The Upstander Ripple Effect Episode 11: “Resilience” and Jackie hosts from Jerusalem

**Kevin Aldridge** 00:02

What do we mean by the Upstander Ripple Effect?

**Werner Coppel** 00:06

Stand up against hate and prejudice, even if it does not affect you.

**Jackie Congedo** 00:13

From moral dilemmas in today's headlines, upstanders who rose for justice and stories of survival,

**Kevin Aldridge** 00:19

Be prepared to walk away from this conversation inspired and motivated. Hello, everyone. I am Kevin Aldridge, and I'd like to welcome you to the 11th episode of The Upstander Ripple Effect. And in today's episode, we're going to be focusing on the topic of resilience. And as you can see, I'm alone here in the studio. So we've got a slightly different setup this episode, because my good friend and co host on the podcast, Jackie Congedo, is actually in Israel right now attending a conference for CEOs of Holocaust museums from all around the world, and so she's going to talk about that in just a moment, and give you an idea of what she's what she's doing, what she's seeing while she's there in Israel, but we've got a lot of other current events and things that are going on that we're going to kind of roll into that Jackie here in just a few minutes. And I thought we might just start out this week's episode by talking about some of the things that we're seeing on the national level, in terms of some of the erasure of history that we're seeing that's a part of the Trump administration's quote, unquote, crackdown or banning of DEI initiatives, and we've even seen this now starting to creep into and infiltrate, even into the Department of Defense, where we saw, just this week, the histories of veterans like Jackie Robinson even being taken down from the DoD website. Now that has since been changed and has been restored, along with, I think we have some other communities that that saw similar types of erasure. And you can, you can expound on that, Jackie, but, but it's a big concern to see our federal government, you know, going to this measure to to erase key figures and key contributors to the history of our country from from non white communities, and I think it sends just a very, very chilling message to those of us who do care about diversity and inclusion. Yeah.

**Jackie Congedo** 02:31

So first off, Kevin, thank you for holding down the fort in Cincinnati. It's great to be with you and see you over the screen. And it is. It is now 7:20pm in Jerusalem, and I'm actually in the little office area of the hotel where we've been staying. Going to be headed out to board a plane and Tel Aviv back to back to the states here shortly. But, yeah, happy to share a little bit more sort of about, you know, talk about reflections on resilience related to the time I've been spending here over the last couple of days. But, but yeah, I mean, I think this is, this is pretty it actually, there was a lot of talk about this here among Holocaust educators, among you know leadership and Holocaust museums, because along with you know the information about Jackie Robinson and other veterans, and also you know suicide awareness, prevent, you know prevention, awareness, and you know cancer awareness, sexual assault, September 11, and indeed, articles featuring testimony from survivors, Holocaust survivors, I believe, related to Holocaust Remembrance Day, were taken down off the Pentagon's website. And I think it's good that, you know, they were restored. But the question is, I mean, the question I'm asking myself is, to your point, Kevin, like, what made anybody think this was a good idea to begin with? And what is, what kind of a message does this send? You know, I think, in an era when a lot of what we've been talking about over the last week is, you know, survivors are leaving us, and in so many of these people, you know, whether that's Jackie Robinson or anyone else like they're, you know, they're not around to tell their stories. And so, you know, access to this kind of information about our history and about where we where we've come from, is really important. And the you know, the way we allow it to help us learn to, you know, to lead better lives and build strong. Communities today, I think, is really, really essential. So, you know, I'd like to think that this was some kind of unintended consequence of, but it seems like this was a pretty deliberate, you know, as part of the sort of sweeping measures to crack down on DEI or to, you know, to limit what's out there related to certain DEI topics.

