

Scott Levin: I have the privilege of introducing my friend Representative Leslie Herod.

I'm sure you agree like I do that there really is no American history without black history. And this month February is when we shine a light on those leaders and everyday people who have paved the way with their words their actions their willingness to fight and break barriers.

With that said, I'd like to introduce you to a true leader, a fighter, and somebody who breaks a lot of barriers, Representative Leslie Herod. I've been privileged to call Leslie a friend since she worked in Governor Ritter's administration and then at the Guild Foundation. Representative Herod was first elected in 2016. She was the first out LGBTQ African American in the Colorado General Assembly. Since then, she's passed over one hundred bills. She's addressed criminal justice reform, mental health, addiction youth homelessness and civil rights protections. Some of the signature work that stands out to me includes restoring voting rights to over eleven thousand Coloradans on parole D felony drug possession,

giving every Colorado newborn a one-hundred-dollar College Kickstarter account, providing free menstrual hygiene products for inmates in Colorado's prisons and jails, passing a comprehensive police accountability bill and passing the crown act banning race based discrimination on the basis of hairstyle and hair texture. On top of all of that, in 2018, She champion the ballot initiative in Denver, "Caring For Denver", it was called, that raises thirty-five million dollars annually for mental health and substance abuse treatment and services for children and adults.

Representative Herod is chair of the House Appropriations Committee and serves on the very powerful Joint Budget Committee. So please welcome my friend and a true leader in Colorado and the state Representative, Leslie Herod.

Rep. Leslie Herod: Oh, thank you so much for that introduction. It is good to be here with you all. It is good to be your friend and good to me all my new future friends as well here, Scott we have been fighting together for so long, on the issues of just fairness for everyone. And for people to not be just tolerated in society, but for our culture's to be fully embraced. So thank you for the work that you're doing.

I will always remember learning about No Place For Hate and just being so excited that it was in our communities that the teaching and learnings that you all do. And now as we enter into I think a much turbulent more turbulent time, especially when it comes down to hate speech to have you all step in and say it's not it's not okay for anyone to be treated disrespectfully. I really appreciate your partnership and leadership, so thank you.

So, I'd have to also thank Lotus Network for having me. And for engaging in these really interesting and empowering conversations, I got to tell you, I did not know about the Lotus Network before you all reached out for me, it's me to be a part of this program and since I have learned more about you all the work you're doing and how you're just sharing stories that matter. I am excited to become a part of the network myself and hope to join you on future calls especially the next one, it just sounds so empowering so thank you all for that.

So, I'm State Representative Leslie Herod, I do represent House District Eight in Denver, I did not always start that way. And today I want to talk to you about the fact of truth that it's never too late to be an agent of change and to really dig in and help out your community in ways that you feel like you need to and should be done. So, I'll start by talking about my journey and how I got here, and I'll start back at the beginning, not when I was born, but a few leaders later when I was in

I went to CU Boulder. And as I went to CU Boulder, I got to be honest with you, I did not know that CU Boulder was not a diverse campus. I didn't know there were campuses that were not diverse I thought everyone went to college. It was a requirement in my household, of course, and so when I went to see you. I was shocked to see that I was one of the only African American female students in my class, you know auditori style classrooms huge beautiful amazing campus.

But yet, there weren't people who looked like me there. And coming from and growing up, though in Colorado Springs but around military bases. I was not used to seeing so little diversity so going there was pretty shocking to me.

And I was a cheerleader I was like you know I joined every single club and that's what I thought I went to college to do you know I was going to be a cheerleader and major and maybe becomes but cheer for the rest of my life and probably wasn't the best decision for me and as I got on the campus I realized that maybe I did have a different purpose and that my, my purpose really was to unite and to break down some of the barriers and the divisions that have divided us in society for so long.

So, I, when I got on campus I decided to run for student government, I saw a flyer that said that there were positions open, and I said, wouldn't it be great if not only I ran for student government, but if we had representation from all the student groups Lumosity matches the Jewish Student Association, the first-generation students the biros. What if we all ran for office together and took seats at those tables and made decisions that really mattered for the student community. All of the student community. So, I did I ran for office I decided to quit cheerleading.

