

## Getting Curious with Jonathan Van Ness & Dr. Eviane Leidig

**JVN:** Hey, curious people. I'm Jonathan Van Ness and welcome back to Getting Curious, honey. It is hot. It has never been hotter. I hope you guys are staying cool. I hope you're staying hydrated. I hope this week is treating you well. It's giving us Wednesday times. Um but here's the thing, this is the time in the year where we're going into the vault, we're giving you a greatest hit. Uh and the reason we're giving you this greatest hit, which spoiler alert is going to be our episode about tradwives. I gotta tell you something since I did this episode about tradwives. And then later on gay republicans, my algorithm has not recovered. So if my algorithm hasn't recovered, I want you guys to understand what is going on with this whole tradwife thing on Instagram. Uh so that you don't have to see it on your algo them the way that I have had to. Um I also just want to say, oh, so since this episode premiered, I have seen this meteoric rise, a very mainstream trad wife esque folks. Um whether that's Nora Smith or Alexia de La Rosa. I mean, these are also like, successful women on their own social, like, they don't need their men to be successful, like they already are successful last summer t his was more fringe and now this aesthetic is something that folks are really, um yearning for. And I think that's interesting. I'm not judging. I just think it's really interesting, but I think it's important for us to go back and really listen to what Dr. Eviane Leidig uncovers in her work, which back when this episode came out, we didn't do like why we're curious about it and then, and then like, if we learn that thing that we do now. Um so I just think this is really interesting because now project 2025 is a thing. We have seen Trump make a very serious run at the White House and, you know, prior to, you know, Biden dropping out, there was a really good chance that he was going to win. Um and now I think it's, you know, much more neck and neck. But I think this is a particularly important place for us to focus because so much of this is happening on social media. And if we don't understand it in the context of where this is becoming like, because really, I think a lot of this is coming from, people want to belong and they want a sense of like normalcy and predictability. And so a lot of these ideas are being born in like right wing spaces on the internet and I want us to know what that looks like. So without further ado, let's jump into our convo with Dr. Eviane Leidig.

Welcome to the show. Eviane Leidig, who is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie postdoctoral fellow at Tilburg University. Now, get this for a resume, you guys. It's freakin major. She's affiliated with the Center for Research on Extremism at the University of Oslo, the Global Network on Extremism and Technology in London and the International Center for Counterterrorism at The Hague. She's joining us today to talk about her new book, *The Women of the Far Right: Social Media Influencers and Online Radicalization*, published by Columbia University Press. Eviane, how are you? Eviane, how are you?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** I'm fabulous. How are you today?

**JVN:** I am thriving. I just feel like I'm giving you my best, like investigative journalism, like adjacent person. Mostly because you did all the work and all the research, but I'm just going to learn about it from you, which is major. But like, we need to talk about this Robyn lady. Who is she? And when did this happen? Is it Mark Zuckerberg's fault? I mean, just because he's recently muscly, does it mean that he has permission to radicalize all these people!

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Robyn is a treat. I will say I loved writing about her. Basically, she's a far right crunchy mama. Have you heard about crunchy mommas before? Yeah. I mean, they're they're moms who are really into like the holistic health care, organic living, sort of like homesteading. And she's really into that health and wellness thing. She's living in British Columbia, in Canada, and yeah, she's really into making organic foods. So, I mean, not just organic cookies, I mean, like vegan, gluten free, non-GMO cookies. I mean, so she's also really into like the cottagecore aesthetic, really into like the bohemian vibe. So like on her Instagram page, you can see like the reusable, like diapers that she uses for her kids... really into like health and wellness supplements, tonics. She's also training to be a doula and a midwife.

**JVN:** Is she a real person?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** She is. I mean, she's such an interesting influencer because in many ways she kind of like LARPs, like she's like living life on the prairie, even though she's like, totally urban and, like, has lived, like, all over the world. My good friend and colleague, Cat Tebaldi, she calls women like Robyn "granola Nazis" because they're just like super into pushing this, like, wellness lifestyle. And she's also really religious, so she's like converted to Orthodox Christianity. And so she uses religion a lot as a way to sort of justify her views.

**JVN:** Scary. Okay, so I had this yoga teacher. I always loved her. She was amazing, I actually did her hair. And I was minding my own business this one day and my FYP page on Instagram brought up for some reason this like Trump page and it said like, my friend was like the first person that liked all the things on there. And I was like, "Oh my God, how is my friend..." And then I realized that she was like, this like hardcore right wing, like yoga lady. And it turns out that, like in the last few years, there's been like this huge influx of, like, right wing yoga ladies, in yoga! It is a whole thing. And I do think that historically, like, obviously patriarchy is the problem, but there has oftentimes been women who have been instrumental in holding up that patriarchal control by like aligning themselves with it. And this is like giving me some of that. So you situate these women within like the far right. So like, how do you define the far right in your work? Is that like even further, right of like a Laura Ingraham or like a Candace Owens or like a Megyn Kelly?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah, I would say it's even more extreme politically. When I talk about the far right in my work, without going into too technical of details, I go into like the ideology. So, you know, those are things like being an extreme nationalist or being a nativist or believing in like authoritarian law and order. But then I also go into like a really rich history of looking at different organizations, and that could be things like political parties, which is much more common in Europe, but also like movements, intellectuals, ideologues, looking at different subcultures and in online communities. What's really characteristic of the far right today, in particular, is they're anti-Islam and they're anti-gender. And that is something that tends to unite the far right across the world, sort of like irrespective of if you're looking in the U.S. or Europe or Brazil, for example.

**JVN:** What... I think I know the anti-gender part. Why are they anti-Islam?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** It's mostly about positioning Islam as a threat to Western societies and this particularly linked to the notion of migration, so that they they say that Muslim migrants are coming in to replace white populations within the U.S. and Europe. So it's definitely linked to that kind of conspiracy around population replacement. And they also say that Islam oppresses women without really like acknowledging that there's a pretty vibrant and diverse history of Islam across the world. But it's ironic that they say that, and yet they believe in this far right ideology, which is really patriarchal and can be quite submissive of women.

**JVN:** Yeah, and like dehumanizes women in so many ways and says like that they shouldn't be working because they're not like cut out for what it's like very like interests. It like fights itself. So some of it's just like plainly xenophobic. What other things or what other like misinformation and disinformation, obviously a lot of anti-trans rhetoric.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah, so it's "Great Replacement" stuff. It's homophobic discourse; anti-vax, anti-COVID conspiracy theories about like the government pushing bio-political control sometimes through things like the food supply, for example. So they believe that like big agriculture is like pumping hormones and chemicals into the food supply to control your reproductive abilities. Also like anti-big pharma discourse that's like they're putting ingredients into birth control pills that's like infiltrating into the water supply. Like, some of these things are so conspiratorial.