**Kevin Aldridge** 05:27

Yeah, it seems to me that, you know, this administration is pushing for that, that anything that is non white is considered to be DEI, and therefore needs to be eliminated from any institution that is receiving government funding. And I think that that is just a horrible idea and a horrible premise to proceed from. You know, I've argued for years that, you know, part of the problem that I have somewhat with the terminology of Black history is, is that Black history is American history. You know, that's that's one of the things that I've always argued about it like even the even the necessity to place "Black" in front of history, says that there's something about our reluctance overall to include this as a part of what is the American story. What is the the story of the world? And it seems like that that this administration is dead set on trying to eliminate those aspects of American history from the telling, mainly because they're not parts of our history that are anything that that you want to be proud of in terms of how our nation and people who were living at that time conducted themselves. But I think why they're an important part of our country's story is not because we want to overly dwell on the worst times, but how we were able to overcome those times and become, you know, become a better country and a better nation. And I think it's just a very cynical way to look at it, to say, hey, we want to get rid of these, these parts of history, because we don't like how we make the... how it makes us look, or how it makes us feel, or this insane notion that, you know, teaching this history somehow teaches people to hate our country is I just think it's just a bad premise to proceed from, and I think that that is what this administration has been trying to sell to people, is that you know truth telling and telling the history of this country makes people hate this country. No, what makes people upset and disappointed in our country is exactly this type of, this type of thing that we see this current administration doing.

**Jackie Congedo** 07:42

Yeah, I mean, I think also it's just, you know, it's this, this, this sort of hyper aggressive, you know, sweeping reforms, if you want to call them that, that I also just think isn't particularly helpful, right? It's, not to say that there hasn't been challenges related to how we have thought in a contemporary from a contemporary standpoint about, you know what? Not, not not the value of things like diversity, equity and inclusion, but certainly the implementation of those frameworks, I think, has in some cases, actually been exclusive for groups such as Jews and others, and so, you know, there's no doubt that there, I think were, you know, wasn't a perfect framework, and there was improvement that I think was really sorely needed, especially when you think about the landscape of our college campuses. And you know what's been, what's been happening in those places recently. But I think this whole, like, throw the baby with the bathwater out is really, you know, it's like the pendulum swinging way to the other way isn't helpful either. Certainly, I think that's kind of an understatement. And so, you know, I'm in the camp of hoping that we can just kind of correct, you know, we can correct and get somewhere back to the center where we can, you know, we can celebrate what makes our country unique and rich and diverse, and those are things like the experiences and the contributions of people like Jackie Robinson and Holocaust survivors. And, you know, people who have come from different places with different sets of strengths and contributed in amazing ways, and have wonderful stories to tell about what it means to be an American. And I think that, you know, hopefully there is, you know, appropriate continues to be sort of appropriate corrections for these things. I mean, you know, it is concerning, though, when you see that it's part of sort of a broader, wholesale elimination of anything related to, I mean, you just get, you know, you just get yourself in trouble, because things like this get, you know, swept up in an attempt to sort of course correct something that really legitimately, I think needs some course correction. But, you know, you start axing left and right. And inevitably, this is what happens, and that's that sends a really, it's hard to take back the hurt that that causes, even once the content is restored.

**Speaker 1** 07:42

Yeah, and in some cases, the you know, the content is not being restored, as we've seen, you know, the Black Lives Matter Plaza being dug up and destroyed there in Washington, DC, and again, taking up what was seen as a symbol of, you know, unity and recognition that again, you know, we're trying to change for the better. Sends a sends a strong message again, you know, I think for all of the talk about ferreting out, you know, government waste and abuse and you you know, spend $650,000 to to tear up. You know, Black Lives Matter Plaza, you know, I, I wish somebody could explain to me how that's how that's good government and good stewardship of tax dollars, to spend that type of money, to remove something that, quite frankly, was was more uplifting than it was than it was divisive again, I think it's just emblematic of the wrong headed thinking that that we're seeing unfortunately coming from our highest levels of government.