I'm 5'8", it was never really going to work out for me, but I decided to quit and to instead lead a coalition we call ourselves the progressive coalition and run for office, and I want, and in fact we all want, and that year we took over every single seat in student government and made sure that the student government was Representative of the students there.

And one thing I didn't know was that we had the largest student government in the nation. And that by the time I was president of campus I would run a thirty-six-million-dollar budget and have the ability to write policies that could really help people's lives.

So, one of the first films I did was passing domestic partner benefits for LGBTQ couples, because back then and it is back then. Now, that was like the sky will fall like we will wake up and there will no longer be a fun if we allow people to have benefits for the person that they love.

And of course we were the state, first public institution to do so in the state, and I got to tell you, the sky didn't fall. The university did not go bankrupt and, and we were able to show the state that this could be done, and then a few years later, you saw we have domestic partner benefits, and how we have full, full marriage equality for same sex couples.

So, that kind of got me going and realizing that quite frankly, there's not an issue that cannot be tackled addressed and fixed. If we don't all put our heads together to do it.

Another issue I worked on this I still get jokes about this today was I decided to... I wasn't actually in a viral video, but the viral students had so many good ideas about what we needed to do to ensure that our planet was one that would be that would stay live right and that we have clean air and clean water. So, learning about what they were talking about I decided, you know what, we can easily help here, you know yes we can't change these big industries, but we can help right here in our own communities.

So I lead a campaign to ban Styrofoam no Styrofoam first in my meetings and then no Styrofoam on campus. And that was the one difference that I could make, and it passed, and so you became a really sustainable campus after that it wasn't just the Styrofoam it became then we went into composting we did all these other things that we had not been doing before. And again, we realized we could do it by just putting one foot in front of the other and getting it done together.

So I take those lessons to where I am now today in the state capitol.

After I left college I went on to start an organization called New Era Colorado. I also worked for Governor Ritter and President Obama, and in founding New Era I founded it with some of those same friends that helped us to pass policies, and were student leaders on the campus. You might know them some of them, Congressman Jonah goose now, that President Steve member, and the Chief of Staff for governor polis Lisa Kaufman, we all came together very different backgrounds, very different people, to make policy changes and then took the lessons we learned at CU into the world now and are now working on making those same changes at the state level.

So, I started kind of getting my hands into politics and policy making because I realized that for me. That's what I was good at I knew how to translate the needs of the community of my communities into policy change, and I knew how to work in the building of the Capitol building to make that change a reality. That was kind of part of my skill set will say, and so I had not initially thought though that I was going to run for office.

I thought maybe I would be a chief of staff, or in a different policy position but there was no one who looked like me in the positions that I could run for right there were no African American LGBTQ people, and there was only one African American female serving at the time Representative Rosemary Marshall, out of one hundred legislators.

But one day, after many people asked me to run I decided that it was time for me to run. So I decided to run for office, and obviously I want and here I am, but it wasn't without hardships and I know that this is a group that's really focused on women's empowerment. I got to tell you, women have to be asked eight or nine or times to run before they do that is not the same with

men, they decide that they want to run so someone has to ask us, and it's really interesting as I think about this and how that translates to other career opportunities, a lot of times women feel like we have to be overqualified in order to assume the position where as men, maybe feel like they need seventy percent of the qualification and they can learn the rest, which is not unfair to them, they're accurate, but it is unfair to us because we actually should step into those positions as well.

So as someone who knows that deeply cares about my community, our communities. I knew it was time for me to run, so I did.

And I brought along all of those folks in those different Coalition's with me and ran with other women started working with emerge to run with other women to make changes in our communities to, and I learned from people who have quite different backgrounds than me. And that's how we produced the best policies. So, as I stepped into office. As you heard, I work a lot on criminal justice reform. And I think it's really fascinating because a lot of people don't talk about their own experience within the criminal justice system. My sister was incarcerated for several years off and on. It started from trauma, where then she didn't get help for that trauma so she turned to drugs and substances, and that substance misuse led to the criminality and incarceration, that really like shaped her life for years, every time she would get out of prison she would have all of these barriers in order to access a job or take care of her kids or take care of her family that it just led her back into that. Into substance use and despair.