**JVN:** So what are some of the other women that you profile?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah, I mean, so some of them have been pretty well known within the so-called “alt-right”. So this is like back during Trump’s time. So there’s Brittany Sellner, who is known by her name, her maiden name, Brittany Pettibone, and she is married to a leader of the Austrian branch of the Identitarian movement, which is this pan-European youth protest movement. And so, like, she’s really big into going to rallies and to anti-vax protests, anti-lockdown protests. Also someone named Lauren Southern, who was a really popular figure for a while, and she makes documentaries around the world trying to sort of like expose the truth. And I mean, there’s a few others I detail in the book. Most of them live in in the US and in Canada. But I also feature some women that live in Europe as well and actually show like the connections that they have as this sort of transnational sisterhood; figures like Thaïs d’Escufon who is living in France and then Eva Vlaardingerbroek. So she is a Dutch influencer, and honestly, I wish that I had written about her more in the book just in terms of like her background. So she started her political activism working for the Forum for Democracy Party, which is a far right political party in the Netherlands. And she really rose to prominence by giving this speech against feminism in the party. So that really made her a rising star. She got into this romantic scandal because she was dating the leader of the party at the time, Thierry Baudet. And so that kind of caused like a massive political scandal because they have like a massive age difference. Then she left the Netherlands, moved to Sweden and became a spokesperson for the Sweden Democrats, which is a party with roots in neo-Nazism. So she was like a spokesperson for their YouTube channel. She then was dating, at that time, a French politician for a far-right political party in France, which some people might know is the previous leader was Marine Le Pen, the National Rally Party. So she was dating him at the time. Then at the start of the COVID pandemic, she moved back to the Netherlands. She has a masters degree in law and was working at a law firm to push back against government mandates on vaccinations and lockdowns.

**JVN:** Here’s the picture of her with Tucker Carlson on the left.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yes. Yeah, so she is really like she used to be a pretty regular commentator on Tucker’s show. There she is speaking for the Spanish far right political party in the recent elections. Yeah, there she is at CPAC Hungary, meeting Viktor Orbán, the prime minister there. There she is with Jordan Peterson. Now she’s just really well known for being this political commentator on lots of channels across the world. But Tucker Carlson was most prominent. And she’s engaged now to Will Witt of Prager U, which is this conservative student activist group in the U.S. So she goes to the U.S. a lot actually to do, like speeches and talks and stuff.

**JVN:** So what do these women have in common, like online and offline? Like, what’s their what’s their thing?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** I mean, so the ones that I do research on, they tend to be like young millennial women. So I would say like a lot of them are young mothers, as well, and actually that’s when their content was shifting to things like motherhood and parenting and health. A lot of them are really interesting, well-educated, like some of them even have master’s degrees. Eva, who I mentioned, tried to pursue a Ph.D. as well. They all have middle class backgrounds, right, and I think this is something that we tend to forget when it comes to far-right actors, is like they can be really well articulate. They could be well educated, they can be middle class, right. And all of these women share these traits in common. And they’ve often talked about like their stories about being red pill. Red pill is a term within the far right to indicate like your radicalization journey. And so these women will talk about like going to college and entering like corporate life, trying to climb that that ladder, living in like urban areas and socializing with friends and colleagues. And then there’s usually a moment in time in which they describe feeling deeply, deeply unhappy and depressed with their life situation. And so they blame feminism for that. And they say that feminism, like, is unnaturally pushing women into the workplace. And so this kind of like starts to go into their spiral of their radicalization.

**JVN:** Interesting! Because it’s almost giving like girl version of incel. You know, like blaming feminism for like the things that were going wrong in their lives. Like, like how does the far right appeal to those type of women or like, to these women like, what happens, like, their followers are

just like, “Yes, I want to like have babies and serve my husband and protect like traditional family values with no vaccines”.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah, some are into that. I think for these women in particular, though, they really feel this sense of empowerment and agency as being kind of like the de facto leaders or being the most visible women within the far right, at least for these influencers. They really enjoy the visibility that they get in the movement, right. But also, on the other hand, the far right needs them. I mean, the far right needs women in order to succeed as a movement. And so, you know, these women see an opportunity to be spokespersons and then they you know, at the end of the day, I think these influencers just love the attention as well.

**JVN:** Well, ‘cause attention and validation, like, feels good, like totally. I also think that it feels good for people to, like, assign someone as like a threat or evil or whatever. Like we just see that play out through history so much. And I think it's interesting that like, I think that “Great Replacement” theory is like, yeah, that it's same thing, different day.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Well, the way the way I like to think about the far right is it's like pouring old wine into new bottles, right. Like the the ideas don't really change, but it's the messaging and the way that messaging is framed, which is new and can be quite refreshing for their audiences.

**JVN:** Yeah, especially with gender. I feel like there's been like a really huge push to be like the TERF and like anti-trans movement seems really invigorated across all conservative fronts. I saw something this week that said that like there's like 1.6 million trans Americans over the age of 13 right now. And I was like, isn't there like 330 million Americans?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah.

**JVN:** I mean, if you look at your Apple News, like so much of the news is like anti-trans rhetoric in the headlines.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** I think what the far right does is it uses transphobia as an exploitation tool because they know that for mainstream society it's about people being uneducated and not being aware of how to have these types of conversations. And so they really play off of those fears and anxieties. So I mean, that's definitely something that's much more recent when it comes to the far right today, in terms of like how it can be really successful in spreading its ideology to a mainstream public.

**JVN:** So how do you like the women of the far right that you—like the most prominent ones— like, how do they tend to interact and like, relate to like the other big like, you know, like men of the alt-right? Like, how do they see like Andrew Tate? Wouldn't they, like, think he's like a piece of shit because he's so anti-woman? Or do they think that, like, do they really get into the whole like, “Oo, we want an alpha male.” Like, are they into that?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Oh, yeah. They want that trad, alpha male for sure...they, you know. I mean, some of them are married to men in the far right and like some leaders, for example. But I think one thing to bear in mind is that not all of them followed a man into the movement. Right, like some of them really did have these preexisting views. For many of the women I research, they describe their fathers as sources of inspiration for their political activism. And their fathers were not necessarily in the far right, but they were conservative leaning, right. And so they they felt that their their fathers would support them in ushering in their far right political activism. In addition, a lot of these women had described first watching male YouTubers and feeling then, like empowered to want to create content themselves, because they felt like there was a place for them to be able to offer their commentary. And a lot of them also describe like being inspired by Jordan Peterson, which really goes down a rabbit hole in terms of, you know, views about gender roles and norms.

