

Demetri Kofinas: 00:00:00 Today's episode of Hidden Forces is made possible by listeners like you. For more information about this week's episode or for easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io and subscribe to our free email list. If you want access to overtime segments, episode transcripts, and show rundowns full of links and detailed information related to each and every episode, check out our premium subscription available through the Hidden Forces website or through our Patreon page. And remember, if you listen to the show on your Apple podcast app, you can give us a review. Each review helps more people find the show and join our amazing community. And with that, please enjoy this week's episode.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:01:06 What's up, everybody? This is an unusual format for my intro to this week's episode, and it's because this conversation came together last minute as a result of my becoming obsessed with this particular story about ... a story about what exactly, I'm not sure ... story of these Catholic school students from Kentucky who ended up making front page news across the country over the weekend and into the week for seeming to denigrate the dignity of a Native American man who was solemnly beating his drum at the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during MLK weekend and on the day of an Indigenous Peoples March in the nation's capital.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:01:51 This story hit all the trigger buttons. A group of adolescent, white, privileged Catholic school boys from Kentucky wearing MAGA hats, smirking, and mocking an individual from what is perhaps the most marginalized group in American society. The oppressor taunting the oppressed. Here it was in all its despicable glory. And the media and millions of people across social media ate it up. They took the bait, hook, line, and sinker and ran with it. And before all the facts had been laid bare, these kids had been all but crucified by both sides of the political spectrum.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:02:32 I wasn't even supposed to do an episode on this today. I was supposed to have the head of Harvard's astronomy department on the show for a completely different discussion about Oumuamua, the interstellar object that entered our solar system six months ago. But I just got sucked into this story. And I found myself getting angry and upset and worked up and totally unable to focus on preparing for that conversation, and I was wondering why. What was it about this story that upset me so much? And I was worried could I actually cover it? Could I do an episode on it without allowing my emotions to impact that?

Demetri Kofinas: 00:03:10 And the only way that I knew how to do that was to try and understand what it was and be as honest as possible and also not angry. And I think we accomplished that. I mean, I certainly accomplished that. Robby, of course, is a professional. And Robby, of course, is Robby Soave, associate editor at Reason, and he's also a columnist for the Daily Beast and has penned articles for the New York Times, New York Post, CNN. He's best known, I think, for his early skepticism of the Rolling Stone investigation reporting on sexual assault at the University of Virginia.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:03:43 But his relevancy here is that he was the first journalist to actually do the minimal amount of fact-checking in order to get a more complete perspective on what actually transpired at the Lincoln Memorial this past Friday the 18th of January. And if it were not for him, this news cycle may have ended before a more complete picture of what actually happened emerged, and these kids could have ended up expelled, their applications to college denied, their families attacked. God knows what else.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:04:11 So I don't want to keep rambling because I think it was actually a great conversation, and I want you all to hear it. Robby was fantastic. I really appreciate him making himself available last minute for this conversation. We brought up a lot of things, some things that we've spoken about on the show before with Jonathan Haidt. I was lucky to have had Jonathan on the show. That helped me a lot in terms of having the foundation to talk about some of these ideas because it wasn't ... a small part of this was the actual story, but we talk about a lot of these larger themes in society. So without further ado, here's my conversation with Robby Soave.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:04:47 So Robby, I was telling you before we started recording that I had an episode to record today on Oumuamua with the head of Harvard's astronomy department, and I got sucked into this story that you have been covering over the weekend and into this week now. And I basically wasn't able to focus on the other episode, and I had to cancel Avi Loeb, and fortunately, you were able to make this happen on short notice, and I really appreciate you doing this. Why don't you kind of lay the table for us? What happened this Friday and through the weekend and into this week, and what is your role in this whole story?

Robby Soave: 00:05:26 Sure. Well, so I was at a conference this weekend, so I didn't really notice until maybe late on Saturday that everyone on social media was talking about this very short video clip that purported to show these teenagers who were there for the march for the Pro-life Rally confronting and staring down and

being hostile and racist toward this Native American man, Nathan Phillips, who was playing the drums and was singing. There was strident moral condemnation. Everyone on the right kind of rushed to disassociate themselves from these students who were wearing Make America Great Again hats from ... these students were from a high school in Kentucky, a Catholic high school.

- Robby Soave:** 00:06:06 So widespread condemnation. I'm thinking, "Okay, I'm going to write something about how we need to, I don't know, teach our ... the role of authority figures is to teach better behavior in children and hopefully can be non-punitive, but this seems bad," something like that. So anyway, I sit down, I think Sunday morning, to write about this, and I'm seeing, well, there are longer videos available now, and I watched them. There's actually two hours of footage, a lot of it taking place between this supposed confrontation.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:06:36 Where did those videos come from? I don't think I've read the source of those videos.
- Robby Soave:** 00:06:40 So there are videos from a number of sources because the entourage of the Native American were recording. There were random people who were recording. And then there's this group called the Black Hebrew Israelites who were there, and they recorded two hours of footage from their perspectives. This is a very bizarre, kind of fringe, quasi-religious, or I guess fully religious sect that are very bizarre and indeed hateful. I've encountered them on the streets of DC before. They're in lots of major cities.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:07:14 They're here in Times Square also.
- Robby Soave:** 00:07:15 Right. And they yell profanity and obscenity at people they hate. They hate white people. They hate gay people. They hate Asian people. They hate Jewish people. They have kind of kooky beliefs. I mean, the Southern Poverty Law Center has written about them, and this is the group that watches hate groups. They are nasty, nasty people.
- Robby Soave:** 00:07:38 And indeed, if you watch the footage, they spend about an hour berating everyone in that near the Lincoln Memorial, including these Covington Catholic students. They yell things I can't ... well, I don't know if I can say them on this podcast or not.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:07:53 No. Well, you could say them, but they're horrible things.

Robby Soave: 00:07:55 Right. I prefer not to. But yeah, they say the most horrible things you could imagine. Slurs for black people. Slurs for gay people. They call the kids crackers. They call them pedophiles. And in response, the kids don't really do anything objectionable. They laugh at them. They boo them when they make cruel remarks. And then they eventually start to do kind of a pep rally sports kind of cheer thing that they said they were trying to drown out these people. They didn't get in their face. There was no physical confrontation. The Black Hebrew Israelites wanted a physical confrontation. They dared and challenged these kids to attack them, and the kids did not.

Robby Soave: 00:08:34 So there's nothing really bad that has happened from the standpoint of the kids. The kids haven't done anything. This is a minute and 12 into the footage. This is when Nathan Phillips enters the scene. And he goes to sort of disrupt or interrupt the high school kids. And later, he misrepresented this to the media. He described them as the beasts, and the Black Hebrew Israelites as the prey. And he made it sound like these African Americans were vulnerable and in danger and these poor innocent guys, and they were going to be attacked by these white teenagers, which is totally 100% wrong. It's exactly backward.