So, we try to break down that. So now I take that experience into the capital I say what are the bricks of the barriers, what are the bricks that built up this wall that is so insurmountable for so many people to thrive in society, and how can we pull those bricks out brick by brick. In order to honestly thrive, right, and have that generational access a generational empowerment I will say, and so, so that's what I do with the capital that's why I passed so many criminal justice reform bills. But as I started to really dig into what does the community really need, what do we really need to be working on right now and how I in my position as an elected official can make a real difference right make an impact.

And I got to tell you, I decided, Wow, the issues are so localized yes there are big scale issues you know yes we need protections and insurance is that people can vote yes we need nondiscrimination.

Yes, we must all fight against hate, but so much of that so much of what we need to do is actually so local it's right in our community, in our schools. It's in our workplaces it's in our neighborhoods, right.

Scott knows this really well. And that's kind of where we can make the hugest impact. So, I really started to work on. You know what is it that the Denver community needs to like what do we need to do right here to change people's lives.

And I realized and this is an issue that I don't care if you're from Denver or not Denver, you'll agree, I bet mental health care, right, we all need access to mental health care and substance misuse care, and we're not getting it you know it's not there's not enough treatment and support in our schools, there's not enough support as we go through our lives and deal with some of our

toughest challenges. And that's why I created caring for Denver and caring for Denver I decided to take off my legislative hat because all of you know all of the action or change that I create it's not just because I have a title to write. It's because I have the will to do the work.

So, I took off my legislative hat and ran a ballot measure that just basically said we want to create an infrastructure of support for everyone in Denver, to have mental health care and access to treatment, and if they need it, when they need it, regardless of if they're in crisis or in prevention, or if they need it for their family members like just make sure that we have that network of wellness and what I created was something really unique no one had seen it before.

And there was a lot of opposition, but I again went back to that coalition of people who didn't look like me, who didn't think like me and said, let's put our heads together and figure out how we can make this work.

And we did, and that ballot measure pass was seventy percent of the vote, and it created an independent foundation called Caring For Denver, that now gives out thirty-five million dollars annually for mental health and substance misuse for people living in Denver and is now the second largest foundation in the entire state of Colorado. And now we're able to give and start to create that infrastructure of support so that if you're in Denver. If you're a young person if you're an elder if you're in the middle that you can actually pick up the phone and get free access to mental health care right now.

And we're continuing to grow that network. So, that is really just a story to tell you that we can create change it's not about the title, it's really about the need and the desire and the will to get it done.

I see folks on Lotus Network here really seeking out new ways of thinking, new ways of being, and also thinking about how you can put those things to practice to work for your communities you don't have to be a governor to change someone's life. You know, you don't have to be a doctor to save someone's life. You just have to know understand and have the will to do it. So, I'm just really excited to be able to spread that message to let folks know that, yes, you can be elected officials to every single one of you all can run for office and maybe should and can join us in the state capitol or in your local governments, but also you can make change without those titles to by just understanding your community, and figuring out what network, it takes to make that change happen who do you need to bring to the table. What conversations, do you need to have and how can you honestly respect all of the various different voices at the table to make that change and to bring on that coalition.

A lot of my work I will say is also very international, I was born in Germany. I'm always in the military. I love to travel. And I believe that that traveling, but that different background you know I lived in Korea, and Texas and, which I think are very two different very different places and California and Colorado and in so many places in between, and what I learned at that young age, just from traveling right like no conscious education around this was just that there's no community that does it wrong. You know, there's no way or tradition that's just not right. It's just different from yours, and how exciting is it to learn it to learn something just a little bit differently, whether its food, whether it's celebration, whether it's how we express emotion and

how we interact in our societies with each other. Some places are different, and that means that they're amazing, quite frankly, and that there's beauty in all of our cultures.

So, I think that helps me to break down some of the barriers that might exist between me and someone who maybe I don't often think I would agree with, because I do have that deep respect for different people in different ways of being.

So, I encourage folks to seek out those type of opportunities to maybe it's to travel, maybe it's just to going to a different church or synagogue, that you've ever never been to before, or sitting at I always tell people to go to black church because if you've never gone a black church, let me tell you it's an experience, it's amazing and it's uplifting and it's a place where you can really I think expose yourself to something completely different.