**JVN:** Who's Jordan Peterson?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Jordan Peterson is an academic who is a psychologist by training, and he has kind of become this intellectual darling of the far right. He really promotes this idea of like individual responsibility. He has a lot of young, male followers, and he is most famous for this phrase, like, “Just go clean your room,” as in like just go and take responsibility for yourself. And so this type of, sort of self-help guidance has been closely intertwined with like gendered logics about like what men and women should do for like a quote, functioning society.

**JVN:** Mhm.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah. But, but, but indeed I mean I think, on the other hand though like these women have also received a lot of flack and criticism from other men in the movement who were like, “Why are you why are you talking? You know, just go back to the kitchen and, and bake your cookies,” you know. So they do receive harassment from other men in the movement, right. So I think it's not a uniform response, but I definitely see a lot more like adoration from male followers.

**JVN:** As so often we see people or I see people say like, “I can't wait for like the young generation, like things are going to get better”. And it's like, we've been saying that since I was young, but I feel like there's a lot of people my age who are super far right and they're also radicalizing like other young people. Or just like at least, you know, creating normalcy around being really homophobic, really transphobic, really xenophobic, like, casually super fucking racist. Like, it's not just going to magically heal itself. And I think that we see that playing out in real time. And it's just that like, as you said, like old wine and new bottles and a lot of those bottles are like the platforms of social media where we encounter these people. So what drew you to like wanting to research those people? Because I know for me like, I see Fox News, like on my news app because like, I want to read like a little bit of what like the other side is saying, like, I want to be like a little aware, but sometimes when the headlines are so intense, like, I just can't even expose myself to the whole thing, you know? So it's like, question 1A is what gives you the strength to, and the wherewithal to even research these people? Are you shitting your pants about the future? And then 1B is where are these people? Where, where, where are they getting the most attention? Is it the 'gram? Is it TikTok? Where is it? What's happening? Is it Mastodon? Don't tell me it's Mastodon, Eviane!

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Oh, no. I think that lasted like 12 minutes.

**JVN:** It's over! You heard it here first.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah. So one step at a time. I mean, so I have already been researching the far right for several years. But the thing is, I had seen these women, and I really wanted to debunk stereotypes of what most people think the far right looks like, right. Because when people think of the far right, it's probably these like angry, young men, you know, maybe skinheads. And I wanted to show that, like, women play such an important role here. And at the same time, there is also a lot of like media coverage or like public conversation about like male YouTubers, like of the far right and not really these women, even though, again, they were playing such an important role. But I think what was most interesting to me was that unlike the men on YouTube, like these women were discussing dating, relationships and friendships. You know, it wasn't just about the political commentary or like hot takes reacting to current events. They do do that content, right. But it was really interesting to me to see how these women were presenting themselves as like more holistic on different platforms. This more like human and ways that that could be pretty relatable. So I just feel like there is a story here that had to be told.

**JVN:** Yeah, it's like come for the health and wellness, but stay for the justified, like bigotry or whatever.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah, yeah. But also like, why were they talking about dating and like, why were they talking about like making friends? You know, like it can make them really relatable to audiences, but also it really helps with their branding, right. And so I well, yeah, I think we can get more into that because I think that was sort of related to your second question.

**JVN:** Yeah. So you refer to these women as influencers. And I mean, I feel like because a lot of them have a lot of followers, don't they?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Some of them do have significant followings like Eva, who I showed you earlier, like she has like 180,000 Instagram followers.

**JVN:** Yeah, that's, I mean, I, when I got 180k, I was like, "Watch out, honey, I'm coming for you girl." So yeah, that's a lot. Especially, like all on your own, you know, I feel like that's kind of major. So what platforms are they generally using? Is it Instagram? Because I feel like every once in while I see some weird shit on Instagram.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah, I mean, it's mainly Instagram and YouTube. I mean, most started off being pretty active on YouTube around like 2016, like doing commentary about like the U.S. election. But then a lot of them shifted more towards Instagram to make majority of their content. But I do think what's really important with these influencers is the visual focus, in terms of like how reliant they are on such visual platforms like Instagram and YouTube, right. Because it's all about the self image that they're trying to project. But I mean, they use these platforms for different purposes, right. So like, yeah, they're going to use YouTube mostly for like political commentary, but like Instagram is where you capture like the everyday, banal snapshots. You know, like it's about like leveraging different audiences on these different platforms. And they're so adept at doing that.

**JVN:** Are they getting some good paid advertising stuff?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yes, they are. And I think we'll talk about that a bit later because there is so much to unpack in terms of their sponsors and advertising revenue and stuff.

**JVN:** Let's talk about it now, because I mean to me, it's always like follow the money, you know?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Okay, so I mean, some of these companies are like explicitly ideological and some are not. So like when we mentioned earlier in the intro about My Patriot Supply. So My Patriot Supply sells like emergency preparedness kits, you know, with like 25 years of freeze dried food and like, here's your water filtration kit. So, like, that's that was a supplier for these women. And I think they were linking a lot of their discount codes, I think around the height of like the BLM protests because they were saying, like, "You need to be prepared for like an upcoming racial civil war, so like My Patriot Supply will like, have your back if we go into an apocalypse." Some are like, are even like health and wellness brands that have like an ideological stint to them. It's things like raw beef liver supplements, for example, or it's like immunity tonics that you can put in your in your kids drink. So and it's sometimes it's skincare actually. So like, I think one of these women owns a skin care brand and so like, you know, these sponsors have like a pretty explicit political message, as well. So, I mean, those are the main sponsors. But then they also have more mainstream brands like Lilly Silk. Some sponsors, interestingly, I feel I don't really know the audience of these influencers. So for example, one of the influencers who has 85% of male followers on YouTube was like advertising this organic cotton tampon company, which is like, I'm sure that the brand, like, saw her thought, "Okay, this is like our presumed like demographic of her, of her viewers." And they were like, "Oh, actually like most of her viewers are not." Yeah, those are the different types of companies that that do sponsor these women. And I've noticed more and more how they're like linking discount codes in like their Instagram stories and stuff.