**Jackie Congedo** 11:22

Yeah, I mean this, this is, I think it's just also important to think about the, you know, like I was saying, the kind of message that that sends, and I think things like that that aren't necessarily causing any problems. And to your point, Kevin, may, you know, be a source of unity and pride, you know, literally digging those things up if, you know, if there's no problem, like, what can be the reason for that? Right? It's a I, you know, I'm not trying to make any assumptions here, but there are definitely certain messages that are sent about what's okay and what's not okay, about what we stand for, what we don't, what we sort of commonly understand as shared values in this country, and what we don't, and and so you know, that's, that's the kind of thing that I think you know is causing a lot of pain right now and and, you know, when I think about the history, I think that the more these kinds of things are normalized, you know, the more we hear and see, you know, these sorts of things take place, and they continue to take place. And, you know, it's more and more aggressive in terms of corrections. And you know, content that's coming down, and expressions of, you know, identity are being dug up. I think we just want to look out for an environment where that gets normalized and where people are, you know, used to it, because that's, that's the first step.

**Kevin Aldridge** 13:09

For sure. And I think, you know, I'm glad that you know, there was outrage over the over the Jackie Robinson situation, to the point where they had to course correct on that and put that back. I'm not going to be as generous as as you and thinking that it might have been some sort of, you know, good natured oversight, but, you know, here, I just think that there needs to be more pushback from the public on these types of things, because this is not the type of environment that we want to create. I mean, think about this. You know, here you have a President who vehemently argued against the taking down of Confederate statues, and we know what the Confederacy represented in the United States, particularly as it pertains to Black people and particularly Black lives. So you have a President who argues for the preservation of that but endorses the destruction of a monument to Black lives. What message do you think that that sends, that you'll fight for monuments depicted to people who took Black lives, but an actual monument celebrating Black Lives, you want that dug up? I really want people who are listening to this to think about that and the message that it sends, and those who want to defend you know this administration and some of their thought processes really take a minute to think about that. Argue for the preservation of conservative monuments. Dig up a monument to Black lives. That sends a pretty clear message to me about how, how those individuals think about these sort of things.

**Jackie Congedo** 14:50

Yeah, and I think this is, again, this is where, like, you know, I think there is a middle ground here where, you know, there's an argument. You. Sorry if you hear background noise. That's just the hustle and bustle of dinner time in Jerusalem. But there's a siren. Oh, there's a siren. Yes, I gotta go. I gotta go.

**Kevin Aldridge** 15:17

Okay, (crew offscreen) that's they gotta... They're sheltering.) Got it. Wow.

**Jackie Congedo** 15:34

Kevin, sorry about that.

**Kevin Aldridge** 15:36

Listen, this is... you don't have to apologize, my friend. I'm just glad you're okay.

**Jackie Congedo** 15:42

This is the reality. This is... so we want to talk about resilience. Like there's people singing now, because everybody's okay. Is that what they're doing out there? It's wild over here. I mean, that's, that's the reality for lived like the lived experience for Israelis every every day. And, you know, the siren goes off, literally, the bell hop, like, the concierge came in and was like, We got to go. We got to go now, which is why I just shut the laptop and we went down, like three floors into the cellar the hotel, where there's a safe room, and we're in there with, you know, people who are staying here, people who are probably Israelis, who are visiting others, people who are staying here, they're guests. You know, children. I was right next to this, like mother carrying her like three month old baby who was just asleep the whole time, and then another little girl, who was probably about seven or eight, who was in tears, and her mom was trying to explain to her that it was going to be okay, and It's all okay. And I think that's the complexity like that. That's, that's what's so heavy about this whole thing, right? Is that people are having to and yet life continues, right? Like here I am back on the on with you, and people are going back to eat their dinner in the lobby, and people are back in their rooms and so and, you know, who knows when this is going to happen again? You know, I'm trying to decide now if I have to catch up an hour car ride to Tel Aviv to get to the airport here in 30 minutes. And I think the protocol, I was just asking about, the protocol, like, if there's sirens that go off on the way to the airport, I think you have to get out of the car and lay flat on the side of the side of the road.

