



EPISODE 3.2

WAR IS HELL (ON FACTS)

OREN SEGAL: Welcome to **extremely** from the ADL Center on Extremism. I'm Oren Segal.

JESSICA REAVES: And I'm Jessica Reaves.

OREN: We are recording this episode two weeks after the massacre in Israel by Hamas terrorists which killed 1400 people, where men, women and children were taken hostage. And that has resulted in a war against Hamas that has only just begun.

While there's a lot to unpack and a lot still going on including processing what has happened for many of us, we're going to pull out a few of the strands that we're focused on in the wake of those attacks here at the Center on Extremism.

By the time this podcast airs things will certainly have evolved and changed. But this is a snapshot in time. Today we're going to discuss the proliferation of disinformation we're tracking about the war, the spikes in antisemitic incidents over the past few weeks. We'll speak to our colleague who's our antisemitic incident specialist to get her take on what she's seeing and then we will focus on how other domestic extremists are exploiting this crisis.

We'll then close with an interview with Professor Jessica Stern, another Jessica, who I spoke to about her career in this field and her experiences teaching a new generation of folks that are interested in extremism and hate.

JESSICA REAVES: I mean, two Jessicas. The jackpot.

Something that listeners will note is that this episode does contain some dark humor and we understand that that may not appeal to everyone and may not even feel appropriate, in some cases. We do want folks to know that it is a coping mechanism that we use frequently in our work. And, you know, this is how we get through our days and our jobs looking at some of the most horrible stuff imaginable.

So please just keep that in mind and here's the episode.

So, I think worth noting that those of us who worked in this field for a long time have seen some really horrific things. The stories that have emerged in recent weeks I think have pushed us all to and maybe past our limit. All we can do at this point is hope that peace prevails eventually and that the violence against all parties stops.

Another note of caution before we get into it. The second half of this episode will contain references to rape and suicide and we advise listeners to use their own discretion on

whether they want to listen or even ask kids to leave the room or any other steps you'd like to take.

So, switching gears a little bit, even though we're staying on the same sort of topic, I will not shock you or probably any of our listeners when I tell you that we live in an age that is defined at least in part by mis- and disinformation.

OREN: I mean, so you say. I don't know, should I believe that?

JESSICA REAVES: That's up to you, man. You know - check your sources.

But our social media platforms are not equipped as we've all witnessed to handle this onslaught, which means essentially that we're all drowning in these false narratives. That's both exhausting and incredibly dangerous.

So, with that in mind, COE researchers right now are keeping track of the bad information and there is a lot of it around the war between Israel and Hamas, which is really set off just a virtual avalanche of false narratives.

A couple of false rumors we're debunking: One very popular rumor insists that much of Israel is on fire and the rumor is accompanied by an image of a wildfire that's actually happening in Argentina. I'm not a huge geography buff, but I do know that [Argentina] is nowhere near Israel. So, I think we can all be safe in that knowledge.

You know, we've heard that the attacks were planned by Jews as a way to expedite the Great Replacement, which is a sinister plot to replace white people with nonwhite people. This ostensible logic goes, if Palestinians are displaced, they'll come to the U.S. and that will further displace the white people. And to some people's point, white voters even more.

It's really just incredibly disheartening. We're trying to keep up with all of these narratives as best we can. But I'm curious, Oren, why do you think there's such a rush to conspiracies whenever there's a crisis or a tragedy?

OREN: Right. And the examples that you gave are one of many that have so many likes and shares. So, what we're trying to debunk is not even the millions that are out there, but just the ones that, you know, we're hearing from because it's literally getting to the point where average people are seeing it and hearing it, which is crazy.

I think there are some folks that never miss an opportunity to leverage a crisis, right? So bad actors will try to put their spin on issues for whatever political agenda that they have.

I think some people, though, want clicks. Like if you're going to reward people for follows and shares and likes or whatever it is, people will make up any crazy stuff in order to beef up their stats, so to speak.

JESSICA REAVES: It's amazing to watch on one level. It's appalling on other levels.