**JVN:** One of my fundamental questions for like right-wing influencers is, is like and I'm sure it's a spectrum because most everything is a spectrum, but it's like, is it that they know that they're peddling misinformation and disinformation but they're enriching themselves off of it? Or is it that they actually believe that the "Great Replacement" theory is happening? Like, you know what I'm saying, like, do they actually believe these conspiracy theories and threats? And like, do they really? It's like either they really see queer people as threats or they know that we're not and they're just getting rich off of it. And I think knowing that it's false, but trying to enrich yourself off it

is even scarier because it's... in my heart, I just want to think that they don't know any better, and so they just get scared. What do you think?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** I think it can be both, right, like, you can be like, a true believer in these conspiracy theories and far-right ideas. But by and large, I do think it's mostly them grifting and profiting off of the opportunity in order to sell that ideology and that messaging and be able to do so in ways that are like...you know, you have organic cookies on one hand. And then you have, like, you know, anti-trans rhetoric on on the other hand, right, like I think they know that you have to sort of mix both of those messages together in order to to generate that interest from their audiences. But yes, I am a skeptic. And I think like on the one hand, we might have a young, vulnerable woman who is sort of drawn to these ideas within the far right. But it's another to be an influencer and literally profiting off of that for your own brand.

**JVN:** Because it's like, that is so true that it's like it's really like it's so disarming when you're talking about, like, cookies or like gardening. Like, I want to see all that content, but then it's like you slip in or like a getting ready with me, but then you slip in these, like xenophobic or anti-immigration, anti-queer, anti, you know, whatever anti-feminist ideas. Is there other ways that they merge like influencer culture with far right ideas that we haven't spoken about?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** All the time. I mean, these women, they'll use influencer practices of of being relatable, of being accessible as seeming to be authentic to their audiences. And like that is actually like the crux of the story that I'm trying to tell here in the book. I mean, on the one hand, like if you look at Instagram influencer culture in a more traditional sense, it's a highly feminized space. I mean, in the traditional sense, with like marketing and corporate relations, right? And these far right women, they exploit that. They exploit that, so they use like the genres and formats, like selfies or food vlogging, and they'll use hashtags, you know, like outfit of the day or makeup of the day. And like, these are strategies that they use in order to seem relatable to their followers and build those personal brands. So maybe that is part of the like the influencer side, but on the other hand, they'll use coded language of far-right ideology to mask their content. So like just for an example, like when you mentioned earlier in the intro about glow up. I mean, they use glow up as a metaphor of being radicalized. And so they take this term, which is about finding self confidence and ones sort of natural, most authentic self over a period of years sometimes, right, and they take that glow up metaphor and then they say like, okay, but this is actually me being radicalized or like, this is me sort of deprogramming from from liberal indoctrination. And like that is so subtle and so insidious and it can be really harmful, right, for somebody who may not be aware of like what's going on, and it can be quite confusing. But this is where they merge like influencer culture with like far right ideas.

**JVN:** Fuck! Because I actually have...I have people in my life who I really love, who I fear have found this type of culture. Like young, little baby girls in my extended family who are like...obviously it depends on where you are. And I think that like we are pretty split down the middle. But like if you had a 12 year old boy and a 12 year old girl and like a 12 year old like gender queer kid (just because I don't want to leave us out) and then the you lined up like all like, you know, 100 groups of parents and then you showed those three kids like, obviously there'll be a really long conversation around like the gender queer kid before you even got to show anybody any videos. But if you showed them like a video of like, one of these far right influencers versus like a video of me... like a video of me maybe gardening versus like—where I'm not cussing or saying anything like, you know, super, you know, like I say things sometimes—but then like a video of like a girl making cookies but then like lacing some xenophobic or, you know, some anti-trans talk in there: I think and again, maybe it would be more down the middle, but I feel like a lot more people see the queer person's video as more indoctrinating than the like far right ladies video and more parents wouldn't have a problem with what the far right lady would be saying. Or maybe it'd be split down the middle, I'm not really sure, but I just...I just think there's something really interesting there where like, there is a way that it, like disarms or seems not as much of a threat, when like, you know, this woman is talking about like, you know, hammering like those like, you know, flower petals on to like the white sheets she didn't like to turn it into a tablecloth, which I love that craft. But then she's like, you know, starts talking about all this other shit. You're like, “Oh, my God!”

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** I mean, the reason why they're so successful is because they're just amplifying mainstream gender norms, right, and taking it to the extreme sometimes. Right, but like, that's part of their relatability tactics, you know. And and I absolutely agree, like they're saying, they're not seen to be a threat or they're not seen to be, quote, grooming young people when they really are. Throughout the book, I use this concept called networked intimacy, which is this idea that, like you seem to be so intimate and accessible to your audiences. And that's something that is so prevalent online with influencers as well. So like, audiences feel like they intimately know and that they feel, like, personable with, with these women.

**JVN:** Mm hmm. Mm hmm. So who is their intended audience? And then, like, their actual audience, I mean, it seems like a lot of young people, no?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** I think other millennials is the most common demographic. But here's the thing: so when I was doing my research, I assumed that these women would be mostly recruiting other women into the far right. But I actually found that at least on YouTube, not Instagram, but on YouTube, they were recruiting more men into the far right. They had a lot more male viewers. So the thing is, these far right women influencers are recruiting both men and women. Now, on YouTube, you could say like, okay, maybe they're just acting as like honey traps for the far right. I did interview one young man who had been radicalized on YouTube. He was de-radicalizing and he basically said like, "Oh, I found these women so attractive and I just wanted to be with them and the life that they would show." And so that sort of like clicked with me, like, okay, maybe these women are just acting as honey traps and like, what they say draws viewers in.

**JVN:** Yes.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** But I think on Instagram they tend to have a lot more women followers, and I think that has to do primarily with the type of content that they're posting, right. Like, this is just like a cookie recipe that I'm making for my family. These are my kids just playing in the garden. And these women have, themselves, said that they are recruiting both "TradCaths", a traditional Catholics like woman who have like let's say, already a religious traditionalist upbringing. But they're also saying that they're recruiting women in their thirties who are, quote, "recovering feminists," is how they like to phrase it. So like some of these woman, like they did grow up in religious families, but some of them, like grew up in really like secular progressive families. And they say, like, "I'm a recovering feminist now. Like, this is the true message."

**JVN:** And there's a lot of that?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** There is. There is a lot of that, which kind of, to me, shows that like maybe they used to have these more like liberal progressive backgrounds. And that might also attribute like the certain like tastes or aesthetics that they have, but like and they carry that over with them with even though they've been like radicalized into the far right. I think that's one thing people don't get, is like people bring their past with them into the present, right. And so like, yeah, like, you know, maybe you're really into like organic cooking or like plant-based cooking, but that's probably because like, that was a lifestyle choice that you had before and like you just now, have far right views and then now you've just attributed that to like a conspiracy theory, right so...