And that's always a good thing but what try so many other ways of just figuring out how to break down your own biases and your own barriers, as you interact with people because together we're really going to be able to make that change.

So, I just thank you all so much for having me and I really do prefer to have like question and answers and just a dialogue so I'm hoping if it's okay with the Lotus network that we actually open this up to questions that we can just talk about you know how we can be the change in our communities.

Terry Rubin: Representative Herod thank you so much that would be so awesome to open this up to questions because there's some that have already come up on the chat, and you are just delightful and you express yourself in such an enthusiastic way that we I think we're all in, we're all in.

I'm going to start, I'm going to start with a question that I was thinking about first.

I saw a TED talk that you did about that you did a ride along in Eugene, Oregon, and that that really inspired you. I was wondering if you could speak a little bit about that.

Rep. Herod: Yeah, thank you. Terry. So, what I will say is that, um, so caring for Denver has provided a lot of opportunities because as you probably know, when you're trying to make change in your community that first place of opposition right usually comfortable there's no money for that it's great idea, there's no money. We know that that's not exactly true but that's usually the first thing that gets thrown up.

So what I'm on this quest for, how can we really provide better mental health services. I went to look straight first to law enforcement and say, You know you guys have been telling me consistently in law enforcement that you don't have enough resources to deal with the increase of mental health needs and substance misuse needs in the community. What can we do to fix that. And I talked to Ben Commander now she pays him, and he said you got to go seek boots in Eugene, Oregon.

I thought he was sneezing, okay, I was like, I don't know what you're saying. Maybe we are speaking a different language I know this guy who says but, send me a memo.

And he did and I was like well I got to see this so I went to Eugene, Oregon and I did a ride along with law enforcement, and, and, and with this new group called Cahoots is actually a first responder model that uses a mental health professional EMT to respond to mental health calls, as opposed to law enforcement or alongside of law enforcement.

So, I went on this right along with Cahoots and I saw personally someone who was, which will house and it was definitely a middle-class normal household normal neighborhood, kid outside on a bicycle just going around in circles in the driveway, but inside.

There was a man who was really in deep mental health crisis, and he was willing to take his own life. Because he said he just couldn't keep putting his family through what was going on with him. And I saw there was health care bills piled up in on the desk, and he was just he was in trauma and he didn't want to go back to the ER because that was going to be another bill that they couldn't pay, and he was just in despair and Cahoots actually came out law enforcement came to law enforcement because he had a weapon, and they had to retrieve that weapon for him from him but then Cahoots came out and they set him down on the couch, and he talked to them and they literally kneel down at eye level and talk to him for about an hour, about what was going on.

They gave him his medication he took it. He stabilized, they took his vitals it talked to his wife.

They got her into, into services as well in case there was any violence happening in the house or she just needed you know counseling to work through this with her husband, and by the end of it they have, they were literally having a sandwich together getting food and talking through their challenges, and then we left and Cahoots came back the next day and got him to his to see a psychiatrist that is a type of response that we need.

He had a weapon, he was threatening his life, and maybe others you know I didn't hear him but definitely his own terrible things could have happened had there been a different response, but because Cahoots was there, and because law enforcement actually trains with Cahoots together. They had the right response for that man that didn't end up in him going to jail, which he could have or being put on an hour hold, which is honestly frightening and terrifying and costly.

Instead, he was able to get the services that he needs, and they were able to work through some of their challenges as a family.

That's what we needed to do, that's what we need in our communities. So, I said, Okay, I got it took that model Friday right here to Denver, and about a year later we launched our support team Assistance Response.

We're now in Denver if you call for mental health need, you will get a star band, you will get a star response, which is a mental health professional and an EMT, and it's now throughout the entire city of Denver.

And let me tell you the best news. We have had zero negative instances on Star, zero, we have been called for backup by law enforcement multiple times and happy to oblige.

And we've been able to move people into supportive services, and never had to arrest anyone. So, this is really exciting and this is like we've been around now for over a year and no negative instances, this is working, we can do things differently.

We just have to put the will, maybe the finances and the policy together to make it happen. So, we did that with two hundred and fifty thousand dollars to get started. Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. That's it, that was basically the van and the insurance.

And now the city has put in I think two million dollars, because the response is right, it is working and it does support our public safety in our communities and so that's really exciting.