This is another indication of just how these conspiracies and this craziness that, at one time, we kind of associated with fringes with extremism. It's all becoming incredibly mainstream and regular people are asking us, family and friends are asking us, hey, is this true? And I mean, it's bonkers. It's beyond comprehension, right?

OREN: I mean, I think part of it too is people rely on like their social feeds more than they do credible news outlets, right? There's so much doubt as to what is credible anymore.

What are some of the items that we have debunked? Are there any other pieces of disinformation or narratives that you've seen that we've put on our website, to help debunk for people who are trying to navigate through this ecosystem?

JESSICA REAVES: You know, there was so much misinformation and disinformation around the explosion at the hospital in Gaza and, you know, information is still forthcoming. But you know, everybody online, everybody was an expert. Everybody said, oh, I can prove using this, this and this tool, this is what happened and whatever their narrative was, they could prove it.

OREN: That one was a particularly interesting one. Because first of all, people relied on Hamas for the news originally, which is just a good practice not to rely on a terrorist organization for any facts on the ground.

JESSICA REAVES: It inflames tensions. It makes people who are already angry, more angry, it makes people who are heartbroken even more heartbroken and it's not helpful or healthy. I mean, we know that firsthand, but it's just it, it really is overwhelming.

OREN: The Hamas attack occurred at a time when many Jews were feeling particularly vulnerable in the United States because of already historic levels of antisemitic harassment and vandalism and assault that we have been documenting over the past few years.

Even the FBI just released their hate crime data showed a 37% increase in hate crimes targeting the Jewish community. And of course, we're coming off of a wave of bomb threats and swatting. So, it's been challenging and it has not gotten any better during [the] two weeks since the massacre on October 7th.

To help us unpack this is Rachel Sass, our Antisemitic Incident Specialist in the Center on Extremism.

Welcome Rachel.

RACHEL: Hi, Oren. Thanks for having me on.

JESSICA REAVES: I'm going jump in with our first question. Thank you for your work and thank you for everything you've been doing these last couple of weeks. I know it's been very difficult. Give us a snapshot of what you're seeing, what you're concerned about. I know that's a big question. But if you can just give us kind of the landscape.

RACHEL: Since Hamas's attack on Israel on October 7th, we've seen a concerning increase in antisemitic incidents in the United States. We've documented this sort of trend before. Back

in the spring of 2021, we recorded unusually high numbers of antisemitic incidents during Israel's conflict with Gaza. So, when the attack against Israel happened just a couple weeks ago, we were looking for similar trends and, indeed, we've noticed that.

Something I'm concerned about is [that] it's unclear right now where this conflict is going. It doesn't seem to really have an end in sight and that could have ramifications, not only for people living in that region, but also for the Jewish community in the United States and around the world.

OREN: Rachel, can you talk a little bit about the types of incidents that you're seeing and maybe some of that sort of stand-out that are representative of the sort of spike that we're seeing.

RACHEL: There's been quite a range of incidents that I've seen over the past couple weeks, actually. Some trends that float to the top are first, unsurprisingly, but important to note, a higher proportion of these incidents have some sort of rhetoric or themes related to Israel that we notice in them.

So, for example, a common type of antisemitic incident that I record throughout the year is harassing phone calls that are made to synagogues. In the past couple of weeks, we've still seen harassing phone calls to synagogues. We've seen more harassing phone calls to synagogues, and we've also seen harassing phone calls to synagogues that incorporate mentions of the war in Israel and blame the Jewish community or Jewish individuals for what is going on in Israel and in Gaza.

So, for example, a synagogue received a phone call saying that the Jewish community is responsible for the suffering of Palestinians. Another synagogue received a phone call from an individual who stated that they hope that Hamas continues to perpetrate violence against Jews, not only in Israel, but also in the United States.

OREN: Did we also get a report of a woman being punched on the subway in New York because she was Jewish?

RACHEL: Yes, we have recorded several violent physical assault incidents. One, the one that you mentioned, an individual punched a woman. She asked "why?", I expect, in shock of the moment, and the person answered "because you're Jewish".

OREN: So, can I just say that's upsetting. The idea that somebody would get punched in the face and ask "why?" that's kind of incredible or was that shorthand? Like, I'm just thinking somebody got punched in the face and be like, why did you do that?