**Kevin Aldridge** 17:43

Wow

**Jackie Congedo** 17:43

It's pouring here. So this is, it's, you know, I think it's very easy for people to think that, you know, this is, this is, like those people over there, that. And I also just want to acknowledge, I want to acknowledge that it's the weight of, you know, having to, at any moment, take shelter. But it's also the weight, I think, for a society, and we've heard this so much since we've been here, that feels so heavy. I mean, the society, people here are so heavy. They're resilient. They are so resilient, but they feel completely weighed down by the magnitude of what's going on. And they know that on the other side of this, there are people losing their lives. You know, on both sides of this, we met with a we met with a mother and father, who, by the way, is was one of the people who works with the Claims Conference so back up or in Israel, because I'm meeting with other CEOs of Holocaust organizations all over the world. So you know, everybody from Argentina to Paris to Amsterdam to Australia, a number of folks in the US, and we're here just talking about, you know, the fact that we're trying to do this work in a moment that is, that is sort of unprecedented, in the wake of the attacks of October 7, in the middle of a war with, you know, implications for Holocaust education, right? And trying to really figure out what our role should be in dealing with forms of contemporary antisemitism and, you know, and it's also just so important, and it's so palpable here, that while there has been, you know, continuity of Jews living in this land for 1000s of years. There are many, many people here who are Holocaust survivors or descendants of survivors. I mean, it's, it's pervasive, and so, you know, talk about resilience. Like, just about everybody here has a connection to the Holocaust - a personal connection to the Holocaust - and you know, one of the Holocaust educators at Yad Vashem, which is the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Israel, now is working with the Claims Conference, which is the nonprofit that helps to, like, negotiate and disperse funding from the German government to Holocaust survivors and to... for Holocaust education. So you know this, this man who's been with us the whole time, helping to kind of lead the tours and managing logistics. We we actually one evening, sat down with him at his home. Him and... he and his wife. They have four beautiful children. Had four beautiful children pictures all over their home. I mean, it's like a home you would go in, you know, anywhere in Cincinnati. And we sat down, and he talked about how his son, at 20 years old, was killed on October 7, you know, he was, he was in the (Israeli) Army. He was part of a unit that is a search and rescue unit. And he... his job was to really look over new recruits. And so they were manning these posts, you know, southern Israel at the Gaza border on October 7 and and he died, as you know, Hamas, fighters, terrorists came over in boats, armed, you know, certainly more, more than he was. And he died because there was a, you know, an RPG that was fired at him, and he and two others, and he, he held them off for a half hour. And because of that, the two villages that we call, they're called kibbutz, kibbutzim, right, the sort of communal villages in southern Israel that we've heard, we've heard a lot about the two villages that were right nearby to his post, were able to lock their gates, people were able to get into safe rooms, and nobody died in those villages. And we know that hundreds of lives were taken brutally that day, and so many captured. And so he, you know he's, he saved a lot of a lot of lives and and to listen to his mother and his father talk about how this was the kind of person who did everything he could to reach across differences, who had the biggest heart for shared humanity, who, you know, there are Druze members of you know, the Druze community that serve in the IDF worked with all kinds of Druze soldiers to help equip them, and, you know, and and hear them and see them. And he just was the kind of person who cared deeply about other human beings and and even his family. I mean, during the, I know I'm going on and on here, but this, I feel like, is really important, you know, during the Shiva, sort of the Jewish mourning ritual in the wake of when someone dies, you know, you have a funeral, the burial, and then you sit Shiva with the family, which means people come and they pay the respects, and they come to the house, and they sit with you for anywhere from, you know, a week to two weeks, and sometimes even more than that. And on the second day of the Shiva. His mother, the soldier's mother, heard about, you know, nearby Palestinian village there was, you know, this is in the wake of October 7, so the whole country was basically in lockdown. And in this nearby Palestinian Palestinian village, there was a woman who, I think they were on, like a shared Whatsapp group. And so, you know, they knew what was going on in in each other's neighborhoods. And there was a woman who was pregnant, she was going to have to figure out how to give birth, and she couldn't get, you know, she couldn't necessarily, you know, access. Had questions about whether she could access a hospital and and this mother grieving the loss of her first born son at 20 years old, finds it in herself to write a letter to to this, to the people in this village and say, my heart's with you. I know we're all hurting. I can't fix it. I don't know how to fix it, but all I know to do is tell you that I see you and I feel you, and even through my grief and my pain, I know that you are grieving and in pain too. And we, we all just want, you know, a different reality than what we have. And because of that, the Palestinian community sent dates. So in the Middle East, there's dates everywhere, like, literally, you know, the dried fruit. And these are, you know, often, particularly in like Muslim custom, you know, a gesture of of friendship, and you know, warmth and hospitality. And in this case, it was condolences. And so I. I got to tell you, Kevin, that that was so the weight of that, just the fact that, like, there are so many everyday people who just want to be able to live safely, and that's on both sides of this,

