

BUT HER LYRICS... EPISODE 006

SHOW NOTES:

This episode of But Her Lyrics... tackles track 5 of Wonderful Hell, "White Lies" with cannabis advocate and activist, Kassia Graham from Cannaclusive. Host Shawna and Kassia discuss how volatile the cannabis industry is, not only due to the racist history of policing and the war on drugs, but also the inconsistencies of cannabis legalization across the country. The band talks about recording the song, and share their feelings about the subject matter.

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All episode transcriptions and important links can be found right here a few days after the original air date: shawnapotter.com/#/but-her-lyrics-podcast, where you can also access the resource list Kassia graciously shared with us.

LINKS SHARED BY GUEST KASSIA:

Cannaclusive

<http://Instagram.com/cannaclusive>

Cannabis for Black Lives

<http://cannabisforblacklives.com>

InclusiveBase

<http://inclusivebase.com>

The Accountability List

<http://bit.ly/accountforitall>

Floret Coalition

<https://broccolimag.com/floret>

Anti-Asian abuse by law enforcement:

We Want Cop-Free Communities: Against the Creation of an Asian Hate Crime Task Force by the NYPD

<https://link.medium.com/17JM3Nk2yfb>

Anti- Blackness, policing, and the War on Drugs:

What George Floyd and Breonna Taylor Can Teach Us About the History of the War on Drugs and Needed Police Reforms

<https://www.commondreams.org/views/2020/07/04/what-george-floyd-and-breonna-taylor-can-teach-us-about-history-war-drugs-and>

LINKS:

Shawnapotter.com

<https://www.patreon.com/shawnapotter>

<https://www.akpress.org/making-spaces-safer-book.html>

<https://www.orcinypress.com/producto/como-crear-espacios-mas-seguros/>

<https://www.b9store.com/waronwomen>

<https://shirtkiller.com/collections/waronwomen>

<https://lhpmerch.com/artists/war-on-women/>

<https://coretexrecords.com/>

Bigcrunchamrepair.com

'Capture the Flag' album workbook: <https://bridge9.bandcamp.com/album/capture-the-flag>

Shawna Potter: Welcome to But Her Lyrics..., the show where we delve into the meaning and politics behind each song from the new War On Women album Wonderful Hell. I'm Shawna Potter, singer and lyricist for War On Women and your host. Black Lives Matter. I've said it before on this show that "matter" is the minimum and yet it still must be said. Today, we're tackling "White Lies", track five of Wonderful Hell. It's about the whitewashing of the cannabis industry, police violence against communities of color, and how the drug war has been used as an excuse to profile and profit off of these communities. I want to give a warning to any Black, Brown, or Indigenous people listening, you just might not have the energy for this episode. It makes sense if you're feeling exhausted and you think another chat about racism won't be helpful for you. So, feel free to turn this off or you can skip ahead and just join us for the band interviews which come after my interview with Kassia Graham from Cannacclusive, an organization that fights for a more equitable cannabis industry. But white people, you better listen to this whole thing. Believe it or not, I was writing and editing this podcast on April 20th. No, really. [Shawna laughs]

While I'm bummed that our weed song wasn't ready to post on 420, talk about a missed opportunity, it's way more important to note that I've been working on this episode during the trial of Derek Chauvin, a former Minneapolis police officer charged with the murder of George Floyd, a horrific incident that sparked protests around the world in 2020. And just before I started recording this bit right here, he was found guilty on all counts. We do need to celebrate the wins when they come, for our mental health and to make it easier to keep fighting. But this is basic accountability, something that should be standard and frankly, a position we shouldn't even fucking be in. According to The New York Times, since testimony of Chauvin's trial began on March 29th, at least 64 people have died at the hands of law enforcement nationwide with Black and Latino people representing more than half the dead. I've got some more

numbers for you, too. In 2018, 40% of drug arrests were for cannabis. In 2017, there were more arrests for cannabis possession than all violent crimes combined. Black Americans are four times as likely to be arrested for cannabis violations even though both Black and white people use it equally. Some people are serving life in prison for a drug that is legal in some form in 33 states. I live in so-called Baltimore on Piscataway land and the disparity is clear here. I've been here long enough to witness the slow and partial legalization, to see every neighborhood have its own cannabis shop pop up. None that I know of are Black owned. All the while, a disproportionate amount of Black and Brown people are sitting in jail for minor drug offenses and are less likely to have equal access to small business loans to start their own shop. It's fucking appalling. So, I'm thrilled that I got a chance to talk with Kassia Graham. Kassia does a great job of showing us just what a clusterfuck the cannabis industry can be, how volatile it is not only due to the racist history of the police and the drug war in the US, but also the frustrations that come with each state and our federal government all having their own policies that don't always work with each other. It's ridiculous. Luckily, she lays it all out for us.

[Music]

Shawna Potter: Kassia, thank you so much for joining me on my little show. You are a really busy person it seems. Can you introduce yourself to everyone and tell us a little bit about all the different projects you're involved in?

Kassia Graham: Oh, gosh. [Kassia laughs] So, hi everyone. My name is Kassia, my pronouns are she/her, they/them. I'm just like what do I not do? [Shawna laughs] Apparently, I am [Kassia laughs] the Director of Community and Digital at Cannacclusive. That's a cannabis advocacy and marketing, branding, DEI collective. I am also the lead on the cannabis for Black Lives leadership team, and that's an offshoot of Cannacclusive where we basically get the cannabis industry into giving back directly to those communities impacted by the war on drugs by supporting equity-based cannabis businesses. I'm also on Broccoli Magazine's Floret Coalition and it's also within the cannabis industry. But this time, we have organizations give directly back to organizations that are doing the work like right on the ground. So, we have worked with the Equitable Giving Circle, Black Feast which is basically about cultivating Black joy especially during these rough times, the ADABI Healing Shelter in Navajo Nation. We just basically run the gamut and try to give back to folks who are in need. And not lastly, but I guess maybe the last thing [Kassia laughs] I'll talk about is my work as a co-producer with the Black X Film Festival. So that is a film festival that centers Black queer folks and it's been like quite the pleasure to work on it and it's coming up a bit later this year. And then outside of that stuff, [Kassia laughs] my regular gig is as a freelance digital strategist.

Shawna Potter: I mean, your life sounds like being in a band where you have like 10 different jobs and [Shawna laughs] it's like all the things you care about, but then also something to pay the rent with. It's amazing that you balance it all.