JESSICA REAVES: I would ask that. I would totally be like, what's your problem, man?

OREN: Like you wouldn't...you wouldn't run?

JESSICA REAVES: I don't know. Probably. I don't know.

RACHEL: Yeah. Something that I've noticed reviewing thousands of reports of antisemitic incidents is that people act and respond in unexpected ways sometimes. And I think when

antisemitic incidents or attack is perpetrated against the person, sometimes they don't know how to respond. Sometimes they respond in fear in anger and confusion. So, I've learned not to be surprised at the ways I see people react and also the ways I see people perpetrate acts of antisemitism. There's some really bizarre incidents out there.

JESSICA REAVES: Can you tell us about any of the really bizarre ones?

RACHEL: From the past couple weeks? I have some examples here - I'll bring in a little bit of dark humor here and you all can edit it out if you want to.

OREN: No, no, this is the point. Bring on the dark humor.

RACHEL: Yeah. One of the incidents, it was an antisemitic phone call, voice message, I believe, to a Jewish institution. The person on the phone said, well, at least you, as in you American Jews, are colonizing Indian land, not Palestinian land. But <bleep> you Jews anyway. That was a pretty interesting take.

JESSICA REAVES: And roundabout, isn't it?

RACHEL: Yeah.

OREN: By the way, one of the things I really appreciate about your work and, Jessica, just tell me to stop because I'm gonna keep going, is that it's providing information to help people really gauge whether what they're feeling is real or not, right? Sometimes we feel like there's a lot going on but you're kind of helping put numbers, helping provide the examples. Then ultimately helping ADL's regional offices respond to people who are feeling most victimized at that time.

But also, Jessica and I were just talking about disinformation. There are a lot of people who will say, oh, did you hear about so and so antisemitic incident and you're often helping us saying, well, actually that's not true or there's no evidence of that, which I feel like is an important part of your role too. Do you view that the same way? And, and how much do you feel like you find yourself debunking incidents of antisemitism in a way because our credibility is so important.

RACHEL: Yeah, there's a really careful balancing act that this work requires. We get a lot of first-hand reports of people who themselves have experienced antisemitism and we want to include those reports in our work. But we've also seen instances where someone will either submit a fake report with some sort of ulterior motive. Other times people will submit something that they heard.

You know, I heard my kids say that "this happened to their classmate", for example. As much as we want to validate and shine a light on the experiences that people have in the Jewish community of antisemitism, we also want our data to be legit. We want it to be reliable. A lot of what I do is digging into the details of what happened, trying to get details from the person who experienced it or some sort of other context or evidence and making sure that what we're reporting out, we can stand behind.

JESSICA REAVES: One last question. You do some difficult work, you do very difficult work. What do you do to take care of yourself? Like what do you do to take a break? What's your go-to?

RACHEL: I really love dogs and I don't have a dog. I can't have a dog because I live in New York City at the moment. But I will go on walks and I will look just for people walking their dogs. And sometimes, if I'm lucky, somebody will see the look on my face and they'll slow down and they'll let me say hi to the dog, which will make my day.

On a more serious note, I think the past couple weeks to be honest, a lot of my go-to ways to unwind have been less effective. This job, and just living through this time has been really challenging.

I went to synagogue for the first time in a while in, in New York City on Friday night. And I realized through that experience that I had kind of been trying to lean in the desensitization that comes with this job. Like I was trying not to feel what I was seeing. And when I went to services on Friday night and heard some moving speeches from rabbi, community members, I kind of broke down and it was a painful moment, but also a special moment and that I realized that I was actually feeling the pain of the moment. For a few days, I was like kind of shocked that I wasn't more upset, and so it was a moment that was humanizing for me to myself.

JESSICA REAVES: I think that's beautifully said and so important and something that, you know, unfortunately comes with the work, but I'm so happy that you were able to find that outlet and find the space. Thank you so much, Rachel.

OREN: Yeah, thanks Rachel. It's likely and I, you know, this better than most, especially as Israel continues to defend itself as there's more violence in the region as this potentially expands antisemitism, and incidents will likely increase. So, you're doing incredible work at a really important time and I hope you walk by many dogs on the way to work.