Robby Soave: 00:09:15 So he approaches the kids and is playing the drums and singing, and it's very clear that they're confused, but they think he's on their side. And then they're kind of joining in with what he's doing, and they're jumping up and down. Remember, they were already cheering, so they're already doing kind of like a physical, musical cheer thing that they think he wants to be a part of. And then some of them sort of go, "Wait. Is he not with us?" And he's really not with them. He's sort of challenging them. So this is a lot more context. The original charge that they went up and proactively decided to racially harass him, completely backwards. Just totally, flat out wrong.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:09:55 Can I ask you something? When Nathan Phillips, who was described in two ways by the media: a Native American elder and also a Native American Vietnam veteran. The latter part, as I understand it, was initially reported by this Washington Post, and then they have withdrawn that. Apparently he is not a Vietnam veteran. I want to ask you about that. But did he ever speak to the students, or was he simply singing, chanting, and beating the drum the entire time? Was there ever a verbal exchange, at least before the altercation or this situation ended?

Robby Soave: 00:10:25 He did not speak with the students, but he was not alone. There were a couple other Native American people with him, and they did speak to the students as this was happening, as this epic stare-down between Nick Sandmann, the teenager who got the most kind of hate online, and Nathan Phillips was taking place.

Robby Soave: 00:10:42 While that was happening, one of the other Native Americans in Phillips' entourage was provoking an argument with one of the other teenagers. He says something like, "You should all go back to Europe." And then the teenager says, "Well, we should all go back to Africa because we call from Africa," which is true. Again, these are the kids who are supposed to be the racists. And the Native American man says, "That's a made up theory." He uses more colorful language than that. So they're starting to have some kind of argument.

Robby Soave: 00:11:08 And actually, Sandmann signals, he makes like a cut-it-out gesture to the teen, to presumably his classmate saying like, "Just don't engage this," is how I interpreted it, which again, totally contradicts the notion that he is there to intimidate or be aggressive or something like that.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:11:26 Well, one could view this ... I mean, the way that I viewed it ... it's interesting how perspective plays a role here too by the way. That's one of the things that I've been thinking a lot about as I've sort of tried to process why this story interests me, why it upset me so much, why it also angered me, why it created all these feelings in me. And one of them has to do with the variety of perspectives that we all have based on how we come to this story. And I think my personal anger and where I direct most of my anger on this story ... and I don't want to get deflected here ... but is in the people with platforms in the media, in social media, who took their perspective, which wasn't based on any facts, it was based on their subjective experience, of whatever sort of fraction of this story they were able to see, and they projected a narrative on top of that.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:12:15 But it seemed to me from my perspective that he looked a little anxious, a little unnerved. He had a drum that was being beaten ... in some places, it looked like inches from his face, the stick of this drum ... and he had cameras all around him. And as you said in that one clip, he sort of was telling his friend to kind of cut it out. And he looked like he was in a bad place. He didn't look like he was in a place where you'd feel in control and comfortable.

Robby Soave: 00:12:43 That's right. And you can hear someone else in the background say ... after this has gone on for a little while, for maybe a couple minutes, you hear one of the other kids say, "I don't

know what's going on," in a very honest and very telling way I think. There are different people doing different things. Some are doing the cheer.

- Robby Soave:** 00:13:02 There are, to be fair, I can count ... having watched this a million times from 18 different angles ... I can count two or maybe three people who maybe do a tomahawk gesture with their arms that I see why that is racially insensitive, and you could have a conversation with those kids that they really shouldn't do that. But I have been on ... I have done sort of debates with other people in the media who were like, "Well, all these kids are jumping up and down and making tomahawk gestures." No, no, no, no, no. I've watched it very carefully. There are two or three who do that that I can see. Most of the kids are jumping up. They're just waving their arms, and they're doing this before Phillips is even there.
- Robby Soave:** 00:13:40 So he joined in in their thing, but there's just this totally misguided notion that it was the other way around. I don't what they should do, just fallen silent and solemnly stood there when he approached them. Maybe that's what they should've done, but that's just a radically different-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:13:56 Turn of the story. That's a different-
- Robby Soave:** 00:13:58 ... expectation. Yeah, we're shifting the goalposts dramatically if that's where like, "Well, they should have just done some things maybe differently." I mean, and the media ... not everyone, but so many are now trying to find evidence that these kids, "Well, they must be bad. They're bad, right? We know they're bad. So let's find some evidence of them being bad in some other context," as if, A, this would change, that this matters at all. Finding out that they did something insensitive or wrong days or even years ago does not changed what happened in the video. But also, it's certainly going to succeed because all teenagers have done something wrong at some time in their lives. If you had a camera on me or you or anyone else, our entire lives, there will be things that embarrass us that we now regret, and that's normal.
- Robby Soave:** 00:14:43 But so many people are looking for some things that are false and misleading. I've seen a claim now repeated time after time that this school must have a problem the way it treats its gay students because its previous valedictorian was gay, and they didn't let him speak at graduation. Guess what? Wasn't even the same high school.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:15:01 Right. I saw that.

Robby Soave: 00:15:01 This was reported. It's not even the same high school. There's another seven second video from earlier in the day where some kids maybe say something unkind to a young woman, but it's seven seconds, and we have no idea if it's even the same kids. Again, if it was, it wouldn't change the video, so it doesn't matter.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:15:20 Robby, I saw that. So a few things. There are so many areas we can go here. One ... and I don't necessarily know that it's worth asking this or trying to answer this question, but I do wonder where the chaperones were and why they let this get out of control. But that also raises another point, which is that why on earth are we sitting here trying to figure out why this random group of teenagers didn't have the chaperone when they needed to have the chaperone et cetera. There's almost kind of like is this really a national conversation?

Demetri Kofinas: 00:15:48 And it's kind of really ... that brings us back to the question of what are we talking about here? And you mentioned this other video with this girl. I've seen that seven second video. I don't think you're even exaggerating. I think it was seven seconds. And it was a girl passing by what I thought looked like those kids, and it sounded like they said, "MAGA." And they were sort of screaming at her, but they weren't screaming belligerently. They were screaming in the way that you would expect a gaggle of 16-year-old boys to scream like when they're on a road trip halfway across the country from their rural home in Kentucky to DC.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:16:19 I mean, I remember what it was like for me going on field trips as a 16-year-old. I just couldn't wait to get out of the school. And these are 16-year-old boys. They're hormonally active. I think that there's a total lack of context about the fact that we're talking about kids here. Do you have any thoughts about that point, about just the lack of that context that these are kids and that we're sort of treating them like they were rioting adults coming to DC wearing MAGA hats?