Kassia Graham: Yeah. I mean, it can be a feat sometimes, but I really enjoy what it is that I do. It's pretty rewarding.

Shawna Potter: And Floret Coalition is like the cutest name I've ever heard, too. [Kassia laughs]

Kassia Graham: I named it. [Kassia laughs]

Shawna Potter: Oh, my gosh. [Kassia laughs] Well, I'm obviously talking to the right person. [Shawna laughs] What led you to focusing your racial justice lens on the cannabis industry? I feel like there's probably a story there.

Kassia Graham: How did I end up in Cannaclusive? So, Cannaclusive was founded by Mary Pryor, Tonya Rapley-Flash and Charlese Antoinette Jones I think roughly 2017. What happened is they were trying to get their foot in the cannabis industry and they all ended up in LA for one reason or another and they were finding that it was just really difficult because all the rooms they were walking into were older, whiter, male, and moneyed. And they didn't come from those backgrounds and it was just very difficult for them to have people pay attention. And these are all really accomplished women that are doing this, but at the same time, it was just because they didn't come from that "pedigree" and weren't bros. They were not given that respect. So, then they also just realized that the space while Black, Indigenous, Latino people were promised equity, like that just was not happening. So, they created Cannaclusive basically to help people get a foot in the door just by providing resources and then also making sure that consumers were both recognized on the policy side, so helping people get more involved with that and also doing policy work. And then also, just from the visual perspective, we were tired of seeing those images of just a particular type of a Black stoner, and as a Jamaican-American, I'm always offended because [Shawna laughs] it's like a Black guy in a Rasta cap and he's smoking a spliff and that's people's idea of Black people with cannabis versus like lawyers, doctors, folks in entertainment and not just rappers, but who consume the plant whether it's for adult use purposes or for medical issues. I'm a two-time cancer survivor and I also had stem cell transplant on top of that, so- Stem cell transplant, yes. But my own cells thankfully, although I still ended up with allergies which is very strange. Sometimes when you get a stem cell transplant, you can end up with someone else's allergies. [Kassia laughs] Yeah.

So, I understand the purpose of the plant and also just coming from being Jamaican, having a grand uncle who is Rastafarian, my mom used to make tinctures and topicals and such from cannabis, so it's always been like a part of my life. Of course, when I was older, when I was in my teens, I definitely experimented and then when I was older like my 20s and 30s, primarily for like sleep and pain, and then the cancer that came in my mid late-ish 30s, that was when I really delved more into it.

Shawna Potter: You have such a strong connection to it medically and culturally. That's very clear now [Shawna laughs] why this is such a big part of your life, why you're doing such great work for people. What would you say to someone who doesn't even really know that there's a problem with equity in the cannabis industry? Where would you start?

Kassia Graham: So, well, it depends on who is asking. [Kassia laughs]

Shawna Potter: Let's say a random white person that doesn't even smoke.

Kassia Graham: Okay. So [Shawna laughs] definitely, I think that folks should first start by checking any kind of privilege or assumptions that they have. And then I think listening to those who've been affected by the war on drugs, that's definitely paramount. And I mean, most any Black or Brown person who's growing up in a large city is typically someone who may have endured it. I think they have to realize that equity is something that benefits everyone. So, no one's going to be losing if you are treating people with basic human decency. That's basically what equity is. And a lot of people that's lost on them because even people who are not in the industry or who are not considering going to the industry get

upset about equity and I'm just like, it literally doesn't affect you in any which way. Even if you're in the industry, the only way that it affects you is that it's saying that you should reconsider how it is that you're moving through the industry. If you are in the industry and you have the ability to create jobs, are you making sure that people who've been affected by the war on drugs, people who are formerly incarcerated, people who do not have like the capital, or may not necessarily have the necessary formal education to be in the industry but know their shit, you know? Are you going to be helping to uplift those people? And while I love budtenders, I think they're fantastic, they're like the heart of cannabis I feel, you also have to be able to promote people beyond the managerial level. So, they're at the director level, they are not just the whole seat at the table thing. I'm like, they have to have a voice while they're at that table, and then you have to listen to that voice. So, I think that that's something that's very important.

Oftentimes, we'll put up a post that's about equity and we'll get the odd white person on there who is like, "we're all human, we're all..." [Shawna laughs] And it's like okay. Well, yeah, I know that we're all human. I paid attention in biology class and did very well. [Shawna laughs] However, I know that we are not all treated well and it is not a feeling, it is not an emotion, it is a fact. And you have lots of people who want to argue facts over feelings. I'm like, okay, well, this thing that's not a feeling is backed up by actual numbers. It tells you that Black folks and Latino people and Indigenous people are more likely to be incarcerated for drug use. Black people who use cannabis at a rate that's basically I think the same as white folks, I think they're what like three times more likely two point three to three times or something like that more likely to be arrested for cannabis use and possession, you know? That's a problem and that's not a we're all human problem. That's a racism problem. That's a white supremacy problem. And that's something that definitely has to be confronted in cannabis because people think it doesn't exist, it absolutely does. Because white supremacy is what leads you to "equity in Illinois being a sham". [Shawna laughs] It's the reason why people who have equity licenses in California are paying rent for years, two-three years for an empty space just to have that space because of all the red tape.

Shawna Potter: Oh, wow, I'm unfamiliar with this. What does this mean exactly?

Kassia Graham: People who have equity licenses. So basically, you have to have a storefront if you want to do brick and mortar for your dispensary. But unfortunately, there's just like so much red tape and there's not enough money in some equity programs and it's just a lot. And so, what happens is even people who like again are very knowledgeable on what it is they do, who have gone and got the capital, have the space, they have to wait because they have to make sure that they're compliant. There are also tax issues because the IRS, they will tax you but you can't recoup anything. So, any deductions that people usually get, cannabis companies cannot. I think it's very limited. I think you may be able to get on your point-of-sale items I believe, but not unless... I want to say sorry, when I say a point of sale, I mean like the actual maybe your laptop, maybe your tablet, but in terms of like the plant itself, no. Yeah, like even in insurance, let's say you're a dispensary and you get robbed, you may be able to get like the display case, but if someone takes the cannabis that's actually there, good luck, you know?