**JVN:** And also it finds probably like if you're feeling like alienated or left out and then you think that there's like this big group that like if you just espouse these views, then you're going to be like, accepted and lifted up and like, just find your community. Then like, I think it adds another layer of like desirability to adopting those views because like, everyone wants to feel like loved and accepted, or most people do.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah, that's right. And like the message they'll tell young woman is: join us and you'll find the sisterhood in the far right. Like they tend to reach out to to women who feel like they're isolated, like they're lonely or might be really unhappy with, like, their life situation and they



say, like, just join us and like, you'll have this sisterhood and maybe you might find a man in this movement, as well. So that is the messaging that they are trying to sell.

**JVN:** What vision of motherhood and womanhood do these influencers promote? Or what do they think you should aspire to be as a young, right, like conservative family values lady?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** I mean, like, okay, so as expected, they have like a very traditionalist interpretation of gender norms, right. So women should be homemakers and in charge of like the domestic realm: like cooking, cleaning, child rearing. And and you know, fathers should be outside working and be the primary breadwinners. So it's a very like specific nuclear family unit vision. And of course, they see it as their duty to the white race. And so I want to give a great example here. So there's a YouTube channel that was created by two of the influencers that I studied for my book called Motherland, and they created this YouTube channel when they found out that they were both pregnant. And so they discuss on livestreams things, just like prenatal nutrition or like how to breastfeed or how to cloth diaper; they'll invite guests onto their show as well. And like, these are really long livestreams. They're like 2 hours, by the way. And sometimes they'll like, stop and like get their kid, and like start breastfeeding. And the thing is, like while they're breastfeeding on their livestream, they'll all of a sudden start talking about how they have to save the white race by reproducing babies, right. So it's like it's it can sometimes just be so explicit. Right, but unless you're like been following this livestream for like an hour in, you're not going to hear that. You're just going to be like, "Oh, this is just a channel about like parenting and motherhood." And so this is the really insidious way that they, that they insert their message onto us.

**JVN:** So how do...how do minorities—because there are like obviously like far right minority members and like there's even like queer far right people who, like, seem like—how do those type of influencers... think of like a black conservative or a queer conservative or a Latino conservative when it comes to like, the connection between, like white nationalist, you know, far right people and then just like other far right people.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** It's a great question. I mean, like they all like Candace Owens, for example. So I think as long as they can see individuals on their side and as long as those other individuals, if, even if they're not white, still support white supremacy and the structures and institutions of white supremacy, like that's what matters ultimately for creating their utopia, the society. All the women I did study are whites, except one is mixed, she is half white, half East Asian. And actually I'm also half white, half East Asian, so like that was a bit strange for me to like be reading about like her background story and be like, "Okay, I could have grown up with this person." Or like, it was it was so bizarre. Of course, like some are, I think, a much more extreme politically, right. So some are like, like they don't see any minorities sort of as being like a permitted in society. Others, I think, perhaps more strategically are like, well, as long as they're anti-feminist, as long as they're traditional family, that's all that matters for our movement. So I think it can also kind of depend on the influencer that you're looking at. But yeah, I mean, at the end of the day, like as long as like, even if you are a minority, and you still support, like their vision for what, like a white nationalist utopia should be like, that's all that matters to them.

**JVN:** How do they draw on the popularity of other groups? And just like other trends, like, do they just kind of like stay like current so that they can like monopolize off of like the person of the moment or like trends of the moment to stay current?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** So what was interesting was like over the years that I was doing the research for this book and following these women, is that like they would find ways to try to stay relevant. So like sometimes it was like reacting to like election disinformation, right. But like other times, like Robyn, who we talked about earlier, like I noticed her kind of like experimenting with different topics in order to stay relevant. So like, on the one hand, she was trying to push a lot of like QAnon conspiracy stuff. Then she started to get a lot more into like showcasing the health and wellness and like the anti-covid vax stuff. And now she's really into like midwifery and home birthing. So I think like just like any other influencers, these women are also trying to stay relevant for their audiences. And so I can see that over the course of time, like they're trying to experiment

with with different topics to see like, okay, what catches my audience's attention? Because I mean, the truth is like sometimes audiences get bored, right. They want to move on to like the next celeb. And so these women know that, so they're trying to find ways to continue to stay relevant for their fans.

**JVN:** What's that like, trad wives? What's that thing?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Trad wives are... um, so it stands for traditional wife, and it's this movement that's been booming, particularly among like Gen Z women, unfortunately, which is this like they're basically trying to LARP this like 1950s housewife fantasy self, right. So it's this idea of like the wife being a homemaker, husband goes outside to work, they live in like this suburban white picket fence house. And trad culture has become really popular, especially on TikTok, particularly these young women who like try to show like, this is my life as a homemaker and like it's like them in an apron-clad kitchen making cookies or whatever. Now trad culture kind of developed adjacent to the far right, like it has its own like online aesthetic and community. But what's happened is like some trad wives have crossed over into the far right and so there is some overlap there, sometimes. Like I would say, all far right women are trad, but not all trad wives are far right, if that makes sense.

**JVN:** Because I bet there's some nice trad wives who are like, "You could be queer and like I love immigrants and stuff I just like really want to be my little, like, progressive Betty Boop from 1950 or something." Or no?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** No.

**JVN:** Dammit.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Sorry.

**JVN:** We need some progressive ladies to play like a really progressive um like Florence Pugh, who is like, really progressive in that one movie with Harry Styles. Like, Don't Worry Darling, and like not a dystopia. That wasn't really it.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** I mean, this is such like a nostalgic myth that these trad wives believe in. And the thing is, like, this was not the reality in the 1950s and the 1960s, right? Like it was a privilege, like the reality was that like there was really limited choices for women in employments and like, there was like high rates of boredom, of depression. There was a lot of repressed sexuality and domestic abuse that was rampant, right. So like, but they really loved to LARP like this sort of nostalgia of like what the 1950s was like. And they argue that, like if, if we have these traditional gender norms with women at home and men in the workplace, like we will be happier and we will function as a society, but then it's a complete myth.

**JVN:** Yeah, because I mean, it was fucked up as hell back then and there was all sorts of stuff going on then.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah, what the far right does is it exploits this fantasy self of trad wives and they take it even further with their political messaging towards like this idea of like a white utopia. And and a lot of trad and far right influencers, they'll follow each other and like each other's content. But I think one of the most interesting things, that trad wives will say is like they'll say it's my individual choice to want to like, stay at home. And what that does is like, it completely neglects the fact that this is actually a movement and it's a community. And like if it's really a choice, like why are you propagandizing your life to like millions of viewers, right. And so... but they love to use that sort of feminist argument, like it's my choice.

