

Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Lauren Baer

JVN: Hey, curious people, I'm Jonathan Van Ness and welcome to Getting Curious. Um don't know if you guys have heard but it is an election year. We are approaching Super Tuesday time which also sidebar can I just say, I remember Super Tuesday of 2020 like it was yesterday, like, how has it been four years? Like it's 2024, like I literally had to look at my phone to be like, wait, is that real? It's Valentine's Day of 2024. That's six years after 2018. I just what? That's, that's so so much. I see so much disillusionment in the Democratic Party. So many people are talking about not voting, not believing in their politicians anymore. Um and just generally are so feeling disappointed, disenfranchised and over it that they don't want to be a part of the process. And that really worries me. Um I was a person in my twenties once and I remember living in Missouri uh in my twenties briefly um and thinking like, you know, my vote isn't gonna count, it's not going to move anything, but I still did it. I still did it. Uh but you know Obama didn't win Missouri, I'm sure, but that's ok. But the point is this election is all about young people and if young people are going to show up or not, and I'm really concerned that they're not, how can we keep new people getting into politics, both young and old? How can we get new leaders into the fold? That's really what I wanna know. So, what I'm asking is, is can we get people engaged in politics? To talk about that, we are talking with Lauren Baer. Lauren Baer is a nationally recognized civic leader. Lauren served for six years as an official in the Obama administration, acting as a senior advisor to Secretaries of State, Hillary Clinton and John Kerry and to U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power. In 2018, Lauren was the Democratic nominee for U.S Congress and Florida's 18th district. And stick around to the end of the episode where we'll reflect on what we've learned and if we answered that question. And now let's get to our conversation with Lauren. Lauren, how are you today?

LAUREN BAER: I am fabulous. Thank you so much for having me.

JVN: Oh my god, you're so welcome. Um so, you know, I think all of us at this point in time are having some anxiety around 2024. Um I notice uh I noticed a schism between more blue state Democrats and red state Democrats and I'm sure that you echo that sentiment because are you still in Florida, Lauren?

LAUREN BAER: So I'm in New York now but...

JVN: Good for you. I mean, Jesus Christ, that was...

LAUREN BAER: You know, queer woman, queer family, so...

JVN: It's touch and go down there. And I mean, I feel similarly in Texas, I mean, I feel like when I first came here in 2020—not that it was like an oasis for queer people—but it has certainly gotten a lot worse, a lot more pointed. There's a lot more legislation. We just seem to be the center of a lot more people's ire. And I think being in a state where, you know, you have almost super Republican or super majorities for Republicans and a Republican governor, it really does become much more frightening to live where you live. And I think that for red state Democrats, it is, um, there really is like a new and more urgent, it's not new, but there is just seems to be a lot more urgency and fear around this upcoming election cycle. And I think that's part of why I wanted to talk about that, especially with you. I mean, we've seen these polls come out that just show the Biden administration really trailing, um, and a potential rematch with Trump. And obviously a lot could change in the next year. And I think

that the administration's been really, you know, pretty good over these last few weeks about trying to like take the edge off of some of those polls and take you know, show that like a lot of polls said a lot of things a year out from a lot of elections that were not at all, you know, accurate. Um, so I think, you know, they've, they've done well on that but it really seems like he, like President Biden, is having just a really hard time with voters and I think there's a lot of people asking the question why, because he really has, it seems like he's been doing a good job um in a lot of areas. And then I think also a huge thing that we focus on, on getting in the Getting Curious universe and in Curious Now is local and state elections because we've seen Republicans be really ruthless and effective in co-opting control on a local and state level. And I think now we're finally waking up to the fact that like we could do the same thing and we're starting to see those protections take hold in, you know, Michigan, a lot of our platforms are doing a lot better. So um also, I'm so sorry that I was talking for like six minutes straight. Lauren, how are you doing queen, tell us everything,