Robby Soave: 00:16:44 Absolutely. And I'm not one to say we just let kids do whatever. I mean, we can certainly educate kids to be better behaved. They should've gone back to the gym when they got back to school and where they should've sat down with the principal or the chaperones or the teachers, and they could've just had a conversation about what happened and what we would do differently next time. And I think that would be not a punitive conversation, just a conversation, and I think that would've been perfectly appropriate.

Robby Soave: 00:17:12 But there was no need for the major media to involve itself and to label these kids ... I mean, this poor kid, Nick Sandmann, the guy who didn't yell or do anything except smile wrongly I guess, he's been dragged. He's been doxed. He's been threatened. His face is all over the Internet. This was not news. What happened was not newsworthy. I mean, we're talking about it because in some sense news is just what-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:17:36 Why are we talking about it?

Robby Soave: 00:17:38 News is in some sense just what people are interested in. And people are interested in this story because they were outraged because they got themselves all worked up, and social media perhaps does that to us. I'm always hesitant to just blame new technology for things because technology has a lot of benefits. The fault is us generally more than the technology, but maybe it facilitates us doing things we shouldn't and wouldn't otherwise do.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:18:05 Why do you think it created so much outrage? And what do you think the outrage was on the left and on the right, and is it even fair to break the outrage, to divide it along political lines?

Robby Soave: 00:18:17 Well, the outrage is divided along political lines, and that is actually exactly the problem. In the age of Trump, there's just two sides. It's Trump side or the anti-Trump side with very little room in between. And the media has this problem. There's the explicit conservative media that is defending Trump no matter what, and there's the anti-Trump media that wants to attack Trump no matter what. So these kids were in the red hats, so they are ... because you can only be one or the other, and there's no room for nuance or in between, they must be the Trump side. So everyone who's not on the Trump side has to attack and find fault with them even if it happens to be undeserved.

Robby Soave: 00:19:00 And now you see them, and now they're more ... they're going to keep probably associating themselves more with Trump. Trump has offered to meet with them and has weighed in on this, and they're going to be in conservative media, and that's going to ... for some, who are, again, the anti-Trump coalition, this is going to justify their hatred of these people.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:19:19 What's also interesting ... I mentioned to you that we had Johnathan Haidt on the program in September, and that was to talk about the coddling of the American mind, but I had actually reached out to Jonathan before that because I had read The Righteous Mind.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:19:31 And that was one of the most influential books for me after the 2016 election. It really helped me understand what was going on because I was really disoriented. I was really confused. I think that's actually a feeling that a lot of people are feeling about this story, confusion. There's a lot of confusion around this. What do you think the larger narrative in which this story fit so snugly into is? What is that narrative that makes this story make sense?

Robby Soave: 00:19:59 Well, for some people, the story is this is the iconic image of our times. This is representative of everything that is wrong with America. This is privileged, entitled, conservative, Trump-loving. This is white oppression of a marginalized community. That it's this poor Native American man who is weeping, who wants peace and equality and is being crushed under foot by the kind of white identity politics that Trump represents.

Robby Soave: 00:20:30 And then on the other side, you have this is everything ... the media is corrupt and duplicitous and despises people who disagree with it and will do anything and everything in its power to destroy and to deceive and to lie and to spread fake news to promote its agenda of undermining Trump and destroying everyone who aligns with him. Those are the stories. It's got to be one or the other.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:20:57 Well, it's interesting because you're right, and it sort of fits so perfectly. Here are these white, very white boys from a very white state, a very Republican state, Kentucky, wearing MAGA hats, Catholic school, all boys school, and they're on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial around Martin Luther King Day, not on Martin Luther King Day, but around that. On the day, as I understand it, that there was some sort of Native American-

Robby Soave: 00:21:22 Yeah, they were having a march. Yeah.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:21:24 A march.

Robby Soave: 00:21:25 It was the Indigenous Peoples March. Yeah.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:21:26 Right. So there was a celebration there for indigenous people. Here was this indigenous person who was peacefully beating his drum, and it fit so perfectly in this oppressor, white supremacy, male narrative and the repressed ... who is more ... I mean, it kind of reminded me of this Dave Chappelle skit where he talked about how the people who got it really bad are the Native Americans because no one hears about them anymore. And this was really the archetype of an oppressed people was

the Native American. It fit so perfectly in this narrative that we have, and this is something, it feels like it has been growing in these last few years.

Robby Soave: 00:22:02 Well, I write a lot ... separate from the story, I write a lot about the left and sort of some of the intellectual currents on the left and how the activist left in particular on college campuses struggles to sort of adjudicate conflicting claims of grievance and marginalization. So my book that's coming out in June ... it's available for preorder now on Amazon ... Panic Attack: Young Radicals in the Age of Trump, and I have interviews with a lot of young, leftist activists. And I talk about instances where intersectionality, this very influential concept on the left, provokes these battles between people who both claim some sort of marginalized status, but then, "You're more marginalized than I. Well, then who wins here?"

Robby Soave: 00:22:45 And I was thinking about that because the Black Hebrew Israelites were actually fighting with the Native Americans earlier in the day, but these are both marginalized groups from the standpoint of leftism. But then the Black Hebrew Israelites were anti-gay and were yelling anti-gay things at the kids, and the kids who were conservatives were actually booing the anti-gay remarks, so this is actually a sort of mismatched-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:23:08 A confusion of victimhood and hierarchy within the sort of victim hierarchy.

Robby Soave: 00:23:13 Right. And the left just often scrambles ... I mean, my book is full of, chock full of instances, "Well, who has more ..." Because it's always the person with the most stacking ... intersectionality holds that ... actually, it causes difficulties for single issue campaigns because the left doesn't want to work with people who disagree on anything that the left kind of holds dear. So you can't be just against Trump's sexism unless you're also with Black Lives Matter and for trans rights, and you hate Israel, and all sorts of other things. Unless you check all those boxes, which very few people do, they don't want to work with you.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:23:49 Well, if I understand correctly, I thought intersectionality was some sort of theory of emergent victimhood, in a sense, where if you're black, but if you're also a woman, it's not simply a matter of adding up the level of victimization that you undergo if you're a woman in society and adding that to the level of victimization that you experience if you're black in society, but you're actually multiplying those two together, that there's a sort of exponential function of victimization that occurs through the complex interaction of these different ... Look, I can't even

believe that I'm speaking about this, but I only know about this because I read Jonathan's book and I had prepared for this interview where we did ... and this was one of the concepts. But is that ... am I mistaken?