**JVN:** But, and it is their choice. I mean, but they're also doing it for like, validation, community and like finding, like a purpose.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah, exactly. Exactly, no, that's it. And it's like if it was really just about choice, like, why are you feel so inclined to to sort of make this into like a community, into into a movement.

**JVN:** And there does certainly seem to be like...this is something I think about a lot just coming from a very like not only conservative but also like very religious upbringing. And I remember like being very young and it just being so normal and like a thing, it's like, you know, they say like, don't talk about like—I don't know if they say this where you're from—but like, it's like don't talk about, like politics or religion at the dinner table. But like any other time, like we were trained to talk about religion, like we were trained to talk about Jesus, like, “Have you like, did you ask Jesus into your heart?” Like we were meant to like, cause it's like if you don't convert people, like they're going to burn in the fiery pits of hell. And you talk about that when you're like a little kid. So, like, that was I mean, for me, like, I remember being like, you know, nine, ten, eleven meeting like some lady at the pool and being like, have you like, what's we were talking about, Miss Universe? I'd be like, “Have you accepted Jesus into your heart?” Like, and that came from like, I didn't want this nice lady to burn in the pits of hell because I thought that's what happened, you know? Like, is there a desire for these influencers to, like, they want other people to get into it too? Like they're trying to get other people into the fold. Like if you live how I live, you're going to be happier and you're going to be more into it. Like when we talk about like a recovering feminist or whatever, it seems like there is a part of that community that's like, be how we're trying to be. Which is interesting because I feel like as a queer person so often that's what the fear is like, you're trying to turn people queer when in reality I think we're more just saying like, if you are queer, like, we think that's fun and we think that's cool, but like, we're not trying to make you queer. Whereas I feel like there is more of a bend and right wing influencers is like, you should live how we're living because this is the right way.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah, that's definitely a superiority complex. And also, don't forget, it's a supremacist movement, right. They they inherently believe that they are at the top of the social ladder. So it's, you know, it's it's definitely they see it as a moral good and they see it as a righteousness that that everyone has to adhere to. But it's like an extremely exclusionary movement. Right, like I mentioned earlier, about like minorities, it's at the end of the day, they're fine with minorities who support their cause in the short term, but like when they get their utopia, like those minorities are not sticking around, right, so...

**JVN:** So what's this utopia you keep talking about? Is that something that they talk about in their content?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Oh, no that was just just me sort of saying like, this is their end goal for society, like, just as like this is sort of what I imagine their dream for society.

**JVN:** Mmm, scare!

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah. I also, because you asked about trad wives, I just wanted to show you one really popular trad wife account, just so you get a sense of like who trad wives are and what they like to post. I mean, so she is like one of the most prominent trad wives: Mrs. Midwest. And so you can see she is sort of LARPing this like suburban life with her kids and she loves to be like ultra-feminine and talk about like how wearing a dress a day keeps the blues away. And she's a really interesting figure because like, on the face of it, she doesn't seem really political. But then she talks about things like submitting to her husband, and she used to write in these forums about like how you need to be a good wife. She actually had one really interesting story when she was in high school, I think, where she went to like this summer camp. She said that she felt attracted to like another girl at the summer camp, but that she just repressed that because it was like, quote, unnatural, which I found to be like, okay, like, who is this, who is this person? But like, as you can see from her Instagram page, it's about like her with her husband and kids. But she's an extremely popular trad wife influencer.

**JVN:** Ah, so pretty.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** It is it is really pretty content, right? And then you're like, ooo, actually, this is masking a lot of hate.

**JVN:** Yeah, I hate it! It's so easy to... Oh, my God. Okay, but wait, so you talk about in the book, ah, you wrote about the ethical conundrum with this project because on the one hand, you're exposing these women, but then on the other hand, you're like, publicizing them. Can you break down what that was like for us?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah I mean, when I was writing this book, I was always asking myself: am I platforming these women for more mainstream audiences? And one could argue perhaps that's true, although I have a lot of doubt that if somebody just reads my book, they're going to go and like get radicalized by these women because like these women already have audiences, as I as I showed on their socials, they already have like hundreds of thousands of followers. So, like, they're already well known. So if you already follow these women, like, or if you already know these women, you know, you're already following them. But when I was also working through this to try to see like, okay, like, am I publicizing them? What I'm trying to do is expose what these women are doing to legitimize and normalize the far right. So I think at the end of the day, it's so important for people to spot the harms and to see like these are the strategies that these women are doing to make far-right ideology seem appealing or to seem normal. And I think at the end of the day, that was much more important than, you know, people continuing to think that the far right are these like, you know, young, skinhead guys, right, like it's more than that.

**JVN:** And actually it's like they're really, the women, are so important because they're the ones that do make it so much more palatable and feel less like of a direct threat. It's like, that's your friend, that's your sister. "I'm your friend, like, you don't gotta be scared of me. I'm like helping you with cookies and like how you're going to stay healthy and stuff."

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah. It's, it's so subtle and it's so insidious and dangerous, right?

**JVN:** Yeah, I mean... Yes! Okay, So what was that like, immersing yourself in that world so much? Did you just feel like your soul needed to take a shower? Were you... did you get any sympathy for them? Did you ever find yourself being like, "Yeah!," like, cause sometimes, like when I listen to Trump for too long, sometimes I'll be like, I'll be like, "Yeah!" And then I'm like, "Wait, no", like, but so they are so convincing when you listen. Like, you really it is like it's confusing, or it can be.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** It can be, it can be. I mean, so I, I wrote this book over three years. I was following these women for three years, and it was totally consuming to follow them. Right, like, I was always getting notifications on my phone and like, tracking content at all hours, right because Instagram stories disappears after 24 hours. So I was just like always on top of it, like at nights and weekends, on all my holidays. Like I was just constantly like monitoring their activity. I created a fake profile to follow their accounts. Of course, I didn't want to use my own profile, but like, so I needed to create a fake profile. But I was also taking photos that, from my personal life, my real life, and using them on my fake profile, right. So like, I was kind of like blurring the boundary there between like my fake and my authentic profile. And at some times, you know, I did find myself relating to these little women in like the most unexpected ways. And I think part of it is because like, as I mentioned, like they could have been like my classmates growing up or even maybe my friends growing up, in terms of like their backgrounds. We had really a similar life trajectories; like I follow them from when they were like single to like when they got married and they had like their first kid, right. Like, I can understand those sort of life events and how like, relatable that could be. So sometimes I did have to stop myself and be like, "Okay, at the end of the day, though, these women are still propagandists. Like, they're still opportunists that are spewing Far-Right ideology." Like you need to take a step back and have some distance sometimes. But again, like I think the ways that they were presenting themselves online to be so relatable also got to me sometimes and I'm like, I'm someone who's been studying the far right for several years now and I can spot the signs of radicalization. But like when you're using terms like glow up, it kind of catches you off guard.