LAUREN BAER: You know, I I'm doing well overall. Um there's a lot going on in the world um that's crazy, but I try to center myself every day by what I am grateful for. I've got a beautiful life. I've got two beautiful kids. Um and one thing that I've learned, uh, from all my years in politics is you got to focus on controlling, um, what you can control and, um, you know, really honing in on that and maybe that's a good place to start thinking about 2024. I want to, like, step back and, like, think about context here, right, because when I look forward to next year and I think about how I'm feeling, the word that keeps coming to mind is clear eyed, right? Like I there's a lot that we know about next year: we know that it is likely to be a Biden and Trump rematch. Um we know exactly where those two men stand on policy. We know what a Trump administration uh would look like because we survived four years of it. Um and we know that this go-around—if we have another go-around—would be even worse because he's saying the quiet part out loud. Now he is talking about how he will be openly authoritarian, use the courts for retribution. Uh this week, he's talking about stripping health care again, right? Like we know the ways in which we will be vulnerable. And to your point about what's happening at the state and local level, we also know that there are Republicans uh from the federal government at the state level to the local level who will follow him like the pied piper and do exactly what he wants. And so the choices are really clear to us. Uh and that can be frightening, um but it can also be empowering and I say empowering because we beat him before; we know what it takes to win. Um and we know that we can bring that coalition together. So now that we're just a little bit less than a year out from the election, all of my focus uh in my day to day, in my work and talking with other people, is on taking those actions we need to do to strengthen and bring together our coalition. Not focus on the polls from last week because those we can't change, but focus on what the outcome is going to be uh next November. And that depends on what each and every one of us choose to do with our days now to make sure that we end up with a Democrat in the office, in the White House and Democrats on down in as many seats as we can at the state and local level.

JVN: I also, I mean, this is like probably for like a different episode of Getting Curious that I actually really want to do, which is like is polling fair. But even when you think about polling, it's like a lot of times they're polling like 2000 people or like 1500 or 1000, sometimes it's more. But it's like if you think about someone standing on a street corner or making calls: how often do you want to talk to some person on the street? How often do you want to take, pick up the phone from someone who, like, you don't know who that number is? So the amount of people who, like, are willing to talk to people like that, it's like, I don't think it's a real accurate representation of the, of the electorate as a whole and we really have to stay,

as you said, wide eyed because what we also know about advertising and like, you know, journalism, press—I guess it's less journalism—but I know this about, you know, just from a press perspective: clickbait is a big deal and the more clicks you can create, if that's based on like fear clicks get more clicks than love clicks. Like you're gonna, you know, “You're gonna die,” is a way more shareable story than like, “Oh my God, everything is probably gonna turn out fine.” Um and so I do think that when you get like scary results from a poll that, that has the ability to go really far and scare a lot of people and really affect like you know how energized someone is for, for someone. Um and so I think, yeah, it, it's, I just think that's interesting y'all we gotta like, remember that. Um so going into 2024, how are you feeling about, how are you feeling about our chances? Um how are you feeling about what, what's your vibes? How are you vibing next year? What do you think we need to do to be really effective?

LAUREN BAER: Um look I, I am vibing, I would say cautious optimism. That is what I will vibe for you. Um and let me base that maybe on looking at what happened in, in 2022 and then the road map for what we need to do in 2024 right? Uh 2022 before those midterm elections, if you opened a newspaper, it would have been story after story about how we were to expect a red wave, devastating losses for Democrats, right, that's what was predicted. Um instead what we ended up with was holding the Senate just a five vote margin in the House of Representatives taking back power at the statehouse level in Pennsylvania and Michigan, holding off losses in places like Arizona, right? Better than expected. And so this kind of speaks to your point about the headlines, like if you look at the news, they write a story as if the outcome is already determined. Um they're telling you what to expect in the future. Um if I know anything from my time in politics, it's that it's only us who gets to decide what happens in the future. We know from what we've done in 2020, what we did in 2022, what we did back in 2018 is that Democrats can win even when the cards are stacked against us, even with excessive gerrymandering, even with voter suppression, even with everything they try to do to scare us and demoralize us and keep us from going to the polls. And so when I look at everything that is on the line, I hope that the American public is going to do what they've done these last seven years and say I'm not going to let our democracy go because I'm scared or I'm apathetic um or um I'm concerned, right, they're going to show up. Um and they're going to vote for the outcomes that we need to put our country in a better direction. So I, I don't think it will be easy, I think there's a ton of work to do. Um but I am definitely not in the defeatist camp.