So yeah, being in this industry is very volatile. So, the Black folks and Brown and Indigenous people who get into this industry, they understand that and they're not asking for a handout, you know? They're basically just saying you've received this head start that we haven't had solely based on our race, solely based on our ZIP code, on how much money we have, you know? We want to enter, we want to build and grow, we're getting this little boost. And I don't even see it as a boost really, it's something that I

think is owed to these folks because for no reason again other than race, their lives were upended one way or another. And people fail to see the cycle, they think the cycle begins and ends in jail. And it's like no, because people's entire families or sometimes generations are impacted by one person being incarcerated. It's this ripple effect.

Shawna Potter: When sometimes people ask me, “Oh, you're in a feminist band, when are you going to run out of things to sing about?” And I say, “Well, the funny thing is I won't because everything, any issue you care about, anything at all that's going on, there's a feminist angle, right, there's a feminist issue.” And obviously, that's true for racism. There's always some weird racist thing about anything at all that anyone cares about and this is just another example of like I don't know anything at all about this world. But of course, there's all these little tiny things that build up and affect Black and Brown and Indigenous people in very specific ways that white people just don't have to deal with, just aren't thrown at them.

Kassia Graham: And the thing is there's so many resources out there, I mean, Cannacclusive like, yes, going to toot our horn [Shawna “you should.”] [Shawna and Kassia laugh] We don't just share pretty pictures of people, we really dive into lots of different things and different issues that affect people of color and across the intersections, so men, women, folks who are queer, disabled, we run the gamut because cannabis like people just don't realize how important it is and has been to various communities at one time or another and I'm also including hemp in this conversation because when you look at the history post slavery, one of the things that a lot of Black American farmers grew was hemp. And then, it was in abundance, people were becoming successful and then, that became an issue. [Shawna laughs] Yeah. And then even things like the racist history of watermelon. Again, that's something that a lot of Black farmers were growing after slavery. So then, here comes white supremacy. Let's go ahead and draw these big, white-lipped black faces eating watermelon and so they made eating watermelon [Kassia and Shawna laugh] something that was bad.

Shawna Potter: [Shawna laughs] I'm sorry. I'm just thinking like ‘and watermelons the best’. Obviously, everyone loves watermelon. What the fuck, guys? Okay. [Shawna laughs] I'm sorry.

Kassia Graham: Honestly, it wasn't until I was again, I wasn't born here, but I grew up here and so, all the history that I learned was Black American history. I also learned some Jamaican history, but obviously they were not teaching that in classes. I learned it from my family and also like just my own research and so on and reading books. But it wasn't until I think I was maybe in my late 20s that I actually ate watermelon in public for the first time. And it's because I was at the Mad Decent Block Party and I saw this white guy eating every watermelon and I was like, “What the fuck?” [Kassia and Shawna laugh] I was just like, “You know what?” [Kassia laughs] I don't know why. I was like, “I'm not going to be ashamed to eat watermelon in public ever again.” [Kassia laughs]

Shawna Potter: But that's what these -ISMS do to us though.

Kassia Graham: Yeah. And so, I had already had my lot and I feel like I've been like pro-Black most of my life. There was a small period of time where I was not *not* pro-Black, but just like I was focused on being a respectable Negro and it was just like I had already embraced all these wonderful things about myself, but that thing that's the one thing that I couldn't shake because of propaganda. [Shawna laughs “Glad you got there, because it's delicious”] Yes, it is especially with a little bit of salt.

Shawna Potter: Little salt! Southerners, yep. I was curious if you listened to the song “white Lies.”

Kassia Graham: I did. I loved it. I had feelings and I was also... I actually came across a post, I want to say it was like yesterday by someone named Donney Rose. And it was basically just like it's almost as if no one really stops to realize how difficult it is to be Black in America but to still persist, to create, to educate, to innovate, just to be while every single day you don't know if it's going to be your last, you don't know if someone else is going to be murdered by police and then not just murdered by police, but also hear bullshit about them that's not true. And it's never true, that's the thing that gets me, but people will find a way to argue it and to justify it. So, when I think about obviously George Floyd's murder, Breonna Taylor's murder, and now Adam Toledo, not Black but a young man of color, and also Daunte Wright, I think Daunte Wright and Adam Toledo's we're the two that just finally broke me, you know? And so, to hear that song, I'm just like I wish it wasn't relevant, but it is.

Shawna Potter: So, in that song, I'm clearly focusing on the racial profiling aspect, cops using the idea that no, I smelled weed to stop and arrest any person that's not white. And while that's happening simultaneously, white people are getting approved for business loans so that they can sell weed to other white people. So, I was curious since you did listen to it, I was curious one, did I get anything wrong. And then two, what was I missing?

Kassia Graham: Oh, I was not necessarily analyzing it [Kassia laughs] like that. Okay, I think that overall, you really captured it, just the excuses that are made, the consistent state violence, and then just like again, that cycle.

Shawna Potter: How can people listening to this help? Whether they smoke or not, what can people be doing right now?

Kassia Graham: Definitely reaching out to their representatives whether it's on a local or a higher state level, so like down to the person who is on your... Gosh, how am I forgetting? [Kassia laughs] Like your community board, your assembly person, your senator, let them know that you support the legalization of cannabis, but specifically with equity provisions in mind. And that should include making sure that people who have been incarcerated have the ability to enter the industry. That's something that beyond national MORE Act was not going to do. It was going to bar people who have been incarcerated from entering the industry, making sure that that money goes directly to those communities that had been impacted versus going to cops to police them because that's one of the ironies of some equity programs is the cops get [Kassia laughs] a portion of the tax revenue. Yes. And it's so that they can train and spend the other. But look, we know that money is going to be used to just re-criminalize people. And with the New York bill, we had two different versions. There was one that was Governor Cuomo's bill and then another one that actually, it was led by Senator Liz Krueger and Assembly Person Crystal People-Stokes. And the bill that of course the women had, [Kassia laughs] it was a lot more comprehensive, a lot more equity focused and then the one that Cuomo had, it was just like your usual crap where basically, multi-state organizations, we call them MSOs, were basically to be able to come in and steamroll everyone else.

