah, @DorothyERoberts. I am on Instagram, but I don't keep up as much.

JVN [01:13:05] Where do you teach?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:13:06] University of Pennsylvania.

JVN [01:13:07] Should I go back to college so I can just only take your classes? Like, is there, like, a Dorothy Roberts class that, like, we can only take your classes or something?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:13:17] I teach two classes on reproductive justice at the law school and on race, science, and justice to undergrads and in sociology in Africana studies.

JVN [01:13:28] Do students have this reaction to, you are like they just spend like an hour and then they're just, like, like, so just like, want to start a fan club?

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:13:37] Oh, you're sweet. I love my students. I can say I have the kind of students who write things like "This course changed my life." I understand now I know a lot of students will say "Now I thought these things, but now I know how to really build an argument, how to talk to my friends and family about it." So I love that. That's one of the reasons I love teaching so much.

JVN [01:14:02] I mean, you just connected so many things in my brain and I know that our listeners feel the same way. I'm so excited for our part two. Just thank you so much, Dorothy. This is just, like, so incredible. And also, you guys, if you have not read both of these books, like, get into it yesterday Torn Apart: How The Child Welfare System Destroys Black Families and How Abolition Can Build A Safer World. And also, your first book, Killing the Black Body. Read both of them. Dorothy, thank you so much for your time. We are so proud of you and we'll see you next time on Getting Curious.

DOROTHY ROBERTS [01:14:29] Thanks, Jonathan. I'll be back soon, I promise.

JVN [01:14:32] Ah! You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. Our guest this week was Dorothy Roberts. 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 Quiñ - thanks 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 & Twitter @CuriousWithJVN. We're doing the most over there, it really is good. You should follow if you don't already. Our editor is Andrew Carson. Thanks! Getting Curious is produced by me, Erica Getto, and Zahra Crim. See you next time!