- Robby Soave:** 00:24:29 No, no. That's very right. And the work in my book tracks with some of the stuff that Haidt and Lukianoff did. So women are marginalized because of their sex, and people of color are marginalized because of their race, and so the concept was initially born to bring those causes together. It was by feminist sociologists who wanted people to fight for racial equality and women's equality. And they were saying you're not progressive unless you're for both of these causes, which makes some sense. I don't have any objection to that.
- Robby Soave:** 00:25:01 The problem is in recent years, the left, particularly on college campuses, has added so many other categories to this. You have to be for trans equality and then it gets more and more kind of into the weeds, like sizeism is an issue, mental health status. Many of these are causes ... I'm not a social conservative ... I'm perfectly on board with. But the issue is if we're only going to where intersectionality in practice means we want everyone to be progressive on all these issues, and if you're not progressive on one of them, you're not progressive on all of them. But there aren't enough people to agree on all of those things, and that's where the left starts to become self-defeating in my opinion. That's my thesis.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:25:43 Oh, so this is all fairly new for the public. A few things. One, these are highly intellectualized ideas from the academy, from academia, from gender studies, from African American studies, from what other, I don't know, what other fields generate this type of material. They're interesting constructs to think about. They're interesting frameworks to think about.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:26:02 But I feel like their application is to produce ideas that can somehow be applied in the real world. To take, let's say, white privilege, to take intersectionality, to take toxic masculinity and to apply these as frameworks for the public to sort of go around with doesn't seem to be working and there also doesn't seem to be a compassion or recognition around the level of confusion that people have for what they're supposed to say, what's okay, what's racist. It's confusing to know what's racist in a society where we're being told that anything you do or say as a white person is racist.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:26:35 And by that definition ... I'm willing to accept that definition in the sense that I do believe it's impossible not to exhibit levels of

racism or to exhibit feelings and thoughts and words and biases in America that aren't racist given how tribal we've become and how much identity politics have injected themselves into our conversation. And to further that point, I'm kind of jumping around here, but I thought about that when I was watching the interview on the Today Show ... I'm sure you saw it ... and one of the thoughts I had was the way that the interview was structured.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:27:05 Let's put aside the fact that they had this weird angled, over-the-shoulder shot that made this kid look like a little boy, and you had Samantha Guthrie, who is basically completely old enough to be this kid's mother, talking to him very much like a little child, asking him if he felt threatened, if other people felt threatened. It felt very emasculating, and he of course, was playing the role of the person who, "Yes, we felt threatened. We were just trying to just be okay. I spoke to the adults." I was reminded very much of Gregory Lukianoff's work Positive Psychology and Johnathan Haidt and how we baby these kids. When I was 16, I wanted people to think I was an adult. I didn't want people to think I was a kid. I was a kid, but I would never feel comfortable or want to be seen in that light.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:27:48 But he mentioned ... this is where I was going ... towards the end he said, "None of my friends said anything racist, and none of my classmates are racist." I find that incredibly hard to believe, but the conditions of the interview are such and the conditions of the social debate are such that we can't actually say anything racist, homophobic, gender-phobic or whatever the term is, we can't in other words say something that we then regret or feel bad about or hurt someone, learn from that, and grow as individuals and as a society. In other words, we can't have these collective, teachable moments because everyone's fighting for their lives in this moral combat situation. And so this kid answers, it's basically ... it was a throw-away interview. I feel like ... I'm kind of throwing that out there. I don't know what your thoughts on about that.

Robby Soave: 00:28:31 No, I mean, I largely agree with you. And obviously people at the school have said things that are racist, that are sexist, that are homophobic, that are trans exclusionary, that are whatever you want to say ... insensitive in any way because they're teenagers and of course they have. Teenagers ideas about things are still in flux.

Robby Soave: 00:28:48 I mean, I don't want to infantilize them either, but the purpose of school is to socialize you into adulthood. You say, you do something wrong, you're told why that's wrong, and you learn

that it's wrong. And I don't know if that makes you ... it's like you're a bad person and you're trying not to be a bad person ... there's a difference between doing something wrong and being a bad human being.

- Robby Soave:** 00:29:13 But anyway, these things are supposed to happen off camera, not subject to the scrutiny and the condemnation of everyone on planet Earth who is using social media, which is everyone, which is a phenomenon now that we have. I also cover a lot of stories of kids who get in trouble for sexting each other. Have you heard about this?
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:29:32 I have not. What is sexting? I'm just curious.
- Robby Soave:** 00:29:34 So you're texting inappropriate, like naked, nude pictures of yourself to other kids.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:29:39 Does it have to be sending naked, nude pictures, or can it just be using sexual language over text?
- Robby Soave:** 00:29:44 So no, not language. It's got to be pictures.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:29:47 It's got to be pictures.
- Robby Soave:** 00:29:48 Which this is something all kids do. This is something tons of adults do, by the way. I mean, it's been studied, actually.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:29:53 Anthony Weiner famously sent pictures of his penis.
- Robby Soave:** 00:29:57 Right. And this is bad because he's a married man, and I think it was made possibly with an underage or close to underage woman, something like that.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:30:04 Many women if I remember correctly.
- Robby Soave:** 00:30:05 Many women. Yeah. But even just in a consensual, married relationship, this is something people do. 70% of people have sent a sext by the time they're in their 20s. This is one statistic I've seen.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:30:16 I think it's a really stupid thing to do. People can do whatever they want, but I find it fascinating to just note that we are such apes. I forget what the percentage of our DNA we share with chimpanzees. I think it's 99.99. Something like that.
- Robby Soave:** 00:30:30 Right. We're just monkeys. Yeah.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:30:32 We're monkeys. And so-

Robby Soave: 00:30:33 We are.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:30:33 ... what do we do when you give us a phone? We take pictures of our penises. And I find that a fascinating thing to mention just because in the context of this conversation, we've got basically three groups of tribal male entities. Well, two groups, and not necessarily the Native American person with the drum. But what are they doing? They're doing chants. You could basically replace these people with chimpanzees.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:30:53 And when you're 16-years-old, you're particularly chimp-like, and you just started going through puberty. You're just starting to have feelings of sexual desire. And at the same time, all this is happening in terms of reorienting gender norms and what is appropriate, how do you approach a girl, how do you approach a boy, what are the roles. And all of that is so incredibly complicated and it seems that society just wants to punish any kind of deviancy from moral-

Robby Soave: 00:31:18 Exactly. Yes, yes, yes. And to return to my point, so the problem with it now is ... so child pornography is illegal, obviously. It should be. But the laws are often not written to give exemptions if you yourself are a child. I can't tell you how many cases I've covered of teens, the people under the age of 18, sometimes under the age of 16, being arrested, begin put on the sex offender registry. Can you imagine being on the sex offender registry as a 15-year-old?