Thank you for bringing that up but it just shows you, you get an idea. By seeing other way other people do it and then you can actually put into place, you could actually make it work.

You could implement that you just got to put again one foot in front of the other, to get it done. Now I'm always happy to help folks think through projects or ideas they have in their communities to make it happen to.

Terry Rubin: Thank you. Oh, that was, that is incredible. You are really bringing us into the future. And the way it should be done, so thank you.

We had a question from our friend Lori Brock and she said: Can you describe Emerge to the group because many people are not aware of it.

Rep Herod: Yeah, so Emerge is the organization that actually was on the advisory board to create but it looks at getting women in office diverse women, and that is through education outreach recruitment and then also true training on how to run a campaign. A lot of folks don't know what it takes to run for office right you think it's just you put your name on a ballot and you win, you know and I think society is that we get it more that it's not just that, but people don't know all the steps that it takes to be successful or where to go for those resources, until emerged as a group that that trains women to run for office, and win, and they've got a great track record or multiple states across the country and there's a national opposite as well, that really does push for opportunities for women to be candidates to become elected and then to move up through the ranks to become represented at the highest, the highest offices in the land. Vice President Kamala Harris is also a huge supporter of Emerge. Because of that strong network.

Terry Rubin: Great, thank you so much. We got Sarah, this is one of our former speakers, Sarah Speer Selber. She's going to ask a question.

Sara Speer Selber: Well first of all this is awfully refreshing and thank you. Yeah, the research bringing people together going through some appreciative inquiry to get to solutions is definitely what every local entity needs to be pursuing.

I'm curious in light of your history and your background. Do you think there's still a need for HPC use in the format that there have they rolled out? And also, I just have to know by chance are you an AKA or a DG?

Rep. Herod: I am not an AKA or a DG but I do wear my pearls. I think you actually didn't have opportunity to join a black sorority or fraternity, when I was there. So, I didn't know that the pearls with the pro signified I honestly just put them on and I leave them on all the time, because if I take them off, I forget to wear them. That's just why I wear them, but you know I find it, I find to be associated with such an esteemed organization to so thank you I'll try down at pearls symbol to HBC, I just liked the pearls, I didn't know I didn't know maybe I should join.

I do think there's still a need for traditional HBC (historically black college) it's interesting because one HBC was quite integrated it's just kind of slipped right so we're when I went to see you. It was one percent black, maybe an HBC you might be two hundred thirty-five percent white so it's a little bit flipped. I think that is necessary, some people need to be in environments where they feel safe and supported and embraced by people who look like them and I think that and to understand the I think the fact that black folks are not all monolith, we're not all the same and to learn from each other in that way, but without having that initial barrier of race, as you're going through your learnings.

I think that's important and I think we need different models for everyone. You know, I was asked the same question about LGBTQ high schools and trans high schools and you know should they exist or should they not exist, should we be pushing for more inclusive high schools in general?

My answer is yes, we should be pushing for more inclusive high schools, but that doesn't mean that if someone needs to learn in a place where they feel safe, and that safety comes from being around other queer people that they shouldn't have that opportunity.

I feel the same way about HBC. Now, I will be honest with you. If I would have gone to an HBC you instead of CU, I would definitely not be in this seat that I'm in today, I learned a lot by being on that campus, and by the sheer... I mean I was called the N word when I campaigned. I was called a terrorist because I brought in Muslim speaker through a speaker series. But honestly, that taught me how to deal with some of the things that I will face as an adult, right. It also taught me how to build community and family and such a tight knit group that we had no choice but to work together.

I mean, when we're talking you know we were always going to be interacting to the end of our time I'd see you, and we have to figure out how to work through those challenges we had together, I couldn't get lost, you know I stood out like a sore thumb and yes that came with responsibility and weight but it did shape who I am today. If I would have gone to an HBC I would have had a very different experience and maybe gone down another path in life probably actually would have because I wouldn't be in this state good or bad. It just wouldn't have been who I am today and so I'm grateful for the opportunity.

I'm grateful for the challenges and the push to make change. I was not comfortable at CU, I was very uncomfortable. And that I think led me to making the changes and understanding how to make changes. That got me through. And that got me through to graduation and got me here now so I am grateful, but it's not because things were, were rosy.