And then I also know that they wanted initially Cuomo's bill a portion of the money to go to the MTA for more cops. I'm just like, "How does that even compute?" [Kassia laughs] First of all, we don't need more cops, we need less cops. We need more teachers, we need more social workers, we need more hospitals, we need more schools, smaller classrooms. Hello. [Kassia laughs] And also, we definitely need to work on making sure that people have nutritious food to eat. That's like one of the biggest things. Kids missing

that very first meal can determine how the rest of their day is going to go. And then you just keep on then again, starts rolling into that cycle, kids are hungry, they're not paying attention in school, they get in trouble with the teacher. Speaking of teachers, we need more teachers of color because white teachers do contribute to the school to prison pipeline because they come in there with their bias and they punish Black children, Latino children, Indigenous children at a higher rate than they do white children. Yeah. So, making sure that even if you don't smoke, you can support other people's right to smoke. And it's not all just about smoking by the way. [Kassia laughs] Let me dial that back for a minute because cannabis is not for everyone. There are some people who are allergic to it. There are some people who just don't like it and that's completely fine.

But then I also think that there's some people who have been so used to it applied in a certain way and some of that is because of like Reefer Madness. [Shawna laughs] There are cannabis pills, there are tinctures, there are topicals, there are sublinguals, so there are lots of different ways for people to consume cannabis. And I use it for pain sometimes so I have a topical, sometimes I will put a couple of drops under my tongue, I also have elevated Pop Rocks, [Kassia laughs] I have a gang of edibles. But it's really important that people actually reach out. So that means that you are calling, you are emailing. Heck, you can send a fax. There are a couple of online fax items that you can use. I'm forgetting the four-digit code that you can use via text basically, like resist bot can aid with stuff like that and there are a couple of other apps that let you just basically send a really quick text to your representatives. All you need is I think your address and your ZIP code and that's it. Because it's really important that people hear a voice and even if you can even walk to your representative's office, like seeing your face and letting them know that you support cannabis legalization with equity top of mind, then that would be really fantastic. It's really important for white folks to show up for people of color. For many ways, when you think about the cannabis industry and you think about culture, a lot of that is Black culture. You'll think about Snoop Dogg and Wiz Khalifa and let's say Al Harrington who used to play professional basketball. He is now in the industry at Viola. You think about Jay Z who has Monogram, you know? So, there's a lot of Black culture that goes into cannabis culture not to negate like hippies [Kassia and Shawna laugh] and so on, but you really think about like a lot of-

Shawna Potter: But the hippies are fine. They can go fend for themselves. It's okay. [Shawna and Kassia laugh]

Kassia Graham: You think about a lot of like Black culture. And then also what you were stating before in your song, cannabis has been used or at least the excuse that oh, I smell cannabis or this person is supposedly on drugs or has sold drugs or something as an excuse to murder Black people. So that's one of the reasons why it's really pertinent for white folks to step up.

Shawna Potter: What are your hopes for legalization? Is there anyone doing it right? Or what's your vision for what the country should be doing or what it should look like?

Kassia Graham: So, as I told someone a couple days ago, the bar for legalization for equity, it is in hell. So, [Kassia and Shawna laugh] the closest that anyone is coming to getting there, Oakland, they have a pretty decent equity program, but again, it still has a lot of hurdles. Oregon, not just with cannabis, but even with psychedelics, they're definitely working on it. Yeah, they decriminalized psychedelics. They're completely legal for adult use and medical for cannabis and I think there may be some other drugs that they're working on. I definitely come from like a harm reduction mode where I think it's important to

meet people where they're at. But at the same time, everyone who uses cannabis is not necessarily dependent on it and then there are people who may not be taking your typical pharmaceuticals for depression or anxiety or pain and instead are relying on cannabis but they simply don't have a medical cannabis license, which I have some mixed feelings about that. Because let's say in New York, even if you do have authorization to use medical cannabis, if you live in federally funded housing, you could lose your housing for consuming cannabis, you know? And now with our legalization laws, they're saying that I guess by the year 2022 or something, but again, [Kassia laughs] if you've been following cannabis, you'll see that they'll say, oh, yeah, we're going to legalize this and then we're going to do that and then like three years later, it's like a SpongeBob episode.

Shawna Potter: Does that feel like that bureaucratic left-hand not talking to the right-hand stuff? Does it feel like just classic slow government or does it feel purposeful to trip people up?

Kassia Graham: It does feel like it's to trip people up because what ends up happening with legalization is there tend to be a lot of challenges and the challenges always come from exactly who you expect. These large companies that want to roll in and just suck everything up. They want the best property, they want to have all the licenses, they want everything and they don't seem to feel as if the "little people" deserve more, you know?

Shawna Potter: They don't care about the person and government funding housing having access to their product because they want to sell it to rich white people.

Kassia Graham: Yeah, basically, basically. And that's another thing the way that white folks who the word ally gets on my nerves for lots of reasons because I've just seen people who say that they are "allies" do like absolutely anti-Black or anti-POC stuff. And then they'll have like a Black Lives Matter or like stop Asian hate filter on their Facebook quote and I'm just like, "Oh, that's why I don't trust you." [Shawna laughs] But what I said earlier about shopping your values. That's also another way I try to be mindful of how I speak because support feels more like you're doing it out of the goodness of your heart versus actually shop these BIPOC owned brands.

Shawna Potter: Yeah, it should be intentional. It's a plan, a plan to be an accomplice.

Kassia Graham: Exactly. I much more prefer people who are accomplices, not just the people who are going to throw the brick and then let Black people take the fall for it, [Shawna laughs] but people who are going to stand up right then and there. So, shopping your values. And then when you shop your values, don't be a dick about it. It's not like some badge. You don't deserve brownie points for it, you know? And I think that the biggest thing for me is when someone does the right thing, they think that they need to always be rewarded for it. It's like unless you're saving a life, [Shawna laughs] I just don't know about you needing an ass-pat. [Shawna laughs]

Shawna Potter: And I think hopefully for anyone listening who's into our band that this would be an easy extension of hopefully what you're already doing of buying music and media from smaller artists and dependent artists, marginalized artists, not throwing money at already rich people that don't actually need [Shawna laughs] your money, stream their shit and buy our shit and I think that makes sense for this world too. Shop small and local and marginalized to help even out the inequity.

Kassia Graham: Yeah. And then listen to those marginalized communities. Listen not because you want to speak back, but because you want to hear what it is that they're saying and you want to act on it. I get a lot of people who they're there, they see what it is that we're saying, but it's only so that they can come back and refute something. [Shawna laughs] There's nothing to refute, you know? We have tons of data on everything and anything that is that we say as advocates in terms of equity, in terms of incarceration, racism in the industry and such. This isn't something that we're making up. The same thing goes with the consistent state violence against people of color. This isn't something we're making up. And even when it comes to hate crimes against Asian-American people, what they've been showing in the media is primarily like young Black kids or sometimes mentally ill Black people who've committed these crimes. But I know that in New York, there was a study, well not a study, but... I can't remember the name of the organization, but they were basically noting that half of the anti-Asian attacks and this is not the recent attacks but prior, were committed by law enforcement. Yeah. And so-

Shawna Potter: I shouldn't sound surprised. I'm sorry for even sounding surprised. [Shawna laughs] I take it back.