Demetri Kofinas: 00:31:43 I've seen this. I've seen this. I've seen this.

Robby Soave: 00:31:44 For sending pictures, for exchanging pictures with their boyfriend or their girlfriend who is also the same age. It's not exploitation of a child in the same sense of a 40-year-old man sexually abusing a 15-year-old or something. It's totally insane. This is outrageous to me that you would put a child in jail for showing sexual interest in someone their same age. That is so offensive to me and so wrong.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:32:10 I'm curious about this. I didn't realize how rampant it was or I don't know if it's rampant. I don't know if that's what you're suggesting.

Robby Soave: 00:32:14 It is rampant.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:32:14 It is rampant.

Robby Soave: 00:32:14 It is absolutely rampant.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:32:16 So I'm a little curious about that because I wasn't aware of that. So what's the dynamic here? Is it the boys that are getting in trouble? I assume it's not the girls getting in trouble for sending nude pictures. Is it always the boys getting in trouble, and do they have to be older, and how much older do they have to be? How does that work?

Robby Soave: 00:32:29 The boys get in trouble more often than the girls, but the girls have gotten in trouble as well. See, the law is different in every state, and sometimes I think even in municipalities within the state, so this is totally different in every state. So in some states, the laws prohibiting child pornography exempt ... they say, "Well, if you're in a certain age range of the person, then it's okay." It's literally different in every state. There are some states where it's so bad.

Robby Soave: 00:32:53 I think North Carolina is one I wrote about. I had a case where a teenage boy, teenage girl, they were in a consensual relationship, so they sexted each other and they both got arrested. He was partly arrested just for having pictures of himself on his phone. So he is the aggressor and the victim. He is exploiting a child, the child being himself. But get this, he was charged as an adult because in North Carolina, you can charge people who are 16 as adults for committing crimes, but the state considers anyone under the age of 18 to be a child from the child pornography standpoint. So for having a picture of himself, a minor, he was charged as an adult for sexually exploiting a child. This was the backwardness of this law.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:33:41 What's happening? All of this, is this new, or has it been happening slowly, we're just catching wind of it because it reached critical mass? What's happening? This to me feels-

Robby Soave: 00:33:52 Well, the technology didn't allow this until recently. Phones were not ubiquitous.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:33:57 This specific story you're describing is new or this specific sort of phenomenon of sexting, but it just feels like there's a lot of this type of stuff happening, this sort of ... things that once seemed to be common sensical that now aren't. Things that we thought were made sense, the people we thought were good people now are bad people. There's something really confusing.

Robby Soave: 00:34:20 Well, we criminalize being a child. We've simply criminalized being a child. I mean, this is something Haidt and Lukianoff and

a colleague of mine, Lenore Skenazy, write about a lot. Lenore writes for Reason as well where I work about the absolute, the criminality of being a child. That playing in a park by yourself, walking home from school by yourself are all things that can get your parents arrested. We have sapped all agency from children. Schools have more police in them than ever.

- Robby Soave:** 00:34:48 Actually, if you went back to 1975, you would not find a single police officer in any school in America. Now, something like 40% of public schools have them, which is an issue because then when there's a disciplinary matter, the student who does something wrong, who gets into a fight or something, can end up in jail rather than just the principal's office. That's what happens if there's a police officer in the school. You drastically make it more likely that the students will get in legal trouble for doing something that was maybe bad but that I would say they should be clapping erasers or they should write a paper about why it was wrong, and then they can learn from their mistake. But instead, they're going to end up in jail or juvenile hall because there's a police officer there to take care of it.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:35:26 Well, it's interesting. Today, Jonathan Haidt, we're talking about Jonathan, he tweeted out, "Today, my nine-year-old daughter walked to school by herself for the first time, a half mile in New York City." And he offered some further advice. But this was something that we talked about also on the show that people and parents have gotten ... I believe there was a woman, I forget her name, in New York City that let her child ride the subway, and people had been calling for her to be arrested because her 10-year-old son rode the subway alone.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:35:53 You use the term criminalize being a child. I'm very fascinated to read your book. I look forward to reading it and to having you on the show to talk about it. And we're getting a little sidetracked, but I think ... I'm interested in exploring that. But there seems to be also in this story ... because the story isn't just about race. It's also about gender because that comes up as well. How did gender factor into this story in your view?
- Robby Soave:** 00:36:18 Well, there's masculinity maybe. What does it mean to be a good man? I mean, that was the theme of the Gillette ad, which actually made a lot of conservatives mad for some reason. So I was on the other side of the Gillette one because I thought the freak-out was totally disproportionate to what it was saying. I thought conservatives really overreacted to what was essentially a benign message.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:36:37 Can you tell us what the ad was, what you remember from it?

Robby Soave: 00:36:41 It was showing some examples of men and boys behaving badly and that they were being called out for it and that this was good, that men should aspire to be better, that we are becoming more aware of issues of sexual harassment and sexual assault and things like that that are disproportionately ... overwhelmingly perpetrated by men rather than women, and violence is disproportionately perpetrated by men rather than women, although men are actually more likely than women to be the victims from violence from men. But men can and should be better.

Robby Soave: 00:37:13 And there's no part of that that's wrong in my view. Now, the left certainly holds more extreme views about the subject of masculinity, the academic left, the campus left often makes much, much more wild claims, and I think that's what some people heard in this ad, and I think those claims are crazy, but-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:37:35 Well, the American Psychological Association has this officially now, I think for 10 years now, this category or this concept or term male toxicity or toxic masculinity.

Robby Soave: 00:37:45 Masculinity, yeah.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:37:46 Toxic masculinity. Yeah, I've read this as well. I didn't realize that this toxic masculinity was actually a real thing. I thought it was just a term that was being used. But again, it seems to be one of these concepts that comes out of academia and is being applied today.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:37:59 Do you feel like there is a crisis of masculine identity in America where particularly young men who are attracted to folks like Jordan Peterson or Joe Rogan or other strong male figures or male figures who are providing some sort of archetypical structure for thinking about manhood, that they're responding to a sort of a confusion around what it means to be a man, and that growing up without some sort of role model or archetype that you can look towards actually makes that process of maturation difficult.

Robby Soave: 00:38:32 Yes. I mean, I think the ... and I'm not an expert in this, but my impression is that the scientific-

Demetri Kofinas: 00:38:37 Well, as a man. You're a man. You're a man. I mean, you've-

Robby Soave: 00:38:39 Right. I was just going to say my impression is that the scientific literature confirms that it is better for boys. They're more likely to mature into good men if they have a positive male role

models in their lives, if they have fathers. I mean, that makes perfect sense, so I think that's right.