RACHEL: Thank you. Thank you both for having me on and, and one thing I'll say is there's a lot of uncertainty in the future, but one thing I can be certain of is that I'm gonna continue to track the antisemitism that is occurring to our community just as diligently as I ever have. Hopefully that'll give people sense of at least a validation of what they're seeing around them.

JESSICA REAVES: That's awesome. Thank you, Rachel.

So, Oren, if you needed further proof that white supremacists are irredeemably awful people, I'm happy to tell you that you've come to the right podcast.

So, in the wake of the Hamas terror attack against Israel, white supremacists were positively gleeful about the loss of life and the general depravity that we saw during the assaults. Group leaders across the country or online and on the ground, cheering for very ironically, Islamo-fascist terrorists who would kill them in an instant if given the chance. And they were cheering because Hamas had killed Israelis, because they had killed and brutalized Jews and the enemy of your enemy and all that, I guess.

And maybe this is just an indication that these groups antisemitism runs even deeper than their racism. I don't know. Oren, and what's your take on this? Why are we seeing so much of this?

OREN: Yeah. I think this is another example of FOMO from extremists. Like, hey, man, we don't want to miss out on, you know, like seeing this terrorist organization, like, fulfill their fantasies. I mean, I mean, I'm being honest, like, it's sick and so they want to leverage it and say that's great and, you know, as long as there's dead Jewish bodies, then they're going to celebrate it.

To me, it's the combo of everything that I think has been so challenging in sort of responding to this and what I think has affected many people no matter what religion they follow, which is having over 300 rallies at the time of this recording, many of which have featured celebration, glorification and justification of the murder of Jewish kids and kidnapping of Holocaust survivors and just the brutality. Like, legitimizing and glorifying it, which, by the way, is what we see on white supremacist forums every single day. It's the language that they use to communicate. Seeing those two things online, on the ground come together has been really maybe not surprising but heavy.

JESSICA REAVES: Oh, absolutely. You know, I think what's so ironic here is that we're seeing these groups on the ground, as you said, celebrating these nonwhite supremacist groups on the ground, celebrating this attack.

There seems to be no awareness whatsoever that Hamas would kill every single one of these people joyfully and without a moment's hesitation.

OREN: Yeah.

JESSICA REAVES: I don't understand why anyone would cast their lot in with people who committed the crimes that Hamas committed. It is truly incomprehensible to me, people with any conscience, any sense of morality.

OREN: So how do you think that this will impact the white supremacist movement? And I know it's a little weird to talk about white supremacy in a time where Hamas and, and its apologists are really focused, but we don't have a luxury of ignoring any extremist movement at any time. You know, we've seen the increase in threats against Jews in these online spaces, increase of threats against Muslims in these online spaces that we know white supremacists are in. Would you be surprised if they tried to jump into the chaos and, you know, do something?

JESSICA REAVES: No, absolutely not. No surprise at all. I mean, as you said, it's the issue of like this really dark and sick FOMO, there's this idea that I think white supremacists could probably ride this for a little while and sort of ride in the wake of it and take advantage of it in that way.

But they're gonna wanna come back into the center, they're gonna wanna be back in the spotlight and we know that and we know that they have a propensity for these horrific acts as well. And, so, I just think it's only a matter of time. I mean, I hate to sound fatalistic, but

we've been doing this work long enough that we know that unfortunately, the next horrible thing is always just right around the corner.

That's a very bleak note. I said last time we were in a very dangerous moment. And I think that has only been exponentially magnified in the last couple of weeks, we can only hope for the end to all of this violence and hate.

OREN: We can hope, and we can continue to do what we're doing, which is to expose those who think they can get away with legitimizing horrible violence to continue to track the movements to the best that we can and continue to try to be a voice of reason against hate. So, hope is good. I like what we do even more.

We are going to now hear my interview with Professor Jessica Stern.

JESSICA STERN: I actually am now an adjunct research professor, but I see that BU is still calling me research professor. So, I'm gonna call myself research professor and I'm also a senior fellow at Harvard School of Public Health and at the Center for Naval Analysis.