JVN: And I think for me, one thing that comes up a lot is I think a lot of people are like single issue voters. I think that really is what a lot of people boil things down to. And I was thinking if I was trying to make it even simpler, you know, for me or for progressives, it really comes down to the Supreme Court. And the next four years, the next five years are going to shape the next 30 to 40 to 50 years of public life in the United States. And we have all witnessed that in real time in this last year. Um we have lost our federal right to privacy in terms of health care. Women in over half, closing in on half the states don't have the ability to get reproductive autonomy in the way that they have for the last 50 years. And so we see that and I think, you know, we're one vote away from like gay marriage being gone. I think we're, or at least being returned to a state level. I think we're one vote away from seeing unions forever ever changed, and be, and have their ability to unionize and wield power over corporations is one vote away from forever being gone. I think we're one vote away from like environmental protections, forever being gone. I mean, we actually already are well into like that, we don't even, they don't even need one more vote. I mean, this is just so bad and so

just for the Supreme Court alone, um if we want a chance at Roe v Wade being returned or restored, if we want a chance at the Voting Rights Act to be uh restored and continued, we have to show up next year. It is the biggest fucking deal ever.

LAUREN BAER: Absolutely. And you know, I think it was pretty easy during the Obama years to believe it when Obama would talk about the arc of the moral universe bending towards justice and this idea that we're just marching slowly but surely towards better outcomes. I mean, I, I certainly felt it as, as a queer woman seeing expanding rights for me, for my family. And then all of a sudden you get to the Trump administration and you realize actually the United States is not any different than any other government around the world, in the sense that we can move forward, we can move in a positive expansive direction when it comes to our rights and freedoms, or we can regress and we can move backwards. And when I look at this, I really look at it in like an international perspective. Um you know, you mentioned at the start, like I spent six years working um at the State Department and a lot of what I did there was look out at other countries that were backsliding democratically and raise red flags when things started going in the wrong direction. And what really scared me and still scares me in our country is the number of red flags I am seeing here in America. We cannot take our democracy for granted. So if you're going to be a single issue voter in 2024, that issue should be democracy because everything else rests on that. And it's pretty clear that if Trump wins, not only do we seal a Republican supermajority on the Supreme Court, but we also embolden an individual who's made very clear that they have no problem disregarding the rule of law. They have no problem disregarding separation of powers. We are foolish to think that just because we live in blue states, we would be safe and our rights would be protected in a second Trump administration. Um you know, it would be off the rails there and this is not exaggeration, um this is acknowledgment of what the man is saying himself and what the template we've seen at the state level in places like Florida with Ron DeSantis, in places like Texas with Governor Abbott. Um this is our shot to preserve uh the, the, the framework that gives us all of the rights and freedoms we enjoy. Um so let's not blow it.

JVN: How did you get into politics? How can other people get into politics? What are all the different kind of jobs someone could have? Um also I want to hear about Arena and um sidebar as we talk about this, I want to hear as much as you can say without like pissing anyone off because I don't, I don't know what your future plans are, but like, what do you think is broken about the DCCCDD? There's D and three C's, right?

LAUREN BAER: You're talking about the D triple C.

JVN: D triple C. Yeah, everything.

LAUREN BAER: Yeah, so I'm happy to share that. Um especially because I'm someone who never thought that I was going to be involved in electoral politics. I was a policy person, not a politics person. I thought politics was kind of yucky. Um and was very happy staying in the world of policy making, of foreign policy in particular. And if you'd asked me, um, in the summer of 2016, what I would be doing for the next five or 10 years of my life, I would have said, you know, my former boss, Hillary Clinton, is going to get elected President. She will be my future boss. And I'm going to continue, um, doing this, this work helping to project American values, um, around the world. Uh but then, you know, two things happened in really close succession um in, in that fall. Um thing number one, was that my wife and I had our first daughter. Um she was born in late October of 2016 and we have this like two