- Robby Soave:** 00:38:54 People like Jordan Peterson are obviously filling some sort of gap and providing some kind of meaning to their disproportionately male audience. It's undeniable because Jordan Peterson is doing so well. He's like a prophet of our times. I don't know that I ... it's interesting. I have very complicated feelings about him because I think a good amount of what he says is totally right, and then some of it is completely wrong, and then some of it is in the middle somewhere.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:39:22 I feel the exact same way, actually. It's interesting that you say that. I feel completely the same way, actually. I feel that he is sort of an imperfect messenger for this.
- Robby Soave:** 00:39:30 Very much.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:39:30 He sort of was thrust into it. I think sort of unprepared and perhaps unqualified for it, and maybe he's doing his best. I'm not doubting his sincerity. But I agree. I think this sort of keeps coming back up to me because like I said, I watched that video, and just watching that interview of the boy with Samantha. I just thought, here, this is crazy. You've got a woman sitting here, who could be his mother, who looks like his mother, who feels like his mother, and he feels like a very sort of helpless, sort of vulnerable boy with his hands between his legs answering questions about whether he felt threatened. I just thought this is the wrong message.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:40:05 Look, I mean, just speaking for myself, as a man who was a boy and had to grow up, having to deal with adversity and also physical threats, that made me stronger having to figure that out myself. And also having men to look at and look up to, not necessarily in my life. Certainly, I did. But just in general to look out and say, "This is what it means to be a man. This is the type of man I want to be. Let me aspire to that." I just think, I watched that interview and I say what are adolescent boys to take from that conversation?
- Robby Soave:** 00:40:40 And there are a lot of ways in which adolescent boys are struggling in a way that adolescent girls are not. The achievements ... and part of it is just catching up because women were denied opportunities historically and have more than caught up in a lot of cases. I mean, colleges graduate more women than men and that teenage boys have significantly higher suicide rates than teenage girls. So the problems that are sort of unique to men that are very complicated, and I have no

idea how to solve or why they've come about, but the Jordan Petersons of the world are speaking to some ... it's self-help.

- Robby Soave:** 00:41:16 There's been self-help forever. There's religious self-help. There's a kind of sort of Oprah or Dr. Phil kind of self-help that I think is for women. I think they're the primary audience of that kind of thing. And so now maybe this is just there's a version for a kind of young man, often on the right or distrustful of political correctness. Jordan Peterson also speaks to that audience. But these are complicated questions.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:41:42 But I'm also uncomfortable with ... again, I do on the one hand think that there is a need for young men to have role models and that they're not sort of getting some ... the attention they need in some ways. But at the same time, I'm uncomfortable with that framing. I suppose what I'm saying is there seems to be an oversensitivity in general in the way that we talk about things.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:42:06 I keep going back to the Today Show interview where Guthrie was talking to Sandmann, to the kid, Nick Sandmann, and she kept asking him, "Did you feel threatened? Were there moments where you felt threatened? Did you consider that maybe they felt threatened? And do you feel sorry?" And he was like, "Yes, we felt threatened, and maybe I should've walked away. Maybe I regret it." It just feels like we're kind of losing the thread, and we're turning feeling threatened into something really bad.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:42:32 And people feel threatened all the time. I've gone through my whole life feeling threatened at work, in my personal life, in relationships, both physically and emotionally, and part of growing up is learning to figure that out and talk to the people you love and to your parents, to your siblings, to your friends and try to work it out. It's just that that's a disturbing aspect of the story for me. It's something that isn't necessarily part of the mainstream narrative, but it is one of the most important ones that just keeps just kind of poking at me.
- Robby Soave:** 00:43:01 Well, he has handlers now. I mean, to be frank, I'm sure his public relations specialist, "Here's how to look and act so you seem-"
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:43:08 100%.
- Robby Soave:** 00:43:10 "... like the victim of situation." And it's totally rational that they hired ... some people are furious that they ... "Oh, this proves

that they're wrong because they hired a PR firm." That's nonsense. Of course they did. Get a lawyer, even if you're innocent. There's no reason not to do that. So I'm sure that he's playing the part that he was told to some degree.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:43:27 Well, you brought up this thing about playing the victim. 100%. And there's something that I was aware. I think Jordan Peterson was the first person to introduce me to the idea of the victim hierarchy, and I was able to kind of flesh that out further with reading more sort of substantial texts like Jonathan Haidt's. But there's this thing that I read about called a Karpman drama triangle or a victim, oppressor, rescuer drama triangle.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:43:53 As I have learned more about this, not necessarily this particular intellectual version of it, but this notion of a victim hierarchy, of virtue signaling, of tribalism around victim, oppressor, and this framing. I see this everywhere. And I saw it case in point on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial, this white kid in a MAGA hat and this Native American man beating his drum. I saw it right away, and everyone on social media, as you said at the beginning of this interview, flooded in with an opinion. Flooded it not only with an opinion, but with a stance, a very strong stance.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:44:31 And some of the stances were despicable. Some of the stances called directly to violence. Bakari Sellers who told people ... basically he said that he should be punched in the face. Reza Aslan similarly something about, I think he said, "Have you ever seen a more punchable face?" Kara Swisher made also very just awful, nasty comments. There was a Hollywood producer that suggested that the kids be put through a wood chipper and had this disgusting, disturbing picture of a wood chipper that looks like something out of the movie Fargo like with blood coming out of the other end. And you had people sharing this kid's address on the Internet and these things being retweeted everywhere. And I thought, "Where is the personal accountability? Where is the personal accountability? People should be held accountable."

Demetri Kofinas: 00:45:18 And to me it seems the real issue here is not about racial groups, the white oppressor or the Native American oppressed minority. It's really about who is in a position of power to dictate narrative and to put people in real danger. And it seems to me that there are people in the media that do this on the left and on the right for issues that are both pro-left or pro-right that exploit both sort of stereotypes, and they have destroyed people's lives. And so I'm expressing a level of emotional sort of resonance here that is unusual for this show for me to do, but the reality is this issue ... I can't deny that this is why we're

having this conversation because it has meant so much to me, and I feel like it's meant a lot to a lot of people and I really want to try to figure out why.