**Jackie Congedo** 25:11

yeah,

**Jackie Congedo** 25:12

who are trying to figure out how to do that in the midst of a seemingly intractable, impossible situation. And, you know, but, but I can tell you that the resilience of the Israeli people, and that's not by accident. That's because for 1000s of years, for 1000s of years, Jews have been chased out, persecuted and expelled, and, you know, and and all the other terrible things and, and through all of that, you have the commitment to identity and the perseverance to live, to choose life. And so, you know, you've got a nation of Holocaust survivors who are in and out of bomb shelters, who are on the front lines of this conflict. You know, they're not calling the shots, they're not making the orders. So it's... but here they are, and yeah, it's just, it's just, it's really, actually something to witness and to be, to be part of. So anyway, you know, on the, on the topic of resilience, I feel like there's just, there's just so much to share. I mean, we were at, we were at a, we were at a Holocaust Museum, visiting one of the Holocaust museums in Israel, basically an education center. And this was on Tuesday, right? And so there was more fighting that broke out on Tuesday after two months of a ceasefire. And so we were supposed to go all the way to the south. We're going to be seeing some of you know, the aftermath of the October 7 attacks in the South that was quickly off the itinerary because of the active conflict that it picked up again. And so we went halfway south, and we stopped at this education center, and we were experiencing, you know, their student tour, and what they do with students, and they have virtual reality headsets that they that they use for student education, where it actually takes students on a virtual experience at Auschwitz Birkenau, very powerful. And it occurred to me, because before we had gone into the museum, the director and said, Listen, you know, it's not a big deal, but because siren goes off like one just did here, I'm gonna have to lead you to our safe room. It's fine, just follow me, like we have a little bit. We have time a minute and a half. It's literally, because we're talking about Israel estate of like, the size of Delaware, you know, or New Jersey. I mean, it's a very small state, and we're in, you know, we're in this virtual reality thing. And I'm thinking to myself, what happens, you know, there's a, there's a we're learning about the Holocaust in Israel, and a siren goes off, and you have to take shelter, and you're like, coming out of a virtual experience at a literal death camp. It's like, so, I mean, hold that, yeah, like, and then people are just, you know, you go to the market at night, and people are out celebrating, and people are out having dinner, and the shops are open, you know, I've got my, you know, tea that I brought home. I got some really good tea for you, by the way, as a souvenir. And so it's like, you know, and I'm, I think we're all holding, the whole society is holding that for many people, it's not life as usual. It's not business as usual, when these things happen either, right? There are people who are dying in this and that's on, but like I said, on both sides, so it's it's so new, I don't even know that I have the words, but I'm just sort of sharing them with you as they come to me, yeah, and I don't want to forget where we were related to the important conversation on the domestic front. But to add a little context for why I just had to ghost everybody for about 15 minutes. there.

**Kevin Aldridge** 29:04

no

**Jackie Congedo** 29:04

that's the situation here.