Kassia Graham: I think it's surprising to a lot of people because then you also have some people from media who are film and TV stars who may not necessarily like know the groundwork that's been put in by Asian-American activists prior to them who don't want policing in their neighborhoods because they know about these anti-Asian crimes committed by law enforcement and also, because they know that when you have this show of force, it causes more harm not just to Asian-American communities, but also to others who may venture into those communities especially if they are people of color themselves.

Shawna Potter: I saw the accountability list on Cannaclusive which I think is really cool. Can you shout out some Black, Brown and Indigenous owned cannabis shops or companies that people should be buying from? Or is it too many? Should we just check out the list? [Shawna laughs]

Kassia Graham: There's so many. Actually, what people can do is go to InclusiveBase inclusivebase.com and there are just I think maybe 600 or 700 BIPOC cannabis owned brands that they can find, so I should probably say companies instead of brands because it runs the gamut from the ancillary side which is not plant touching to dispensaries, distributors and so on. Some of my favorites, let's see. For glassware, MOTA Glass. I also love Elevate Jane, they make really amazing glass and Potli, they make honey and different condiments and so on and they have both hemp and CBD items. Gosh, I just felt like there's so much. The Hollingsworth Cannabis Company, that's a family-owned farm. I want to say I think they're in Washington. And then there are others that are not necessarily black-owned, but they feel more like accomplices in the space. So, there's Besito. There is Sonder which is owned by a really awesome queer couple. KAHN which is I believe KAHN reflect both or only one of the founders is a white queer man, but they've been really awesome with aiding Cannaclusive and one of the founders, Luke works with me at Cannabis for Black Lives. So, those are some of the folks who I feel are in the space like doing really great things. But again, InclusiveBase has just a ton of people who are worth shopping from if you're shopping your values, if you believe that Black Lives Matter, if you want to stop Asian hate, if you believe that we should be abolishing the police or defunding them then you want to go ahead and shop those brands.

I think a lot of people when they hear about InclusiveBase, they're like, well, why don't you have white-owned brands? [Shawna laughs] The white brands are going to do okay. They really are, you know? [Shawna laughs] It's just like by virtue of having that leg up and it's not just a couple of years in

cannabis, it's 400 years of a leg up. They're going to do okay and it's not going to hurt. And then it's also like if there is a white-owned dispensary, make sure that you're doing things to support Black folks in cannabis. We're not saying you have to just buy a product because it's created by Black folks or Latino folks, Asian people, Indigenous people, but lots of these brands put out really good stuff and they are being missed out on because everyone is focused on white celebrity owned brands. Like yay, Martha Stewart, I like that she's so put together, but Martha's going to be good on money. [Shawna laughs] I like Seth Rogen and I think Houseplant is dope, but Seth's going to be good on money, you know? So, support these smaller brands. I mean, I know that at least one, it's cool, Potli they are Asian-American, but I know that some of their honey came about because they are family-based. They have like a small honey farm and that was cool just like how that all came about. So, they have like honey that's infused with both THC and then they have another one that's infused with CBD and they have another which is more sleep-oriented. Well, that has CBG.

So yeah, I could talk about cannabis all day. I know that [Shawna laughs] I'm kind of sad that I missed some names. I'm actually working on a roundup right now. So, they can also visit Cannaclusive on Instagram and we're going to have just like a BIPOC roundup one for queer owned brands and then another I think that's probably like women owned brands in the space.

Shawna Potter: Well, I was just going to ask you what you're working on now and what your socials are so we could find you. [Shawna laughs]

Kassia Graham: So, you can find Cannaclusive @cannaclusive and you can find me, my personal Instagram is @msgoodegg. That's M S G O O D E G G.

Shawna Potter: Thank you, Kassia, so much for joining me, for illuminating these issues for us and I just really appreciate your time today.

Kassia Graham: Thank you so so much. This has been really awesome and I'm so happy that Valentina turned me on to a new band.

Shawna Potter: Oh, yay, thank you. [Kassia laughs] That's nice.

That was great. In case you're wondering, there is a reason we say cannabis instead of marijuana throughout the interview. According to an article in The Guardian, the word marijuana comes from Mexico, and about a century ago, prohibitionists used the "exotic sounding word" to emphasize the drug's foreignness to white Americans and to appeal to the xenophobia of the time. So, because of its racialized history, cannabis is currently the preferred term. All right. Band interviews are coming up but first, I'm sending the biggest thank you I can to my biggest Patreon supporters, Recruit Stephen and Julina and meatheads, Melissa, Lauren, Zachary and Gaelen. And of course, our sponsor, First Defense Krav Maga. Thank you First Defense Krav Maga. If you're not a Patreon, you are missing out on some very cool stuff, so here's your reminder. We have exclusive and private chats that I call meandering conversations between me and J. Robbins from Jawbox, Lauren Kashan from Sharptooth, Katy Otto from everything, Ryan Patterson from Coliseum and Fotocrime and Autumn Lavis that you might have seen doing merch for us on a tour and artist and musician Landis Expandis who's the guy that made the music video for today's song "White Lies." Have you seen it? Music videos in the age of COVID just seemed

incredibly daunting and difficult to us when not every one of us lives in the same town and I don't know about you, but we were all scrambling to survive and find work. So being able to hire Landis to make a video for a song that also resonates with him, well, that was an easy decision, I'll tell you. So go watch the music video for White Lies if you haven't seen it already and if you want to hear more backstory on it, well then sign up to be a Meathead on my Patreon so you can watch my conversation with Landis Expandis, who I've seen on Facebook is now making cartoons for kids? [Shawna laughs] It's super weird. He's such a busy guy. Just go check out his YouTube. I don't even know all the things that he does. Also, in the last Patreon only bonus episode, I think we finally solved the mystery of what the fuck is that sound during Dave's interview - if you were curious.