Terry Rubin: What a message of trusting in a journey and knowing that maybe if we stay with the story the journey takes us somewhere where the story reveals itself in the most amazing and profound ways.

So, we have another question from James: What kind of solutions are you working on for Colorado in housing our population? Isn't that one of the toughest and biggest challenges we're facing right now, housing, the cost of housing?

Rep. Herod: I mean you guys are kind of all throughout the metro area, but for me I live in Park Hill in Denver. It's a lovely neighborhood, I represent Park Hill, I live in Park Hill. I'm very grateful to be able to live there.

But my neighbors in Park Hill, when I started campaigning the first time and now it's even worse, their biggest issue was it's getting so expensive here, and I don't think that my kids could buy a home in the neighborhood that they grew up in, like they did. I thought, Wow, well that's, that's an interesting perspective it's true, right and now you can get a one, what did I saw recently a one bathroom, three-bedroom bungalow and park Hill for a million dollars. That's shocking, right, it's just shocking.

So, we have to deal with our housing issues in Denver. What I wasn't aware of... integration we really pushed to bring jobs to Colorado and to make Colorado a destination. We had no idea we were going to be so successful, but we were, so we didn't think about the unforeseen consequences of the housing crisis that we were about to walk into and, maybe even some help to support by bringing in all these great opportunities and these great paying jobs to Colorado.

So, now we're dealing with the cost of housing rising in every single community across the state. I mean if you haven't been down south, seeing the cost of housing down there literally will blow your mind. It'll blow your mind.

So that's one piece of housing. And yes, people are being unhealthy because they can't afford to live, so that that is a large part of the population a lot of folks see the unhealthy population is maybe that you know some of the tense you might see if you're driving through Denver, that is only a small portion, there's a much larger portion of kind of the unseen on house and their families, their women.

And they have nowhere to live. They just can't afford to live here. Some folks are working, and it's still not enough to be able to be housed I have a friend who was actually an activist a member of a church, very close to mine, and she came to me after a meeting just like this and said, I've got three kids and my husband and we cannot afford to live in Denver.

We had a crisis where their current landlord said they're done, they're going to sell, and they'll have nowhere to live, because the place like this I have nowhere to live in about 10 days it's hurting a lot of people.

So thankfully I was able to help her find housing but you know we've got to have more of that. So, the solution I think is a very, it's a lot it's very nuanced First of all, we've got to stop thinking that developers are all the devil, because they're not.

There are some people who are in our communities that are developers and also anti-growth people to both sides of the spectr that actually have really great ideas that really do value the community and the culture of communities and can add to and ensure that there is affordable housing, we need to make sure that affordable housing is an option, and that it's truly, truly, truly affordable. Additionally, for those who are living on the streets, we need to make sure that we are providing them housing.

The Safe Section housing sites I can't think of exactly what they're called. But those tents that you might see at churches or in parking lots that are organized by the city, those are fine they don't they don't bother me, but they're temporary, you can only live there for a certain amount of time and then you have to move on and those in those tents have to come down.

And then the unsanctioned camping is not a solution at all. At all. So, what we need to do is we need to get people into housing, we need to we need to support and fund more supportive housing which is not just a place to lay your head.

It also comes with those mental health services which is what Caring For Denver is pushing the conversation on is how can we provide that support to get mental health care and substance misuse care, and your medical needs met where you're living.

We need to yes build more units that are affordable for people to live in and they should be throughout the city in every single area, not just in certain areas because of course we know that that breeds discrimination. And then we need to make sure that people have access to good paying jobs, and that that's kind of a part of that housing model that we think of. I have a friend who's doing some really great work to build modular housing that they actually did get approved on Santa Fe, where they actually build it by the unit and then they can stack these housing units on top of each other. Think of it like Legos.

Which is crazy that we haven't thought of this yet but it's actually working quite well in certain other parts of the country, and he's actually building those units in Pueblo, providing jobs for folks in southern Colorado, and then bringing them up based on you know how many, how many folks who can we house today, what do we need in this development, and then making sure that the rent there because their costs are so low is below market, right, because they're not they're keeping their costs down so they can pass it on to the renter, and so they're able to put their one-bedroom units on for a few hundred or less a month which is really great. So excited about those type of opportunities and again you just have to seek out and be willing to listen for people at the table together and say, What are your ideas? If you don't have any you don't, you don't have to be here or you can just listen. But let's get some people who want to make change at the table and make that change together so that's really what we look to do.