**Kevin Aldridge** 29:05

Well, I think it was important. And thank you for, you know, thank you first for sharing all of that, because I think it's important for our audience and for people to hear that, that story and that perspective, you know, I was, I was talking with, and our producer in between, you know, during that time that you were away, and I just said, you know, my God, most Americans can't even imagine. You know what that's like, and that's how quickly things can turn on a dime. You know, if you're living there in Israel, you know, it's like one minute, hey, we're having, we're having a conversation, you know, on a completely different topic, you know, on the podcast, and then the next minute, you know, you're you're taking shelter because you don't know what might happen next. And, you know, I think sometimes when we sit back in the comfort and security of the United States and debate these issues that are taking place 1000s of miles away. From here, there's that perspective that's missing the perspective that you shared of what people on both sides of this conflict are living every day. And I think that that with that, it should bring some humility, you know, to those of us who are not, you know, who are not living that reality every day to say, Yeah, we have, we have our opinions. We think we know what we know about the information, but, but that's very different than, you know, living in the reality of what that is every day, and not just from a political or governmental standpoint, but, but as you said, from the lives of everyday people who are not calling the shots, but yet and still have to live under this, who've lost loved ones, who have to find a way to carry on, you know, normally in the in the midst of completely abnormal circumstances, right? And and that is, that's just, quite frankly, something that most of us can't even imagine. And so even just that, you know, five to 10 minute period, you know, just kind of made me reflect and and I think humbled me on, you know, in a lot of ways, to just say, you know, one you know, sort of selfishly saying, man, we're, we're blessed here that, you know we, at least at present, you know, aren't worried about and living under those types of things. And then it also one made me concerned for my friend, but then also, just to think about, you know, all of the other folks there who have to live under that under that threat daily. And it ought to inspire and encourage all of us to play whatever part or lend whatever voice that we can to figure out a way to try to find some solution that that that stops the bombing, that stops the killing, that that somehow or another, find some kind of resolution where people can can live their lives, right?

**Jackie Congedo** 32:04

So it is so incredibly challenging. I mean, right now you have a situation where there's, you know, there was a cease fire in place. That fell apart. Things weren't proceeding as you know, some say they should have been. No more hostages were coming home. You still have, after how many months has it been? How many years, you know, at this point, innocent people who were ripped out of their beds in the middle of the day, you know, held hostage? Interestingly, Israelis insist on the language kidnapped and not hostage, which is, I think, kind of an interesting distinction from how we think about it in the United States, and how we talk about it. But, you know, the problem is that there, there's been such a status quo related to Hamas and their, you know, their leadership, if you want to call it that in Gaza, that it's just untenable. It's untenable for Israelis to say we're going to go back to that, because that looks like, you know, this at the best case scenario, worst case scenario, another October 7. And so there's, you know, there's sort of, you know, every Israeli I've spoken with, nobody, everyone wants this to be over, like, more than anything, I talked to one of the Holocaust educators in Israel, whose son was in Gaza for four months at a time. Couldn't talk to him for four months, and no idea where he was, if he was alive, you know, in the army. And so everybody wants this to end. I think the problem is the Israelis refuse to go back to a place where they have the they're in the same situation where this is and, you know, I don't know that we could expect that any other legitimate nation with a right to defend itself would accept that kind of a status quo. So but, but, you know, in the midst of war, right? People are dying, and that's horrific, and it is, it's, that's, that's the weight I'm talking about. That's the weight of the soldier's mother who is holding, you know, the humanity of the people on the other side of this, while she's grieving her son, like you just feel the burden that people are walking around with here,

**Kevin Aldridge** 34:25

yeah

**Jackie Congedo** 34:26

because, you know, you can talk about the kind of security that keeps you alive, and then you can talk about, like, the kind of security that keeps your humanity alive,

**Kevin Aldridge** 34:39

yeah,

**Jackie Congedo** 34:39

and those things are in tension all the time here. And it's, it's, it's the such a heavy weight, yeah, so, but, you know, the resilience, I mean, I sat last night, I sat at dinner next to one of the, what's sort of, you know, the now become known as one of the, the twins who, um. Uh, Dr Mengele, you know, had tortured essentially during the Holocaust. These were, these were twins who were, who were used in medical experiments. It's not even probably the right way to say that, but just really, you know, some of the most horrific things you can imagine. And she's in her 80s now, and she's sitting next to me eating her Sam and dinner, talking about her grandkids, I mean, and I just could, I couldn't even hold the resilience it takes. You know, she's got a granddaughter in the army. She it's like, it's just unbelievable. And, and and I think that's really hopeful when you think about, you know, people facing adversity and and, and being able to manage in their everyday lives, even through that adversity, it's um, it's remarkable. So, yeah, it's been invigorating in all those ways, but definitely really really challenging and, and I'm I, you know, and I'm really glad that that I was here to witness it,