**JVN:** Mm hmm. Mm. Okay. What about, like, is anyone ever trying to, like, limit or report or, like, suspend these, like, women's accounts?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Not really. No. On the one hand, like we have to ask, like, are are these women actually evading, like being banned or are the platforms just not taking action? I think the one exception was around COVID is like when these women started posting a lot of disinformation about the vaccine. That's when I actually started to see their content getting flagged. And like, we like individual pieces of content were getting banned, but that was only with disinformation, right. And I think, like they had been spewing hate on these platforms for so long before then. It was just interesting to see, like from the platforms perspective, like you're only targeting these women once they actually are spreading disinformation about the vaccine specifically. But I mean, these influencers are so good at like using coded language or like manipulation techniques of like text or emojis. So like instead of like vax, they'll use like the letter V and then the axe emoji. Or they'll like, use like deliberate misspellings of text. Now, just like, just bear in mind, this isn't necessarily new, right. Like people in like the pro-ana community or like the eating disorder community, they've already use these types of techniques as ways to, like, circumvent the flagging of their content. So it's like this isn't necessarily a new practice, but it's like the way that these women do so, so consistently and they're still able to spread a lot of like hate speech despite that. Right?

**JVN:** Right. I mean, is there any tactics that you think could actually, like, curb their hate speech? I mean, it seems like there's a market for it.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** I mean, so here's the thing: we have the technical tools to do it on platforms. We just don't use them on these women. For example, like one of the influencers I study, her husband has been banned from like every platform off the face of the earth. Like he's been prosecuted in court. I mean, like he was not allowed to enter like countries. And she has like not faced a slap on the wrist at all. She has the same, like views and she still like part of the same organization as he is, but like the way that she frames her content is it's so soft, it's so like gentle in it's framing that like she just knows how to sort of cross that border of like what's violating on the platform. And this is a major blindspot when it comes to like regulating these women and their activity. So we have the tools. We just decide, like platforms decide like, that they don't use them because it just may not be like a strict like violation. I think that there's also a space in terms of using like counter-influencers, like there's a lot of great accounts on TikTok, for example, that like debunk a lot of like far-right myths or like debunk a lot of like disinformation terms and conspiracy theories. And there is a space for them, I think, because like they understand how that influencer culture works, they understand like how important it is to engage with audiences. So I think there's a space for that. I just don't think I just don't think we can make it cringe. I mean, I think like sometimes it becomes to be too to cringe if like, if like, you know, governments get involved or something like, I think we have to like, allow them to be independent and like, have creative control over the content that they produce.

**JVN:** So is a way that we can stay ahead of them, like reporting hate speech?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yes, users can report hate speech. We could also, again, have these like counter-influencers who like are debunking a lot of those conspiracy theories and like far-right propaganda. And also like people, academics, like myself... I advise and consult tech companies and I tell them, like, this is what you need to be looking out for like, this is how you need to enforce your policies.

**JVN:** Because that is against community guidelines, to spread like racist or xenophobic or whatever or anti-trans on your...

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah, there's usually community guidelines against hate speech which are protected characteristics. And so that's things like nationality, sex, gender, religion, age, ability, like there's a lot of coded international law characteristics. And so people do violate those hate speech guidelines all the time, right. It's just about like enforcing them. And like, these women are known,

they're not just like some anonymous account, you know, that's just like posting this stuff. Like they are well known public figures with like so many followers. And so, like, there's a there's a good case to be made that they have audiences and networks that like once they say something, it can spread like, like wildfire.

**JVN:** Right. And I also think that, like, I have definitely seen queer creators, like when they start talking about things that are just very political, like all the time, they get really shadow banned. Like their content just goes less far. They get less engagement. And I don't necessarily see that on the right, like they seem to be getting, like bigger and bigger.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Oh, but they think they're being canceled and censored. That's that's the thing, right? It's about, part of it is like, we just don't really know and platforms don't release that information in terms of like who actually gets censored. It's all about like perception, and if platforms did release that information, I think people would be actually like quite shocked in terms of who is actually getting censored. But I mean, yeah the far right loves to cry victim, right? Like and even if it's anecdotal, even if it's like one time that they got like shadow banned, I mean, they'll just cry wolf and say like, "Our freedom of speech is being infringed upon."

**JVN:** So any tips for speaking with family, friends or like a loved one who follows this type of influencer?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Well, I think one really important place to start is about critical thinking, to spot the far right's manipulation techniques. So like what I mentioned earlier with the glow up post being used as a way to sort of weaponize their radicalization beliefs. And what I've also noticed is that how important it is to recognize personal grievances. You know, if maybe someone's feeling like lonely or isolated... but trying to encourage them to understand that finding your authentic self doesn't justify believing in hateful ideology, right. Like there's plenty of people who have grievances who don't turn to the far right and there's a reason for that is about support. And so when I was listening to some of the radicalization stories of these women on their socials, they all talked about at one point, after having been radicalized or being radicalized, they were crying in front of the webcam saying, like, "I lost my family, I lost my friends, like no one, like, supports me or believes in me." And they were using this idea about like finding self-confidence and about finding their authentic self as like a justification for them believing in these far-right ideas or believing in this hate. And so if you have like a family or friend who is susceptible to the messaging of these influencers, I think it's so important to teach them to think critically and to sort of spot, like where they're being manipulated with their grievance.

**JVN:** So.... Ooo, that's hard, though. How do they do that? Like, for her...so if your friend, you know. God, I see them, like, liking some weird shit. They're like. Like, ah, like, you know...Or they just say something to you that's, like, super right wing, or you see them in their in their Trump hat, and they've never really done that before. Like, how do you like, are you like, "Are you feeling lonely, queen? Are you feeling left out?"

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** I mean, definitely ask why because, I mean, if they're wearing like a Trump hat for the first time, it's obviously a signal that they're like inviting some attention. But it's about sort of like not accusing them, but just trying to get a better sense of like, "But why are you wearing that?" Or like, you know, it's really just asking questions and maybe you won't get so far, at least in that first conversation. But I think that intervention step early on is so important before they start getting deeper into the rabbit hole.

**JVN:** Yes. Okay, so now what do you think is next for these women of the far right, online and beyond? Like, yeah, I mean, they're all the women who you profiled are still active online, right?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Most of them are... like a couple have like, quote, "retired." Some some actually, like left and came back into their activism. And I think it's just so interesting because they really love the attention that they get as being like these celebrities in this online space. Some are a bit less active than they were before, but then others are like rising as stars, like I've seen some

of them become like the new faces and get get new audiences. So, yeah, I think most of them are still active. And again, like I said before, like they're not suffering the repercussions of the content that they post online. So, like, why would they leave?