We have a request from meathead Gaelen who says, "I was wondering if you could talk about how you go about getting constructive criticism either in WoW or in other artistic endeavors? At what point in the process do you look for feedback? Who do you turn to? And how much weight do you give their critique?" I think that's changed over the years. I think with age comes a little bit more self-awareness on when you need a fresh perspective or an editor and you might even need it less as you get more secure in what you're doing. But with five very opinionated band members, we kind of do all our own critiquing, right? We don't all like the same stuff or have the same philosophies on creating, so I don't actually have to seek anything outside our band unless I really want to, unless I'm looking for an outsider perspective. And so, to super simplify it for me, I'll come up with a rough idea or a rough draft of lyrics and melody, I'll edit and perfect as much as possible, and then if I'm having trouble with a part or I know like a section could be better, I'll first approach Brooks to see if he has any ideas or insight based on the actual music with a certain note sit in the chords better, then we all sort of get a chance to write our best stuff, and then work on making the song as a whole better together. I'd say it is a learned skill to not take things personally in the rehearsal room, right? It can be hard, but when you trust your band and you know that in the end it's so we can present a song we're proud of, it does get easier. But it's a skill to both give and get constructive criticism.

I also think the studio is another step, right? So, our relationship with J. Robbins who records most of our stuff is that he knows what our thing is and he knows we are doing our thing. But if something really stands out to him as missing or could be better, he'll let us know. And usually because he gives us that initial space to do our thing, he's right. But if some random band we were on tour with was like, "Oh, you know that one song would be better if you would have," I would not care. I literally don't want to hear it. [Shawna laughs] I don't think criticism is constructive when it's offered out of nowhere. It should be asked for or understood in a relationship. I think I got that from when I went to high school, I was living in Nashville. All of my friends were in bands and they were all playing different kinds of music at all different skill levels and that's where I learned that being asked, so what did you think of the show, is fucking awkward. So, I never put people in that position unless it makes sense. If someone has seen us a thousand times and offers "that was a great show," I might ask them something specific like, "Oh, did I hit that one high note okay?" But that's it.

There's a second part to Gaelen's question and that's, how do you go about giving constructive feedback or advice to other artists? Well, I don't unless they ask, then I think about what is reasonable and actually attainable, you know? I won't say you guys need a new drummer or your drummer sucks, [Shawna laughs] right? But I might say, "I don't know if that snare sound fits you guys." I'm honest but I wouldn't say the snare thing unless it was true. I don't just say something to say something, but I do try

to bring an air of kindness and humility to what I'm offering. Just because they ask my advice, it doesn't mean I know what the fuck I'm talking about.

[Music]

Jennifer Vito: How does that go again?

Shawna Potter: Well, it is the music video, right that Landis Expandis did. What did you think? You don't live in Baltimore. You don't know Landis like we know Landis. He's like a Baltimore staple. What did you think of the video when you saw it first? What did you think of my harebrained idea to have Landis do his thing for this video?

Jennifer Vito: Yeah, I thought it was a cool idea. I didn't know who that was, but I understood that there was like a person who already made videos and was like a Baltimore community member and I liked that because I mean, we had to figure out how can we make some videos. They can't all be of us in separate boxes, [Shawna laughs] you know? So, I thought that was a cool idea. And I think somebody in the band had brought up that that was such an important song, like do we want to make a funny video because it's such an important song? And I think that it kind of worked out because I think it got views and broadened a different audience a little bit too and I thought it was visually stunning. I like that style. I also like people covering songs. For my birthday, I asked people to cover songs that I wrote. So, I think it's really cool and flattering to see this other person in the video, kind of a professional. Is he like an actor or? [Shawna laughs]

Shawna Potter: I mean, I guess yes, because he's so great. No, he's a musician. He was in the All Mighty Senators. He's a DJ. He's a visual artist and just all around a cool dude, right? And I think that in my interviews with people and talking with folks, I think it's a really common feeling that whatever medium you might be involved in, right, you and me, we play music mostly, we really admire folks that are doing other kinds of art and can have their take on what you do and that it's common to be inspired by other people's art or poetry or books or movies and then you write a song about that and the symbiotic nature of everyone's inspirations going around and around and finding new ways to be presented to people. So, I think that that really applies to this video of just really being impressed and admiring and being humbled and grateful that Landis would put his spin, right, on our song with his video with his visual art. It was just so cool to see what he came up with.

Jennifer Vito: Yeah. And digital labor is high right now. [Shawna laughs] We all have a lot of digital labor so it is really cool if someone takes the time to do that and I think it made it look really cool, way cooler than it would look for me to make the 100th video of me at home in my bathrobe. [Shawna laughs] And now I remember-

Shawna Potter: Why are you making videos of you in a bathrobe?

Jennifer Vito: It's because the people want it. [Shawna laughs]

Shawna Potter: I give them what they want. [Shawna laughs]

Jennifer Vito: But now I remember that song. That's the one that's like [Jennifer sings] right? [Jennifer sings]

Shawna Potter: There you go. Yeah.

Jennifer Vito: So, I remember recording those backup vocals in my home late at night. I had like a little bit of soundproofing on but there's the verse that I love it, but it's the one that's like [hand out loans to light skin tones] and just some of the lyrics I remember screaming them. [Shawna laughs] So, when you're recording, your headphones are on so if your neighbors were hearing you, all they're hearing is the backup vocals that I scream occasionally. So, silence, silence, silence and then like [hand out loans to light skin tones] What's this person screaming about in the next house over?

Shawna Potter: Yeah, like you have to give everyone a notice like don't worry, this is actually against that, you know? [Shawna and Jennifer laugh] You got to give a nice big warning any lyrics in our band taken out of context because I use a lot of sarcasm too. It's like it's going to sound bad. [Shawna laughs] It's just going to sound bad. So, I know exactly what you mean. I can only warm up before a show [Shawna laughs] with certain songs. You don't want to be singing some stuff all on its own, right? [Shawna laughs]

Jennifer Vito: Yeah. But yeah, that song is really rocking too, so I love the pace and I love that it's a rocker.

Brooks Harlan: This one I wrote pretty much top to bottom by myself like just demoing it into the computer. And this one came about because I'm a fan of that band Gouge Away and I really liked the songs that they wrote and so I wanted to try and write a song like that, maybe not write a song for them or that sounded like them, but something that had the same energy or the same feel and that's where the song came from. And I think I literally just wrote it, I wrote all the riffs and demoed it and it pretty much stayed the same since the inception, you know? We may have shortened the intro to the second verse or change where you came in with the vocals or something, but nothing drastic. I like that this song that the chorus part or the C part is like really quiet. I like that the chorus to the song would be the quietest part of the song and then it comes back really big at the end. I like how that worked out. I also like the hardcore part.