**Kevin Aldridge** 36:09

yeah, yeah. Well, again, thank you for sharing that and bringing that, you know, humanity. And I think that's why I believe in so strongly what we do here and, and sort of what I do professionally, because I think that, you know, a lot of what we're seeing is sort of like our failure to be able to communicate and to be able to see the humanity in one another. Because I think when that breaks down and we find ourselves in that place, this is what we're sort of left with. We're sort of left with war and conflict and things of those nature, and things of that nature. And I think all of that stems from a failure for us to be able to talk to one another, to see sort of the humanity in another, in another, and to sort of understand and value, you know, another person's story. And so I think by being able to share stories in this format, for you to be able to share the stories and things that you you hear, that you're hearing there on the ground. I hope it challenges, I hope it challenges all of us to to take a minute and pause and tap into our humanity and listen to what you shared and say, you know, how can I be? How can I be a better communicator around these issues and others, so that, you know, we don't find ourselves in a position where we're where we're diving on the side of the roads or ducking into shelters to, you know, avoid bombs, because that's, that's what it's left with when we get to the place where we can no longer talk to each other, you know, in in functional and reasonable and diplomatic ways that that can allow us.

**Jackie Congedo** 37:44

I'll also just totally, I don't mean to interrupt you,

**Kevin Aldridge** 37:47

yeah, no, go ahead, for sure.

**Jackie Congedo** 37:49

I was just gonna say, you know, I think, and I think that there is this, there is this very real feeling here that antisemitism is real and it's present. And I'm not talking about people who, you know, care deeply about human rights, don't really know the issues, don't really know the context, don't know the history, don't know the reality. I'm talking about a very explicit threat to Jews. Half of all global Jews live in Israel. Half so any threat, you know, to Israel, an existential threat to Israel is an existential, existential threat to the Jewish people is the reality. I mean, that's that, you know, that's not a value judgment, that's just the facts and so, and you know, there, there is a dedicated strain here that that, when talking about, you know, this conflict, that has made it very clear that that, you know, they don't believe in Israel's legitimacy. They don't believe that Jews have a place in the Middle East. They don't believe that Jews belong here. They don't believe that Jews should, should be here, and despite, despite the history that says otherwise, and and so that's the kind of thing that's very hard to talk through. Yeah, you know, when the negotiating line is your legitimacy and your survival and your right to exist? And you know, that's a tough one. So I think, but I think, to your point, most people on both sides of this want to be able to just drop their kids off at school, cook dinner for their families, read their kids a boat before they go to bed and wake up the next morning and do it all over again. Most people just want that. And so I'll you know, I we keep, if you've listened to the last episode, Kevin and I so much going on in the world these days that we can't even get to, like, the testimonies that we want to share. So next time, we will do that promise, promise this time, but on the tone of of see somebody else. And you know, how do we have these conversations? I promise I didn't queue you up for this, but so this is, this is the soldier. This is the 20 year old child who was killed that day, and this is what his parents are handing out when they talk to people. And you know what's inside two instant packets of coffee. And that's because their son had a knack for connecting with people and for seeing the humanity in somebody else, and for caring enough about another human being with a different story to ask about that story, to want to know more about it. He was in. The reason it's coffee is because he was sort of known for these like, you know, long evenings where he would go and, you know, when other his fellow soldiers Druze, you know, Israeli, whoever were on, on, on their posts, he would not sleep, and he would drink coffee, and he would go talk to him, and he would try and unpack, like, "What's going on with you? What's your journey? What's your story?" really, you know, listening to really hear them and see them. And so in the wake of his death, the Turkish coffee company in Israel worked with his family to put these together, and now they're handing them out, and they're like, in honor of our son, go have a cup of coffee with someone who thinks differently than you, who looks differently than you, who has another story to share and hear their story, because when you've seen somebody, you've heard their story, you can't dehumanize them. Can't dismiss it. It's part of your story. So I'll share this with you, maybe when I get back, or with someone I don't know quite as well. I feel like you and I have had plenty of coffee, but I have... glad to be taking that back with me, just as a reminder that you know, if they can do it, if survivors can do it, if people who have witnessed and lived through and been dealt the worst cards, the worst of humanity, can come back and say there's a reason to sit down and have coffee with someone who's different than me. I think we should all be able to do that.