OREN: Thank you so much for joining me in this conversation. One of the reasons I was particularly excited about speaking with you is not only have you spent time in this field, but you're now teaching others to do this work in some way. And so how did you get into this line of work? What do you think I even mean when I say this line of work, what does that even mean to you?

JESSICA STERN: Well, there are lots of ways I could answer that question. I'm gonna give you the professional answer first.

I was writing my dissertation in the late eighties and nineties and one of the country's foremost terrorism researchers, Brian Jenkins, who was at RAND, came to give a lecture at Kennedy School and I was completely fascinated and immediately hooked.

And I will say that I don't know whether that happened to you, Oren, but I have noticed that a lot of people who come into our field, which I would call terrorism studies, they get really obsessed.

I was writing a dissertation on chemical weapons. I'd studied chemistry as an undergrad. And after hearing that talk, I expanded the dissertation to include terrorism with chemical weapons. Ash Carter was my dissertation advisor and he already thought it was weird enough I was working on chemical weapons because this was a time when he and pretty much everybody in the national security field was working on state-to-state conflict and balance of power. And once I started working on terrorism that was for him beyond the pale.

I mean, I knew that he felt that way, but obviously when he became Secretary of Defense, he had to work on terrorism and chemical weapons, and I had also written about Iraq. Those were the three issues I was most interested in and that he thought were most bizarre.

And when he came back to Harvard from the Pentagon we were on a panel together and he admitted in public that he thought it was strange and, you know, this young doctoral

student was actually on to something. You know, obviously ISIS was a big part of what he confronted when he became Secretary of Defense.

And then I took a postdoctoral position at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, which is a nuclear weapons design lab. And I worked in intelligence and there I was, I would say, forced to expand into nuclear terrorism.

And it was incredibly interesting and I kept working on that issue when I went to work at the National Security Council in the Clinton administration. I was more or less doing what I was kind of trained to do, which was looking at the weapon systems that might be utilized and, that at that time, were very much at risk with the breakup of the Soviet Union, very vulnerable to terrorists.

OREN: Just to make sure I get this straight though, chemicals led you into terrorism studies.

JESSICA STERN: Well, really Brian Jenkins led me into terrorism studies.

OREN: But yes, baby Jessica didn't say to herself at the age of five, "I am going to deal with some of the worst of humanity." That was just something that you were introduced to because you were through your studies and meeting people like Mr. Jenkins.

JESSICA STERN: Right. Another way for me to answer the question is my dad's a Holocaust survivor. And I did a complete turnaround. I got really curious about the people as opposed to the weapons. I was not trained at all to talk to terrorists about their motivations. That was just a deep curiosity. And I think that my whole career I've been trying to understand perpetrators of violence.

That is really a combination of my dad, who never talked about the Nazis actually until he was in his nineties. But also, I was raped at gunpoint as a 15-year-old, and I think that also played a role.

And the thing is, Oren, I'm telling you these very personal things but I find that it's very common that people who go into terrorism studies or even to some extent national security affairs, but especially terrorism studies, have some kind of personal experience that makes them curious about perpetrators. And, you know, as a professor, I hear a lot about that.

OREN: I don't know if you get this sense with some of the students that you're working with but there's almost like, feeling like you gotta get through it. Right, the stakes are too high. This work is too important. And, you know, even if it is making our lives miserable, we have to sort of push through which I think is exactly the opposite of what we should be telling people. How do you sort of talk about the need to create that work life balance or just time away from this terrible stuff?

JESSICA STERN: Yeah. It's a big part of my role as a teacher and a mentor. Just in the last few weeks, I had a student whose friend committed suicide, a childhood friend and he needed a break and I encouraged him to take the break. I've had another student who has talked to me a lot about whether she can handle this or whether it's better to go into another field.

Honestly, I thought maybe it was better for her not to work in this field, but she chose to stay in the field. But I think she will have had the experience of having breaks. You know, there are many times when I suggested she have a break and she'll have had the experience of working on a team where we all do talk about the difficulty. Especially now.