Shawna Potter: Yeah, I remember you definitely had a vision about the C part first time around being quiet and sounding like it's in a big hall and that was important to you. It was like, oh, that's how that part goes and I was like, okay, I guess. [Shawna laughs]

Brooks Harlan: It's very Fugazi influence, very Ian MacKaye style, the chords and shrinking the song down to just a solo single guitar and voice. That's I'm sure where I got the idea the influence from.

Shawna Potter: Is that one of the sections where I was still singing in front of the regular mic, but then the door was open and there was also a mic out in the big live room and so we captured both just in case?

Brooks Harlan: Well, I think the first time we did it, we did it that way. And then I decided that I didn't like it and so I had you go back and re-record it. But the second time, I just had you stand in the big live room and I set the mic about 15 feet away from you I think and I think we just decided that you should sing it a little differently.

Shawna Potter: Yeah, like sing it, just sing it. [Shawna laughs]

Brooks Harlan: Well, I think before it was a little too rock'n'roll sounding for that part. I think you and I just had different ideas about how that part should be and I wanted you to sing it a little sweeter and use the natural reverb of that big room to carry it. And I'm really happy with the way it turned out.

Shawna Potter: No, I am too. I think looking back, I now know that I was probably hesitant to sing it that way because I was like, but we're War On Women and it's got to be tough and mad, you know? And I'm sure it was hard for me to wrap my head around like no, this will be fine. This will be good. [Shawna laughs] So, I'm glad we did.

Brooks Harlan: Yeah, I think that's one thing that is a little more unique about this record is there's some quieter moments on this record that hopefully make the bigger moments seem bigger in comparison. I also really liked the end. I really liked the way the end came together. I mean I liked the chord progression in that C section and so it was fun to layer more guitars over at the end to make it a little more lush and I really love the drum fills Dave plays at the very end. They really carry it to the final note. I also like that the bass that actually lands on the fifth of the ending chord instead of the one or the tonic so it feels a little unsettled. I like that.

Shawna Potter: Were you surprised that this was also chosen by the label as a song that they liked for a single?

Brooks Harlan: No. No, I think from the beginning, I knew it was a catchier song for us and I wasn't surprised about that.

Shawna Potter: The song White Lies, that's the one we have the video for from Landis.

Sue Werner: Yeah. Yeah, it's so good. Hold on.

Shawna Potter: All right. For those that can't see this, Sue is rocking out to the song [Shawna laughs] before she talks to me about it [Shawna laughs] and she cannot be stopped. [Shawna laughs]

Sue Werner: The main intro riff of this song makes me think of The Muppets. You know how they dance with like flinging their arms like this way or that way? That's what that makes me think of for some reason.

Shawna Potter: Oh, I like it. [Sue laughs] Yeah. You could see them bopping around. Yeah, I like that.

Sue Werner: But definitely arm flinging is happening. [Sue laughs]

Shawna Potter: Okay, yeah. I mean, let's make another video for it. Okay, let's do it. [Sue laughs] Anybody out there got some muppets lying around, [Sue laughs] we need you.

Sue Werner: And I don't know. Again, another song I just can't wait to play live because this one is a banger [Shawna laughs] and I think it will be fun. It's weird to think about when this song got written and what happened months after, you know? It almost made me feel like really weird, you know? Yeah, yeah.

Shawna Potter: Yeah, yeah. I felt very weird about it, very strange about it and was kind of thankful that the album wasn't ready to be released yet, you know? I almost thought it's probably a good idea that there's some space.

Sue Werner: Yeah. And I think that that's the right way to think about it. I definitely agree with you. There was also a part of me though that was like we're missing this cultural moment and we have something really relevant to say, but you know what? I think that it's better often than that there was some space I think between our song and... Yeah. And the last thing I would want to do is like, I don't know, capitalize on something like that, you know? But anyway, but the song rips and I can't wait to play it. [Sue laughs]

Shawna Potter: Let's get into White Lies.

Dave Cavalier: White Lies, yeah. Yeah, I feel like it's important to say you wrote this line about would you politely request to get your boots off our necks before George Floyd happened and that's something that you never want to get right, I guess. That's the phrase that I'm going for here like-

Shawna Potter: Correct. It does not feel good to [Shawna laughs] predict the future and in such a tragic way. And obviously, I didn't. But I've spoken in interviews about how when you're when you're singing about social issues, about injustice, about marginalization and violence against marginalized people, you can't help but predict the future a little bit. It keeps going. It's ongoing, these issues and so it's unfortunately going to be relevant until it isn't.

Dave Cavalier: Right, right. Yeah, it will be relevant for a long time to come. As I was saying, towards the beginning, 70 million people just voted for Donald Trump and that means that 70 million people have those ideals and values in mind and that means that 70 million people are not on the same page as the other 74 million people, you know? And those are just the ones who voted, right? And so, yeah, we got like a real long way to go. You could probably keep writing fucked up lyrics and those things will keep [Dave laughs] on happening for a while, [Dave laughs] unfortunately. Sorry. [Shawna and Dave laugh]

Shawna Potter: So, this song specifically touches on a few things, but it was mostly inspired by this idea that the cannabis industry is being whitewashed and white entrepreneurs are getting opportunities and business loans while Black and Brown people men especially are being kept in jail over very, very, very small amounts or selling it on their own and they're not being led out of jail. They're not given business opportunities. And so, I don't know if you had any thoughts or like personal beliefs when it comes to where you buy your cannabis or how you practice that?

Dave Cavalier: Yeah, the whole thing is such a mess. It's like when I drive down 83 South now. In Baltimore, at the bottom of our highway is a prison and it's like the first thing [Dave laughs] you see when you drive into the city basically is this huge prison. But before that, there's a billboard and on that big billboard recently, was the new dispensary where you can go buy your weed your medical weed because weed in Maryland is now medically legal and decriminalized, right? So, if you have a card, you can be prescribed weed essentially which is stupid. [Shawna laughs] Just make it legal. I don't want people to think that I don't think medicinal marijuana is a thing. It is. It helps. It's awesome. Just make it legal. Just make it legal for recreational use as well. Because that's not why I use weed, that's not why a ton of people that I know smoke weed. We smoke it because we like it. We smoke it because it makes us more creative. We smoke it because it makes music sound better and food taste better [Shawna laughs] and it's just like makes life a little more fun sometimes, you know? I think weed is great. But it also like helps people with Tourette's and helps people with anxiety and helps people sleep and helps people have an appetite if they have cancer and helps with glaucoma and helps with all these things. But the

point I'm trying to make is like when you're driving town 83 and you see this giant billboard for going to buy some weed and then you drive right past the prison where mad Black people are locked up for weed, it's a mess. It's such a mess. It's like you can't do one without the other. You can't legalize this thing without letting all these people out of jail for this nothing crime of having a plant on them.