**JVN:** Do you see it moving further to the right? Do you see these people as becoming more mainstream? Do you think more people are going to be coming? Like, who is the next generation of these influencers? Or do you think it just widens from who's already within this generation?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** So I think a lot of the ideas that these women first promoted back in like 2017 when they were part of the alt-right, I think a lot of those ideas, those fringe ideas, have become quite mainstream. I mean, just look at like the Republican Party today and like the discourse about like being anti-woke and like being transphobic. And so what I do see next, at least for like influencers within the far right, is I'm seeing a lot of younger women trad wives on Tik Tok. So like again, these are the Gen Z women, these are like 18,19 year olds who are like LARPing this trad wife lifestyle. And I'm I'm yeah, I think that's sort of like what's next when it comes to what's new and interesting for the far right.

**JVN:** What are you most concerned about from your research?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** It's hard to pick one!

**JVN:** Top three or in like a mission statement or like an impact statement: like, what do you think we need to do?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** So I think one thing is: we as a society need to not have this generational amnesia. So by that I mean, this is a term that, like climate change scientists used to describe like changes over generations, in terms of like wildlife. And so I think the same thing needs to apply to understanding the the gains of women's rights, feminist rights and LGBTQ rights, and not take those for granted and be educated and aware of those histories and those legacies. Right, because the women I write about, they write books, they went to university, they own bank accounts where they get, you know, their their monetized contents sent through. I mean, these are women who have profited from the gains of the women's rights movements. And yet, ironically, they want to go back to the 1950s, right. So, like, it's so important to not take for granted. And so I think we as a society need to just be constantly vigilant about protecting and safeguarding those rights and improving them for the future.

**JVN:** Mmm. So, Eviane, what's next for you in your research? What are you like, just excited to get into next?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah, so while I was doing the research for this book, I was finding ways that these women were circumventing the flagging of their content. So like I mentioned earlier, with, like, manipulating text or images. So that inspired me to do the work that I'm currently doing now, which is I'm looking at platforms' content moderation policies of far right content. So at the moment I'm interviewing tech company employees and experts they consult on designing and enforcing the policies, and then like how those policies get adapted over time.

**JVN:** Are you ever scared that these like, alt-right, people are going to like, come for you?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** I have been trying to find ways to protect my, my, my safety and also my mental health in this phase, right. So the first thing I do is I just drink a lot of wine because that obviously helps.

**JVN:** Yes!!

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG** Like, honestly, never underestimate that, you know! No, but also like, you know, having a really good social support networks like my family and friends, my colleagues who just, like, check in to make sure like how I'm doing; like I'm part of a network of other researchers

who study the far right, and like, we we obviously have chats and we just make sure, like if someone's facing harassment, that we check in with them because that is so important when you're doing work like this. I also try to create boundaries between like work and personal life, you know? And I think at the end of the day, also just being really open about like challenges to your mental health or even like security issues like just being open about that is so important.

**JVN:** Not to give you unsolicited advice that maybe that one account that you started to research those other girls, like, let's delete that shit and let's get you a wig or two. Let's get you like a little red wig, a little blond wig you can do like a little like fucking like maybe her name is like Priscilla or something. Like your new alt-right, yeah, like for your new research. You know what I'm saying? Yeah, it's giving wig vibes. You just gotta learn how to, like, braid your hair so that you can just, like, make it really flat to your heads so it's not like a lumpy wig. It's like got, like a really good transition so no one clocks it, you know?

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Yeah, I think you and I, we can set up a whole scheme here if you want it.

**JVN:** We got to do a wig consult, yeah, on *Pretty Curious*. You're so right. We got to do it. Yeah, because, like, I'm just really ready for your, like, spy diva era.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** That's the next book, right? Going undercover.

**JVN:** Yes, Yes, Eviane's spy diva era is upon us. We're so excited for it. I can't wait. Thank you so much for your time. Dr. Eviane Leidig, thank you so much for coming on the show and for teaching us all of your research. You've just been incredible... Thank you so much for coming on *Getting Curious*.

**DR. EVIANE LEIDIG:** Thank you so much for having me. I had such a great time.

**JVN :** Did we learn the things? Uh well, we definitely learned that tradwife culture is on the rise and one thing that I just really am taking away from this, it reminds me a lot, wait for it, Adrienne Maree Brown and how she was talking about loving corrections or like on the internet or one of the last places that it's going to happen. So as we interact or when we see this type of content, I'm not going to waste my time like being in their comments or being scared about it or sharing it. I'm just, I'm not going to give, I'm not going to engage with that type of content because that when you engage with it, it makes it go further and we don't even know like if a lot of these people are bot accounts and like bot commenters, like on these sorts of places. So there's just so much that we don't know and I know that if we don't engage with it, that is helpful and not to glamorize it. Um and I just think it's like really if we want to build a more loving future, we need to just be like as aware and not judgmental at the same time. And you know, we get to set our loving boundaries too. So I think we can love people from afar and like the boundary is like from the place with which you can love someone so we can accept people's boundaries. But also we can give our own boundaries too. Um when I think about our past episode about um episodes about intimate partner violence with Sonya, um Passi, we really need to name a lot of these situations, not all but a lot of these sort of like really aggressive men that are so glamorized in the tradwife movement in the fifties and sixties like to like intimate partner violence was so much bigger. I mean, women couldn't even get paychecks without their husband's permission. So we just need to be really a lot of this isn't a joke. And I do notice that a lot of young women who advocate for this tradwife culture aren't aware of the history from with which we came, and so understanding our history is also incredibly important when we're talking about trad wives. So thanks for listening to this re-release. You guys. I hope you got something out of it. Maybe you missed it last year. Um but I love you all and we'll see you next week for a fresh new episode of *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 in the episode description and follow us on Instagram at @CuriouswithJVN. You can catch us here every Wednesday and make sure to tune in every Monday for episodes of Pretty Curious which we love. It's our podcast on all things, beauty, get into it! Still can't get enough and you want to get a little spicy with us? You can subscribe to Extra Curious on Apple Podcasts for commercial free listening and our subscription only show Ask JVN where we're talking sex, relationships, or really just whatever is on my mind that week. Our theme music is Freak by Quinn. Thank you so much to her for letting us use it. Our editor and engineer is Nathanael McClure. Getting Curious is produced by me, Chris McClure and Julia Melfi with production support from Julie Carrillo, Anne Currie and Chad Hall.