So, if I think of myself as training people to work for you, I know that they have to learn to work online and it's not really possible to study terrorists the way I once did-- Go talk to Al Qaeda. I mean, that's just not safe at all. It probably wasn't safe when I did it. But especially now you just could never do that. An American could never do that.

And, yet, at the same time, there's an incredible source of information online. And I think that's potentially more dangerous psychologically because there's just so much coming at you. And if I think about training students to work for you, I want to help them become psychologically savvy, but also to be able to talk to computer scientists can be a challenge for non-computer scientists and vice versa. I love teaching classes where the computer scientists and and the international relations students are working together.

But also, I would encourage learning to code. You know, if I could have gotten away with it, I would impose that on my students. I would have liked to have a coding requirement at my school. But my dean didn't go along with that.

OREN: You're a Trailblazer in this field, right? The fact that you have had to do it differently, the technology was different, the expectation was different. There were probably very few women in this field at all at the time, things are just very different now. But the sort of lessons of how to deal with this psychologically, I'm sure remain the same.

And, in fact, there's more of an opportunity now people are talking about the need for people in this space to take care of themselves before they're able to do their work in ways that I have just not seen before. Supporters of this work, you know, when we do sort of a report here, here's what we've done. When we say: Here's what we've accomplished. They will ask, which I'm so happy about, they will ask like, how are people doing? How are you dealing with the mental toll that this takes? And these are just not questions that were asked before.

But actually, I want to get back to something that you said because I think it's a good sort of segue. Another question that I have about feeling that a number of people who get into this field may have had some sort of trauma early on that may have turned them on to this the way you described, you know, your father being a Holocaust survivor, et cetera.

And I also know that you worked on how children who have dealt with trauma also may become extremists. And, so are you seeing parallels? And I hate to make that I'm not trying to make that comparison, but for those who are fighting hate and extremism and may have that background, those who are perpetrating it and may have that background. I mean, based on what you've studied, how do you make sense out of that?

JESSICA STERN: If you think about who's gonna be a really good police officer, it's someone who can think like a criminal. I think those of us who study terrorism, the best analyst, I don't know whether I'd say the best scholar, but the best analyst is someone who really learns how to think like a terrorist.

Is that because the analyst has also experienced trauma? I'm not sure I'm ready to go that far, but you're noticing something interesting. Certainly, learning how to think like a terrorist is absolutely critical. You have to be able to find the terrorist inside you. I mean, a psychologist once said that to me, that, the first time I went, my first terrorists were the kind of people you study, neo-Nazis.

These was the first terrorist that I talked to. The psychologist said to me you need to essentially become the neo-Nazi in order to fully understand that. How could I do that? You know, I'm a child of a survivor. It just seemed like an absolutely impossible task to me. It doesn't feel that way anymore. I am able to locate that hate in myself. I'm not gonna act on that hate, but we all have hate. It's not necessarily for a group but you can find rage and hate inside yourself. When I was that young, I was a good girl. I didn't think I had any of that. Over time, I found it.

OREN: Yeah. If you look hard enough, all of us can find a little bit of that inside or, or a lot of it, I guess. I don't know how to ask this question. But how does somebody become, you know, a terrorist? Are these questions being asked now more than they were when you first started looking at this?

JESSICA STERN: Oh, yeah.

OREN: Why is that? Is it just because the issues become so much worse or is it just people are legitimately trying to find solutions? I mean, what do you think the difference is

JESSICA STERN: If you could take care of the problem from the perspective of the Pentagon with a drone, it doesn't really matter why the person becomes a terrorist. I mean, I was really interested personally in that question, but that wasn't something the government was especially interested in.

The kind of work I was doing when I first started out on this path was not that expensive. Now, the work is very expensive because we're looking at a lot of data. So, the fact that the government is interested in this is important, you cannot take care of a domestic terrorism problem with drones. There's no military response to a domestic terrorism problem. As we have more domestic terrorism, it suddenly becomes really important to consider a public health approach.

And what we're funded to look at now is helping probation officers prevent recidivism. Is the approach to terrorists who come out of prison does it need to be different from the approach to others? I think the answer is probably, it's not that different, but probation officers are scared, they are really scared dealing with terrorists coming out of prison.