magical week period where we were so excited. We're like our daughter's being born into a world where she's never going to know that there can't be a female president and to what we were talking about before, she's just going to see this expansion of rights for her moms, for her family. Like, how lucky are we? Um and then Trump was elected and, and then all of that was, was shattered. And I just kept thinking about the question that I always ask myself at times when I have to decide what I'm going to do next professionally, which is how can I have the most impact, right? I knew I wasn't going to stay in government. I was a political appointee in the Obama administration, so my job was up when Trump went into office. And I kept coming back to this, this point of like at some point, my daughter is going to be old enough to ask me what I was doing now to, to fight for her rights, to fight for our rights. And I better have a pretty damn good answer. And so the long and the short of that is, is it, it led me home to, to Florida, to the, to the state where I was raised, where my family's been for, for generations um to, to run for office in um a deep purple red swing district um to try to oust a Republican um incumbent who was super pro-Trumpy. Um and, and to try to, to sort of bring back um accountability to, to our government at a very difficult time. And although I ultimately lost that election, um there were so many ways in which it was successful, right?

We turned out more Democratic voters than a Democrat ever had in that district, and in a midterm election. We really motivated and energize this, this community. And I, I really realized um the, the power and potential of engaging directly in our democracy at the grassroots and the ground level versus um where I was in Washington um so far removed from that. Um but at the same time, I also realized um a lot of the ways in which we don't support our candidates very well. Um, on the left, you know, there is this idea, I think, that what it takes to win an election is a really compelling uh candidate; they're charismatic, they can persuade people. Um, but good candidates don't win elections on their own. They really need uh big teams behind them, uh teams of qualified well-trained staff and, and staff who represent the diversity of the place in which they are running. And so I knew when I came out of that election, that I wanted to spend my time working on fixing American democracy. And in particular, I wanted to spend my time making it easier for good candidates to win. And that's what brought me to Arena. Um at Arena, we build the teams that power victories. Um on the left, uh we have trained thousands of campaign staffers, the majority of them women, the majority of them people of color, more than 30% of them members of the LGBTQ+ community, we train them, we put them on campaigns up and down the ballot and around the country. And then we support both candidates and staff so that they can win and building this infrastructure to support the candidates of the future. Um I can see no more essential thing right now in terms of what we need to strengthen and preserve our democracy.

JVN: And um well, I not to name drop, but I'm friends with Sharice Davids. I love her so much. And, um, we have gotten to, like, hang out a few times in DC when I've been there performing, I campaigned for her back in 2018 when I lived in Kansas City for Queer Eye. Um, but when we get together it's really fun because we just talk politics. Like, we're like, you can tell we're two people who read a lot of news. We talk a lot of, we just talk a lot about politics. Um, so if, if there was someone who just loved to talk politics, but they're not really, like, they don't see themselves as a candidate necessarily, but they'd like to, like, stay involved, like, what are some jobs in politics or that you could do, like, supporting candidates that you could actually, like, make a living? Like, is there anywhere you can, like, get paid to be doing this sort of thing if you were really inspired by it?

LAUREN BAER: Yes, Yes, you can get paid to do this. Um, and the first thing I will say is that, um, there's a place for everyone in politics. I, I think a lot of people, um, and I count myself among this, like, you know, didn't really see electoral politics or don't see electoral politics as a place that is a space for them; precisely because most people who have run for and held elected office in the history of our country have been straight cisgendered white men. Um, and it can be really hard to imagine how you can work within a system and make a difference within a system, when the levers are a power controlled by people who are very different than you are. Um a huge part of what Arena is doing is trying to, you know, break open the doors of politics, really wide; democratize it and enable people to see themselves um in this work. And there are all sorts of cool jobs um that you can have. Uh you know, you can be an organizer, um, here I think of like young Barack Obama with his clipboard in Chicago, right? You can be the person you like engaging with your community who is out there persuading and turning out voters. Uh you can work on the finance side, like you can be the person who makes it rain, right? Because campaigns operate on money. In many ways, they are like start ups, they start from nothing. You got to raise all the dollars to operate the organization and you've got to spend them um, in order to turn out your voters and get the outcome that you want.

JVN: What degree would you need for that? Like, do you have to go to college for like, finance or something?