And then I think you have to go into a lot of these encampments and ask folks to like what do you need. And a lot of times they need a warm place to live, they do want access to mental health care they do think that feel like they need more help than they have, and we should be able to provide that as a society. But the funny thing is that income inequality is not an issue only have this country, it has friends across the globe.

But when you go to places like Copenhagen, Amsterdam, others, you say Where are your houses, your neighbors, where are they and they're like, they're in housing, we have housing for people, we could actually create it, we just have to have the will to.

Terry Rubin: Oh, thank you, we have the maybe the follow up question from Cathy Fleischmann: How can we as individuals, help support some of these changes? What can we do?

Rep. Herod: Sure. So I think that the number one thing that we can do is to, to have conversations about what is the change that we want to make what is one project that we can work on maybe together maybe in a small group that will make a difference and then you have to, once you identify that problem you know get the right people at the table to solve it maybe you just want to have at all.

This is going to get tough love, but controversial I'm sure but maybe we just want to have a dialogue around why you want someone to wear a mask in the supermarket or why your kid should go to daycare or the playground with a mask on, and you just don't quite understand why people don't agree with you. You know what I mean like that's kind of a tough conversation right now but being willing to sit down and have a conversation and try to gain mutual respect.

That could go a long way, it can really go a long way right now and hey, maybe people make the decision to say, at least when I'm in your presence I will, or when I'm with your child, I will.

Let's try there I know it's tough, but starting with some of those uncomfortable conversations is actually extremely helpful.

I'll tell you, when I was a legislator, when I first got started, I did think I had all the solutions to everything. And that my ideas were definitely the ones that should go to go first. And I was on the Judiciary Committee and I intentionally set myself next to my mentor who was Joe Salazar very, very progressive legislator.

And then, Cole West, a conservative Republican legislator, former DA, and I set myself in between those two people intentionally because I wanted to understand where Cole was coming from. And of course, I wanted to learn from Joe as well.

Cole taught me a lot, not only about his perspective, but again that because someone presents a certain way does not mean that that's the only way that they think they are cool and I are still very close friends today still Joe and myself as well, but we actually found where we had common ground, which I might have called it mass incarceration, or prison industrial complex - that's not his language he didn't really agree with that - but he did think that the Department of prisons was too big, Department of Corrections was spending too much money and not doing anything to ensure that people were successful on the outside, and then he would see him as a DA committing the crimes right so it's like well wait a minute, we can agree on that.

You know I agree with you there, and we can pass at least a dozen built together to fix that exact problem but we never would have known it if I didn't sit next to him.

If I didn't know he like to have an apple every day at two o'clock I didn't know who his kids were at that helps to build that dialogue so bring some unlikely partners to the table to as you decide what you want to do in your community, and I think it is important to try some the low hanging fruit maybe it's a conversation, maybe it's a dialogue, then moving on to the policy changes or some of the other structural changes right because you want to gain momentum.

You don't want to get too discouraged to the process and I will have to be honest with you I know our group have a very authentic and honest people right now. It is really hard work, and there are a lot of points of discouragement and a lot of things that can get you down in this, but when you make a difference. I tell you it's better than anything which could actually make a difference. And when you're actually successful and so stick with it through all of that kind of hardships.

And yes, you will have people slam a door in your face yes you will have people who say, I never want to talk to you about a mask again in my life but when you keep that one that to that three, that you might have thought were over there listening but not really on your team. You know when you get them to come over and when you can actually meet together in the middle and say no, this is a human being, you know this is a human being who I respect, and I can have a dialogue with them and maybe just maybe we can find common ground and move something forward together, that when that happens that magic moment, it makes all the difference.

Terry Rubin: You are a true change agent. And, oh a force for change. We cannot thank you enough for taking time out of your very busy schedule to have done this for Lotus Network you speak our language you believe it's never too late to connect now and we are so very appreciative. Thank you.