OREN: Right. Because it presumably somebody who's like, robbed somebody who gets out of prison and you're afraid he's gonna go rob somebody again. But if it's somebody who's committed a terrorist act, I mean, if they're gonna do the same thing, it's just that much more I imagine, concerning issue.

JESSICA STERN: Yeah, because it could be a lot of people, I mean, the people who come out of prison are generally convicted of terrorism-related crimes, perhaps they were supporting a terrorist movement or were involved in a terrorist act in some way. You don't see a lot of people coming out of prison who have already killed a lot of people.

But, yeah, it's scary for that reason. We're also looking at what kind of therapies are being used with this population and which therapies might be important. So, one thing we found is something called moral reconnection therapy is of interest. Another therapy is dialectical behavioral therapy.

OREN: These are foreign languages to me. Yeah. What do those mean?

JESSICA STERN: Moral reconnection therapy. Somebody told me that it started out as a typo. The word reconnection was a typo and dark. It's teaching people the impact of their choices, helping them understand the morality. And dialectical behavioral therapy was developed to help people respond to extreme emotion in a way that they don't hurt themselves. And it seems to be useful to help people respond to extreme emotion in a way they won't hurt others as well.

So that's something we're trying to figure out whether probation officers could use components of dialectical behavioral therapy in their encounters with extremists coming out of prison. So, the government hasn't proposed to us, "Can you please tell us why people become terrorists?" They have much more specific questions related to policy.

OREN: So, from chemistry to psychology, this field has taken you on quite a trip, right? You sort of dealt with it in so many different ways. I obviously have always admired your work.

It's been a pleasure being on some calls with you and meeting you a couple of times. When you look at the focus on extremism and terrorism in this country over the past however many years, it has gone from one thing to another, international domestic and you've just could have been there as an important voice throughout the changes. And just thank you for what you've done to contribute to our understanding of this issue and to honestly prepare the next generation of folks who, let's just face it, are going to have to be dealing with it well after us because it ain't going away anytime soon.

So just thank you for all that you've done and continue to do.

JESSICA STERN: Thank you very much. Great to talk to you and obviously I'm a big fan.

OREN: Thank you so much. I really do appreciate it.

JESSICA REAVES: Thank you, as always, for listening and please, if you have questions, comments, irate rants, key lime pie recipes, please send them to us. We love to get your emails and you can reach us at extremely@ADLorg. So, please do get in touch, ask us questions you have about the world of extremism, about our work.

And now let's cut, Oren, with our life rafts for the week.

OREN: This is gonna be tough. This has been a really difficult couple of weeks. So, I am really excited to hear what you could possibly come up with.

JESSICA REAVES: Well, I had sort of a life raft and I use an asterisk after that in place before the horrors of October 7th. I briefly lost my sanity and decided to foster two puppies on top of the dog that we already have. So I have spent the last two weeks not only working at this very demanding job, but also managing two 10-week-old puppies. So, now I know I can get through a lot of things. They really have given me a lot of love and joy and moments of solace. And so I've been very grateful to them when they're not like ripping things apart and or eating my shoe.

OREN: So, fostering means you're going to train them to then be...

JESSICA REAVES: They need to be adopted.

OREN: Got it, got it.

JESSICA REAVES: They're lovely. If anyone's interested, please email us.

OREN: Ok. There we go. Good use of the email.

My life raft? I'm gonna go with key lime pie. So here's the deal.

JESSICA REAVES: That was last time also, you know.

OREN: Yeah, some people will talk to you about cool lime pie. Yeah, it's different.

JESSICA REAVES: Does it have cool whip in it?

OREN: Not sure.

JESSICA REAVES: Why is it called cool lime pie?

OREN: You know what? People should investigate and write in to extremely@ADL.org and let us know if I'm making this up or not. But there are other, my point is, lesser versions or pies that are adjacent to the key lime pie. But for me the pie itself, the whole thing this week. That's my life raft.

JESSICA REAVES: Not the adjacent version but the OG key lime pie.,

OREN: The OG key lime pie. You know, it sounds like nothing but it can be everything.