LAUREN BAER: No, no, you don't. In fact, the, the I'll go back to the rest of the jobs. But what I will say about like needing degrees is this is what Arena is here for. You don't need any specific degree if you come to Arena, if you come to Arena Academy, we will, regardless of your background, train you up to do the kind of work that you want to do and then help you find a job, a paying job where you can do that.

JVN: Is Arena Academy free?

LAUREN BAER: Uh Arena Academy has a small tuition fee, but it is free to anyone who has need. Which means if you cannot afford to pay our \$300 tuition, we will cover that for you in full. We don't want cost to be a barrier to entry to anyone. And then all of the career services we offer afterwards to our grads, you've been through our program, you get all of that help helping you find a job on the back end. Um because we know that that cost has been another thing that has kept people out of politics. Uh traditionally these jobs haven't paid very well, they haven't had great benefits. You have, you work one campaign for 18 months, then you got to go find a new job. Um and that's hard if you don't come from, from wealth and we're trying to change that, um at Arena. So, you know, I would say all that you really need is the motivation to make a difference and the commitment to, to do the work. And we will give you the skills and we will give you a community that will support you along the way.

JVN: That's fucking cool. What are like, is there any like stories from Arena that like stick out to you over these last, you know, few years because, because you're the managing partner of Arena. So like, is there any like stories that stick out to you or like success stories that you think are like amazing?

LAUREN BAER: Yeah, we, so we have so many success stories and our, our, our grads, the people who go through our program um are, are really what keep me motivated and energized every day. Um one story that comes to mind um is a story of a woman named uh Kayana. Um she was working as a, as a party planner in Atlanta, she had a party planning

business, um decided that she wanted to get engaged in politics, didn't really know how um came to our training. Uh she, after that training um went on to work and do digital work, uh so the online presence uh for Senator Warnock in, in his race. Then she became the digital director for Val Demings um on her senate run in Florida. And now she's the Vice President of digital uh at Emily's List, one of the foremost organizations on the left trying to elect Democratic pro-choice women. That is a transition in just a number of years from party planning to senior leadership and a key democratic organization as a Black woman. And we at Arena saw our role as giving her the tools and empowering her to make that difference um in her life and in her community and in the country and that is, is an awesome thing. Um we have another grad I think about a lot, um, his name is Kevin. He had a 30 year career as a firefighter. Um and instead of just going into retirement, he decided that he wanted to come to our training and learn how to be an organizer. Kevin came to a training we did in Texas in 2022 learned to organize, went to Georgia and, and organized for senate races in Georgia. So we take people from all walks of life. We love people who are trying to apply their skills from other fields. We equally love people who are like fresh faced and just out of college, college and want to get their start in politics. Um but, but our whole goal is to enable any person who is motivated to be able to see themselves in electoral politics, to find their place so that we can build a democracy that's more reflective and more representative of all of us.

JVN: Okay, so if you want to find out more about Arena, if you want to get into it, are you guys on social, Lauren?

LAUREN BAER: We are on social, we are on social at arenasummit. Um you can find us on Facebook, you can find us on Insta, we are on X, we are on threads. So everywhere you get your social: we are there.

JVN: What about TikTok?

LAUREN BAER: Oh, we're not on TikTok just yet.

JVN: Lauren, I really think all of them hoes are over there on TikTok. So just figure it out. Get over there if you can do what you've done so far, you can, get on TikTok.

LAUREN BAER: I'm gonna, I'm gonna do, I'm gonna tell my digital director that Jonathan said, "all them hoes are over there on TikTok," and we'll start an account today.

JVN: Ok, so Arena, yes, you, yes, I want to talk a little bit about Florida and then we're going to wrap it on up. So goddamn, you know, Florida, like it's, it's such a pretty climate, you know, interesting animals. You got the Everglades over there. Um is Florida fucked to hell or could it be okay? Um well, we just had that win in Tallahassee for me or that was cool, right? Like, or wasn't that Tallahassee?