- Robby Soave:** 00:46:04 And the impulse, the desire to have violence committed against these kids is wrong even if the worst things that had been said about them were correct. I can't imagine wanting to punch a child unless it was to stop the child from killing somebody or something. But I mean, violence is weakness. And we're hearing this call to violence from the very same crowd who talk about toxic masculinity and all these problems, but this is toxic humanity. It is wrong to want to seek violence is the most sort of core belief that I have.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:46:41 Well, you and I think it's wrong. Other people think it's wrong, but maybe other people don't think it's wrong. There's also kind of interestingly ... and I wonder what you think about this, this is a very unstructured, unsubstantiated thought ... but I'm thinking about this meme of baby Hitler and would you go back in time and kill-
- Robby Soave:** 00:46:56 Oh, absolutely. Yeah.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:46:58 It's interesting. Tell me more.
- Robby Soave:** 00:46:58 I have thought about that ... exactly. Yeah, Ben Shapiro was sort of made fun of for saying this at the March for Life rally that he wouldn't go back and kill baby Hitler. I mean, actually, yeah, this kind of makes sense because-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:47:10 Why are we even ... it's just a ridiculous-
- Robby Soave:** 00:47:11 Well, if you have the ability-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:47:12 ... thought experiment.
- Robby Soave:** 00:47:13 It's a ridiculous thought experiment because if you have the ability to go back in time, of course you would not kill baby Hitler. You would reconfigure events. There would be numerous ways to prevent Hitler that would not result in you have to kill a baby. Just take baby Hitler out of his environment and transport him to the future or something and educate him in a more tolerant, progressive society. I don't know if this requires you to plop him back in a previous timeline or whatever, but it's ... I mean, violence is necessary to prevent aggression against yourself or to respond to aggression against yourself, but to initiate violence is wrong. That is my most fundamental belief.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:47:49 Robby, I want to say something here because I'm reminded now, you just said something that made me think about this. One of the things that I think is at play here is that people are looking for a moral excuse to conduct violent acts. I have seen this time and again. I find that people want to put themselves in the moral high ground so that they can either fantasize or say things that are very violent. They are looking for an excuse.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:48:16 There's a great scene. I'm a big movie buff, Robby. You don't know me. But there's a movie called The Thin Red Line. I don't know if you've seen it. It's one of my favorite movies, and Terrence Malick is one of my favorite directors. And there's this scene in the movie where one of the young men, the boys, and they're fighting at the Battle of Guadalcanal in the Pacific, and he shoots a man. And now you hear his internal monologue. He shoots a man. It's the first time he's killed anyone. He goes, "I just shot a man." He's getting this rush of adrenaline, "I shot a man, and no one can touch me for it."

Demetri Kofinas: 00:48:41 Now I think that human beings are aggressive animals, and we have not been civilized for very long, and I think that these new tools of society and all these sort of complex factors are bringing out some of the worst qualities in people. And one of those qualities I think is the propensity towards violence, and I think that we are seeing that growing in social media. And it concerns me, it upsets me, and it's the reason why I wanted to have you on the show today.

Robby Soave: 00:49:09 You're probably ... I'm guessing you're a fan of Steven Pinker.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:49:12 Sure.

Robby Soave: 00:49:12 He has been very, very influential to my thinking. But yeah, it's like we talked about earlier. We're monkeys. We're basically monkeys. And guess what? Monkeys are violent. Tribes of monkeys have wars against each other where they ritualistically sexually assault the losing monkey tribe. We've not been not monkeys for very long on an evolutionary time scale. We have committed horrible acts as a species of war and genocide and slavery and rape against thousands of years of history of brutal horror. It is only in the last very narrow time frame, maybe like the last 200 years, where we made significant strides, not perfect strides because there's still tons of violence, but where we have reduced it substantially.

Robby Soave: 00:49:55 And this is something Steven Pinker talks about in his influential book on this subject The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Declined, and he basically says, yes. Where we have

violence in our nature, but we also have the capacity to overcome this tendency and there are social phenomenon that can civilize us. There's participatory democracy. There's free trade. There's social custom. There's all sorts of things that make us more likely to treat our neighbors better and that we're getting better at it.

- Robby Soave:** 00:50:24 And we've actually seen a staggering decrease ... just one example. Gun violence in America since 1993 about has fallen in half. The rate has collapsed in half. There was twice as much gun crime in the '80s and early '90s as there is now, which is a remarkable human accomplishment. That's a very good thing that has taken place just recently.
- Robby Soave:** 00:50:46 So I think we're better on the whole than we were before, but things are not guaranteed to get better. Things can get worse. We're also not condemned to get worse. We're not doomed or cursed. Things can get worse or they can get better, and we're on a roll on some things, but we have to be mindful that this is by no means a guarantee nor a death sentence.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:51:08 I have some screenshots of some of the tweets, just some of the tweets that came out on social media in my rundown. And just reading them, it upsets me. It makes me feel like if I'm being yelled at or if I'm in a dangerous situation and I get that fight-or-flight mechanism. I'm looking at a Kara Swisher tweet. I'm looking at Bakari Sellers.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:51:26 I'm looking at Kathy Griffin, who had her career turned upside down for having a fake decapitation of the President of the United States, and she is telling people to dox them, to get their addresses, to give the names of these kids. To see this stuff in a timeline, to see these are real human beings with platforms and power and education and privilege saying these sorts of things, it makes me angry and it makes me want to defend the people that they're attacking.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:51:52 And I just wanted to sort of put that out there because that's been my emotional place where I've come to, and I've tried to do my best to make this a constructive conversation, not to have that impact that. Let me ask you, Robby, in closing, I've really tried not to give into the narrative that we're in a new civil war and that there's this identity war between tribes and people are just going to duke it out and Trump is just a symbol of this new white supremacy and all this stuff's going to come together and we're all going to clash.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:52:24 This is the first time that I actually feel ... and maybe it's because some of the other crazy stuff that's happening in the world in Venezuela or in other countries, where I'm thinking maybe it's not beyond us to just disintegrate into violence. We've seen something like that before in the late '60s, and there was a lot more violence and assassinations in the '70s too. I mean, do you think that we might be headed in that direction?

Robby Soave: 00:52:52 It's possible. I don't think it's by any means definite. I think the issue is that the worst sort of aspect of our culture is our political structure, is our politics. And our politics consume more of our social space I think than ever before, in part because the government, we expect the government to do a lot more. I mean, even in the executive branch in particular relative to other branches of government has more power and more ... the government impacts your life or is at least being talked about way more than before.