Shawna Potter: It makes me so angry in a way that makes it hard for me to communicate, [Dave laughs] the just utter purposeful malicious hypocrisy.

Dave Cavalier: Yeah, blatant racism, blatant systemic racism.

Shawna Potter: Yeah, over policing Black and Brown communities, finding an excuse to make arrests, to disrupt their lives, not given as much money for education or job opportunities, throw people in jail and then oh, now we're going to make it legal and we're going to give all the money to do it to white people, and to not reinvest in those same communities. It's purposeful and it's egregious, and it makes me very upset that if I really started talking about it, it would be clear that I'm not an expert [Shawna laughs] on the subject. I'm just passionate and it would not come out very well. [Shawna laughs]

Dave Cavalier: Yeah. I mean like we see the tides turning in a pretty big way. We just saw Oregon decriminalize everything, right? Like heroin decriminalized, you know? Yeah. I went to Denver last year and I bought weed like I was buying weed in Amsterdam, you know? I walked in and I bought some weed. I didn't like show him a medical card. I didn't do anything. I just showed him my ID and that was it. And I had a guy walk me around this fucking Starbucks version of a weed store, you know? [Dave laughs] It's all done up and he's like my budtender and he's like walking me through and he's like this strain will do this and this strain will do that and I'm having this boogie experience like buying weed, you know?

Shawna Potter: How does that make you feel?

Dave Cavalier: I mean it's good and it's bad, right? It's great because I didn't have to worry about going to jail because almost all of my friends have been charged with possession at some point because we're dumb. We're kids, we're in high school. Where are we going to smoke? We can't smoke at home, right? So, we're going to smoke in our cars or some shit like in the parking lot of the Giant grocery store. And shocker, a cop comes and arrests everybody. So, that's a dumb thing. People should be able to just smoke some weed and chill and not have the worry of being arrested. So, the legalization, decriminalization is all good. That's all a good thing. But why only in Denver, right? Why like California? Why not in New York, right? New York is the biggest city in the world. You can still fucking get arrested for like having weed. It's just like such a mess. It's a state's issue for some reason as opposed to just a national issue. That's a problem. Locking up Black people is a problem. It's all tied in. Yeah, I mean-

Shawna Potter: So, you're with me on the song?

Dave Cavalier: Yeah. [Shawna laughs] Yeah, I'm basically with you on the song. Yeah. [Shawna laughs] Yeah, what's the line? Big fat loans for light skin tones? Is that what you said?

Shawna Potter: Big fat loans! [Shawna and Dave laugh] Yeah, let's leave it at that, I guess. It's good.

Dave Cavalier: Yeah, "hand out loans to light skin tones," that's what you said. Yeah. Yeah, sums it up right there.

[Music]

Shawna Potter: All right, that was episode six of But Her Lyrics... I can't believe I got through it. There were kids playing basketball outside basically all fucking day, so I'm glad we made it. A little news, I've been booked for a ton of Safer Space and Bystander Intervention trainings for the month of May which is awesome. It's my favorite thing to do. But it's enough that I cannot handle recording, editing, and promoting new episodes of this podcast at the same time. So, I hope that you will grant me this birthday wish, May 21st just saying, of being cool with me taking some time off so that I can bring my best self to all these trainings, to all these projects, my partner, my dog, and my band, we just started rehearsing and myself, you know? So, I'll be back with new episodes in June. Patrons will still enjoy some fun bonus content during the month of May. So, if you haven't signed up, do it now. Catch up on everything you've missed and thank you in advance for understanding that I'm only human. Keep listening to hear the song White Lies in full. The album Wonderful Hell is available on vinyl from our Bandcamp page only right now. It's basically sold out everywhere. So, you want it on vinyl, grab it on Bandcamp. You can also grab it digitally there. Each vinyl comes with a digital download up to you and it's streaming in all the usual places.

Thanks to Brooks Harlan for chopping up our song "Her" to create the podcast theme song. If you want to support this podcast or this band, we'd be very grateful so share, subscribe and review this podcast right now. Pause it, do it right now. No, no, no, no, no, it's free and it helps. You can buy WoW merch from b9store.com, shirtkiller.com and in the UK and Europe, through CoreTex Records and lhpm merch.com. You can buy my book Making Spaces Safer from akpress.org or your local independent bookstore and it's available in Spanish from Orciny Press and they both have e-version. If you need a new overdrive or boost pedal designed and built by Brooks himself, head to bigcrunchamprepair.com and order one. If you want to cover our songs and sound like us, grab one of these overdrive or boost pedals because we do play only Big Crunch shit. And join my Patreon to help me keep this podcast going. You can join in the seeds level only \$1 a month, you can buy a membership annually and get a discount, or you can donate more to help me reach my current goal of 100 patrons. That's all. If I meet this goal, I can pay all my guests for appearing over the entire season, I can cover supplies both digital and physical and yeah, I can even buy a few more dog treats for Rosie. So, thanks for listening. Black Lives Matter. Fuck police brutality and white people: we must get our shit together. Till next time.

WHITE LIES

Money. Death. Repeat
Shoot. Kill. Repeat
Feign shock. Repeat
Thoughts. Prayers. Repeat

Big white lies
There's no other size
Locked in a room

So you can't compete

We politely request you get your boots off our necks

And if the bastards grind you down, become a diamond

And if the bastards grind you down, become a diamond and cut them all

Hand out loans

To light skin tones

Legit business?

Nothing but smoke

Stop and frisk

Proper permits

How do you spell complicit?

We politely request you get your boots off our necks

And if the bastards grind you down, become a diamond

And if the bastards grind you down, become a diamond and cut them all

I wanna make room for the glow. They light the fuse. It's gonna blow

If the bastards grind you down, become a diamond and cut them all