LAUREN BAER: Jacksonville, Jacksonville? Yeah. So here's what I'll say about Florida. Um I think Florida is a long term play right now. I will never give up on my home state, the place that I, I came from, that raised me and generations of my family came from. Um and that is, is filled with like a lot of really good people who, who want the right thing. Um but the political landscape there is, is rough. It is rough, um not just because Ron DeSantis is in office and because there is a super majority, um in the Florida state legislature; it is rough because they have changed the rules in ways that make it really structurally difficult for Democrats to win the gerrymanders. There are hard to beat. It is not really within reach in the short term to get back a democratic majority in the Florida legislature. They have cut down the number of

seats Democrats can hold um in Congress, uh just the way that districts are, are drawn. Um But does that mean we give up on Florida? I don't, I don't think so. I don't think we give up on hard places. I don't think we give up on Florida. I don't think we, we give up on, on Texas. I think we just change our time horizon and this is really part of the work that arena does. Um because we people yes to work on campaigns, but also to work in movement organizations who make change longer term. You can't expect to get everything you want. All of the change you want in the next 18 to 24 months. But if you've got a permanent on the ground presence and you are registering voters and you are turning out voters and you are bringing new people, young people into the process and engaging them and talking to them about the policies that they want and sharing the ways in which this administration is delivering for them. Then over time, you are building up an electorate that can deliver a victory. And so, you know what I would say is, is like as a party. Yes, of course, we need to focus on the swing states um In 2020 for those are critically important that's going to determine the balance of power next year. But we also need to think about all of these places where we can be building power for the long run. And I am unwilling to say that Republicans are going to permanently have control in Florida or anywhere else. We just have to do the work, we have to do the work.

JVN: I also think it's like, it reminds me of um sister district and like they like the way that they categorize like states. It's like maybe it's like for Florida, we just start with like, let's try to like stave off a, a super majority, like let's try to pick that part off first. Like that could be our next 2 to 4 year goal and it's just like you have to keep coming back and it really, there is never like an off year. It's about like consistent rebuilding and and also Florida didn't get to where I mean, and 1000 Florida almost went for Gore by like 500 votes and maybe Gore did win and we'll never even know because the Supreme Court like cut that investigation off. But like that didn't happen overnight, like Florida becoming such a supermajority Republican place. So it is able to go the other way, but it's like you said, probably a longer term. Yeah.

LAUREN BAER: Even, even back in 2018 when I was running Bill Nelson lost his race for us Senate there by 10,000 votes. Um, Rhonda Santi won by only 30,000 votes. Right. These are small margins that had a huge, huge impact on the direction of the state under the laws and that people live under. This is the reason that my queer family isn't comfortable living there anymore because I can't send my kid to school and have or be able to acknowledge who her moms are. Like these choices that we make to show up or not, um really make a difference. Um But in the same vein, um we can also make change if we all show up and, and maybe we can't change in the short term, the balance of power in the legislature in Florida. Um But we sure could elect someone different at the top of the ticket um to the governor's mansion where it's just based on statewide. How many Dems are Republicans turn out? So, you know, do that, build some hope, build, build the sort of foundation for longer term change.

JVN: Lauren, I feel so fulfilled. I loved meeting you. I've loved talking to you. I'm going to do, we're going to do two quick questions to round things out. Um What's a recent today? I learned moment for you.

LAUREN BAER: Um So what I'll say I mentioned I have a daughter, I have a seven year old. Um, and last night, every night I asked her at the kitchen table, I said, you know, what do you learn at school? And today, and last night she turned to me and she said, let's talk about what you learned today, mama. Today you learned to be a better parent. Um, I'm not really

sure exactly what she was referring to do with that little bit of sass. Um, but I will say it was a nice reminder that I am constantly learning and trying to be a better version of myself, both professionally and personally.

JVN: Ok, parents. So that's a good thing. So you, so you learn that your daughter's got a fearful person, even a more fiercer personality than you already knew. She's, she got a fierce future coming for her. We love her. Um, ok, what's a meme or a gift that made you lull recently? Um,

LAUREN BAER: so I have been fed a lot of content of this golden retriever who is talking about how, um, ignorant its owners are and this is really spoken to me. Um, we have the best member of our family is a little terrier named Biscuit. He's 12 years old, he's super cranky. Um, but everyone loves him like 100% the case that if we were on the Titanic and there were one seat on the lifeboat, my wife would save him, not me and I'd be like, Jack hanging off the ball. Oh my God. Um But I think about him and this is why this, this just like made me lull. Like totally is because our projection on him is just like his undying love and gratitude for us. And I feel like this golden retriever was telling me he was like really giving us the middle finger

JVN: for our things. You guys are silly people. Um OK, so what's a moment of queer joy that we can end on Lauren bring us home?