Robby Soave: 00:53:26 And it's very divisive and very partisan and very tribal, and it's very weird right now. I mean, this is a very odd political moment in truth. And it's driving us insane, I think. It's unhealthy, and it's not good, and I worry that it could have the consequence you describe. I don't think that's likely. We can course-correct. We could put some constraints on what the government does, or we could decide to tune out and not talk about it all the time. We have the power, but it is bringing out the worst in everyone, and the Covington story is maybe the best example there has been so far of everyone seeing what they want to see because politics has brought out the absolute worst in them.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:54:13 I just feel like it is ... I think you kind of alluded to this in our conversation ... it's almost a sideshow because what's really mattering here is that this is ... we're now in what day of the government shutdown? We're past 30 days, right? I mean-

Robby Soave: 00:54:25 Yeah. Well past.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:54:26 So this is a huge problem. We don't have a functioning government. We don't have a functioning government neither ... literally we don't have a functioning government right now, but increasingly because of this political disjointedness, the government doesn't function properly. And I think that that's a huge other issue. That's not even something where I was going with this conversation.

Demetri Kofinas: 00:54:46 In closing, Robby, the last question I want to ask you is what do you think the proper response by society should be? This is not, obviously, a top-down question. There's no one you can go to. I

think this is kind of part of the problem right now, platforms like Patreon and Facebook and Twitter, they have taken sort of a step to try and censor people and to try to decide who gets banned from the platform, who gets the platform, all this stuff. What I'm asking I suppose is more broadly conceptually. What do you think would help us to walk off the ledge because it feels like we're really on the ledge here?

- Robby Soave:** 00:55:21 Everyone should get a hobby. That's my answer. No, seriously. I mean-
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:55:26 Well, you're in DC, Robby. You live in this stuff. You're in the Beltway echo chamber.
- Robby Soave:** 00:55:29 I do, but I think I'm a responsible consumer of ... I don't get that angry or fired up, and I do my best to turn off my biases and evaluate both sides. But if you can't do that, if you are prone to joining pile-on's that have been poorly researched or conceived and to punish and to get furious and to want to wish death threats on people, you should deplug a little bit. You should back off from social media.
- Robby Soave:** 00:55:55 And you know what? That is on you. I don't have a top-down solution for it. I balk at people being ... that platforms trying to drive off people for speech, and I certainly don't want the government to police it. But you know what? There are people, and I've interacted with them on social media and some of them are friends of mine who need to limit their activity and to just try to do something that's not the politics side of all this. Reality entertainment has captured our politics and reality entertainment is fun and perfectly fine when it doesn't have consequences that affect who gets to do what in our society.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:56:30 I agree with you that people need to get a life. I think also, unfortunately, the people that cannot get a life or get a hobby are making it difficult for those of us to actually have a life to engage constructively in a domain where we need to participate in order to have an effective democratic republic. And I think that's part of the problem. And for those of us who are adults and who aren't interested in attacking children and who are interested in having constructive conversations, situations like this can become a major source of conflict.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:56:56 And I should also say I'd like to do a show ... this is sort of coming in my mind now, Robby ... but I think at least one episode of this program is warranted to discuss the absence of the elderly in our society. Because we seem to have a place for all sorts of other groups. We seem to be missing one of the

most important groups of any functioning society, which is the elders, the people that don't hold power because they're too old to hold it. They're not vital enough, but they hold the wisdom, and they hold the temperament, and they are the peace makers.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:57:25 And it seems that we have taken those people, we've put them in homes and we've put them in hospitals, and we've pushed them as far away from society as possible. And I think this is the time, more than any other, that we would benefit from having respect for people who have come before us across political lines, across racial lines, and listen to them because some of the greatest wisdom I've ever found has been in people that have seen a great deal.
- Robby Soave:** 00:57:47 That's interesting. And I'm actually not sure I agree with it, but we probably need to do another episode to have a conversation about that.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:57:53 That's interesting. What do you mean?
- Robby Soave:** 00:57:55 I think the elderly often have political opinions that are probably worse on average or less likely to be accurate. For instance, I saw a recent study that apparently older people are wildly more likely to share articles that are simply fake on social media than young people are. They're astronomically more likely. It's not even close.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:58:16 That is an interesting point. For sure, the classic older person, like grandfather, is the one who has crazy racist views or crazy views around gender because they lived in a different time. But there are elements of wisdom that they hold separate from those political views that are timeless that I think are relevant.
- Robby Soave:** 00:58:33 There's always values from the ... autonomy and individuality, and when they were kids, they got to play freely, and it was better. And in some sense, I agree with you. I think there are ... because I'm not doctriated either way. There are some traditions that are good that we should keep doing, and there are some that are bad that we should not keep doing, and it's an individual call for me.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:58:55 Maybe the point is that we're all too political and maybe that's part of the problem. But in any case, I think my personal experience with older people is some of the greatest wisdom I've ever found has been in people that have seen things first-hand. When I was younger, people that fought in World War II,

my grandfather. He was a veteran. I'm Greek, but he fought in World War II on the continent for Greece and then in the civil war later. And there were important sort of deeper lessons about that.

- Demetri Kofinas:** 00:59:20 And I think also, another thing that I've gained tremendously from certain people that I've had on the show who really lived in the '60s and '70s, were adults in that period. And we had Bob Kerrey on recently for example, and his point was it's been worse. It's been worse. Let's all relax. We went through Watergate. We went through Vietnam. We went through the assassination of JFK. We went through the assassination of Bobby Kennedy, of MLK. We went through the attempted assassination of Gerald Ford, the attempted assassination of Ronald Reagan, the stagflation of the '70s. There is stuff that's come before, and I just think having those people helps us walk ... it's helped me at least walk back from the ledge, which I think we all need to do.
- Robby Soave:** 00:59:59 I absolutely agree with that. We need perspectives. I mean, there were bombings of public buildings constantly in the late '60s and '70s that you just don't have happening now, and so some perspective definitely, definitely helps. I agree with that.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:00:12 And the busing and everything else.
- Robby Soave:** 01:00:12 Yeah. Right. Well, segregation. Yeah.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:00:14 Robby, I appreciate you indulging me and our listeners for more than an hour and making yourself available on such short notice. I really appreciate it.
- Robby Soave:** 01:00:22 My pleasure. It was great talking with you. This was a great conversation.
- Demetri Kofinas:** 01:00:26 And that was my episode with Robby Soave. I want to thank Robby for being on my program. Today's episode of Hidden Forces was recorded at Edge Studio in New York City. For more information about this week's episode or if you want easy access to related programming, visit our website at hiddenforces.io and subscribe to our free email list. If you want access to overtime segments, episode transcripts, and show rundowns full of links and detailed information related to each and every episode, check out our premium subscription available through the Hidden Forces website or through our Patreon page.

Demetri Kofinas:

01:01:05

Today's episode was produced by me and edited by Stylianos Nicolaou. For more episodes, you can check out our website at hiddenforces.io. Join the conversation at Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram @hiddenforcespod or send me an email. As always, thanks for listening. We'll see you next week.