**Kevin Aldridge** 42:12

Absolutely. That's, that's a great

**Jackie Congedo** 42:14

Now I'll get down off my soapbox.

**Kevin Aldridge** 42:15

Yeah, no, that's, that's a great, I mean, and, and, you know, I think that's a great upstander shout out right there. You know, I mean in terms of someone who, you know, sort of epitomizes a lot of the character strengths that we talk about, about being, you know, being an upstander. Again, we've talked about this many, many times on the program. It doesn't take much, like we're not talking about necessarily lifting boulders, but just taking it within yourself to go have a cup of coffee with somebody else and hear their story again. We don't know what ripple effects,

**Jackie Congedo** 42:50

the ripple effect, yes, the ripple effect of this. Yeah, you know, I mean, what am I going to do? What are you going to do now, because you've heard the story, because you've seen the coffee, like, what do you you know, it's really it's so powerful. It is so powerful. Yeah. Anyway, I just got a text. Well, go ahead. Go ahead. No,

**Kevin Aldridge** 43:06

I was just going to say, because I know you probably got to get ready to to leave here in just a few seconds. But I was just going to say along those lines, you know, I'm a firm believer that, you know, things happen for a reason, and sometimes, you know, from a spiritual perspective for me, best laid plans. But you know, higher powers have some things, some things differently in the plans and, and maybe for this particular episode, this is what you know, what we needed to discuss, and what needed to happen and, and, and what somebody who might be listening needs to hear, to adjust their perspective, give them something different, to think about, something that might activate them. So I don't believe that, that this is in vain, even though it didn't necessarily follow the script.

**Jackie Congedo** 43:55

It's always great. It's always I feel like I'm always better off for the conversations. I hope the folks are listening and watching our two and I'm going to sign off head to Tel Aviv, get on that plane, head to JFK, and then head back to since Cincinnati, and hope that I don't have to figure out how to take shelter on the side of a highway. And there are plenty of people who've been doing it for a long time. So if I if I do, I will, but yeah, but I'm gonna head that direction, so I'll see you back in Cincinnati. Thanks everybody for listening and watching, and we'll be back next time. We promise next time, and we're gonna hold you to it, and our producer make sure that you really insist that we get to that next time. For our testimonies, we're excited to share those truly meaningful and deserve their space.

**Kevin Aldridge** 44:45

All right, safe travels, my friend. We'll see you when you get back in Cincinnati.

**Jackie Congedo** 44:50

Thanks, Kevin, see y'all next time. Let us know your thoughts on this episode. Our email is in the show notes. You can listen anytime on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or visit Holocaustandhumanity.org/podcast. You can also connect with us on Instagram and Tiktok @Holocaustandhumanity and X Facebook @CincyHHC. The Upstander Ripple Effect is a production of the Nancy & David Wolf Holocaust & Humanity Center. The Center's mission is to ensure that the lessons of the Holocaust inspire action today. This series is part of the Cynthia & Harold Guttman Family Center for Storytelling. Visit us in person at historic union terminal in Cincinnati, Ohio, or online anytime at holocaustandhumanity.org. Managing Producer is Anne Thompson. Consulting producer is Joyce Kamen. Technical Producer is Robert Mills, and Technical Director is Josh Emerson. The opening sequence is by Ken Furman. Select music is by Kick Lee. This is recorded at Technical Consulting Partners studios in Cincinnati, Ohio.