LAUREN BAER: Um I will go back to my kids on this moment of queer joy. Um You know, the seven year old is getting big enough now that um we talked to her about real issues, right? We, we talked to her about racism and sexism and homophobia and islamophobia and anti Semitism and like all of the things and when we talked to her about ways that people can be mean to other people and are mean to other people. It is always just met with this like disbelief, this like lack of understanding but like, how can people be that way? Moms? And like, why would people be that way? And it reminds me, I think that like at base we're all really good, right? Like we come out good, we want to like love and embrace one another and embrace our differences. And so like, I guess my moment of queer joy is if you know, if my seven year old just can't understand the concept of hate, then maybe there's some hope for humanity um overall that we will get to a better place where we, you know, stop focusing so much about the ways we are different and the way we don't like each other and focusing more on what we have in common and what we can do together,

JVN: Lauren Baer, we adore you and we can't wait to check back in and see how you're doing later on. Thanks for coming on the show. Thanks so

LAUREN BAER: much for having me.

JVN: Yay, yay. Did we learn the thing? Did we do the thing? Did we learn the thing? I would say we did. Uh can we get people into politics in 2024? We can, I also feel like in a lot of ways they, a lot of folks already are very involved, but we need more people involved to really get there. Um That's really what I learned. Um I think the other thing that we learned is is so so yes, we did answer the question. A lot of people are already involved, but we need even more if we're going to keep Biden in the White House and if we're gonna like flip our house and retain the Senate, it's gonna take a lot more people getting off the sidelines, getting into this election and really understanding what's at stake um for, for the United States. Uh I thought it was really interesting the way that, um Lauren talked about, you know, being someone who's been in politics for so long and then engaging with the press, I thought

it was really interesting when she said that the press often writes about things as if it's a foregone conclusion when so often that is not the case. Um So leaving open our minds for optimism, for possibility for potential, like not necessarily getting so down in the dumps. Also a really interesting takeaway here is I love the work that arena is doing. Arena is training thousands of people to get into politics, whether that's like supporting candidates or training candidates. It's just, it's getting people into the operations of politics and it's majority women, people of color and more than 30% are LGBTQ, the diversity of experience matters in these rooms and in these races. Um So donate to them or if you're looking into enrolling in their trainings yourself, get into arena. That is like my biggest takeaway. I'm curious now about who runs polling, like who is in charge of running these polls and sampling these polls? And then like, how much can we trust? Polling data is one thing that I'm really curious about. Um I'm also curious about how is the Democratic Party run like the, the National Democratic Party and like State Democratic parties? Like, how do you get elected to like those boards? And like, how does that infrastructure work. Um Just like, you know, there's like the Republican National Committee, like the Democratic National Committee, like, how the fuck do those work? How do you get elected to those? How do those work? I need to understand that. Ok, I love you, hoes. I love you guys. You're the best. I'll talk to you soon. We'll see you next time on Getting Curious.

You've been listening to Getting Curious with me, Jonathan Van Ness. You can learn more about this week's guest and their area of expertise and the episode description of whatever you're listening to the show on. And honey, there's more where that came from. You can follow us on Instagram @curiouswithjvn. We are doing the most over there and it is so much fun. You can catch us here every Wednesday and also make sure to tune in every Monday for Pretty Curious! Still can't get enough? Subscribe to Extra Curious on Apple podcasts for commercial free listening and our subscription only show, Ask JVN, where we're talking sex relationships and so much more. Our theme music is Freak by Quinn. Thank you so much to her for letting us use it. Our engineer is Nathanael McClure. Getting Curious is produced by me, Chris McClure, Julia Melfi and Allison Weiss with production support from Julie Carrillo, Anne Curry and Chad Hall.