

## BUT HER LYRICS...EPISODE 11

### SHOW NOTES:

This episode of But Her Lyrics... tackles track 9 on Wonderful Hell, "In Your Path" Host Shawna, with the band, describe how this song is based off of a feminist Chilean protest chat from the Las Tesis collective. They also talk about how weird it was to make a music video for the song (OUT NOW) in the middle of a pandemic. The episode ends with an interview with Margaret Killjoy, a transfeminine author, musician, and podcaster, who teaches Shawna about personal safety while protesting. As always, Jenarchy and Sue need a reminder of what song we're talking about, Brooks talks music theory, and Dave, who everyone thinks is very chill, assures us he is not chill as you think. Also, Rosie the rescue makes an appearance.

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### LINKS AND RESOURCES:

Watch the music video for "In Your Path" on Youtube: <https://youtu.be/X169uqv96Qo>

Donate to The Undocumented Womens Fund in NYC at [linktr.ee/undocuwmensfund](https://linktr.ee/undocuwmensfund)

La Red Chilena contra la Violencia hacia las Mujeres at <http://www.nomasviolenciacontramujeres.cl>

"The Chilean Network against Violence against Women"

More info about the protests:

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/mar/06/chile-womens-day-protest>

Las Tesis Feminist Collective: <https://www.instagram.com/lastesis/>

Margaret's podcast: [liveliketheworldisdying.com](https://www.liveliketheworldisdying.com)

The "demonstrator's guide" stuff from here: <https://crimethinc.com/categories/how-to>

<https://riotmedicine.net/>

Everything War On Women: <https://linktr.ee/waronwomen>

To follow, support, and hire the directors:

Rob Menzer: IG @robmenzer, Website [www.ramenzer.com](https://www.ramenzer.com)

Jesse Pliska: IG @jessepliska, Website [jessepliska.com](https://jessepliska.com)

### EPISODE TRANSCRIPT:

[intro music]

**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. This time we're tackling *In Your Path*, the ninth song on the album. This is a cool episode, y'all. I'm excited to bring you the band interviews about writing and recording this song and making the music video, which patrons of the podcast have had exclusive access to for a while now, but it will be made public upon the release of this podcast episode. And we're going to change it up by doing the band interviews first and then ending with my informative interview with Margaret Killjoy, who I know from designing the cover of my book *Making Spaces Safer*. Well, it turns out, she does a lot of other cool things too. And for a song that is based on a protest chant, we'll get into that, I wanted Margaret to share her extensive knowledge about how to protest safely and effectively. I get the feeling injustice isn't going away anytime soon, so I want all my listeners to be prepared for the worst while we hope for the best. It's a regular wonderful hell situation, right? So stick around till the end for some great advice. I learned a lot talking with her.

Okay, let's break down this song. The lyrics to *In Your Path* are a translated and reworked version of "Un Violador en Tu Camino," "A rapist in your path", a Chilean protest song against social inequality, originally created by a feminist collective called Las Tesis. It was first performed in late 2019 in Chile, but quickly took off around the world as an anthem against rape culture, and victim shaming. I was first made aware of it in early 2020 when I saw a video circulating online of women in New York protesting with this song in front of Trump Tower. So you know I was all about it, right? But it's really striking to see it actually. That's why we included footage of these protests in our music video. There's just a sea of women and trans and non-binary people wearing matching colours, usually black and red, all wearing blindfolds and singing and dancing in unison. It's a really powerful image. I do want to note that I did reach out to Las Tesis and I got their blessing to record and release our version of the song, which is amazing, as well as make a video for it. And they even ended up sharing some of their own footage to be used in the video, which we then combined with public domain and original footage. It was a concern of the band that we not accidentally cause harm to anyone who took part in these protests by sharing their image again so publicly. So I'm glad we got Las Tesis to sign on and even contribute to the video, cuz the purpose of making the video was just to raise awareness about their collective and the struggles they are facing in Chile to an audience that might not be aware of it otherwise.

I think this is where I should give the biggest heartfelt shout out and thanks to Rob Menzer and Jesse Pliska for directing the video, coordinating all the band shots, which was a feat, and compiling contributions from other amazing videographers for the rest of the footage. They worked so hard and for

so long on this video, we literally could not have done it without them. And they had to put up with me, right? Someone with no experience or shared language of videographer speak, but who for some reason has a very clear idea of what she doesn't want. I'm sure I was very easy to work with. So all our gratitude to Rob Menzer, who you might know cuz he worked with Two Minutes To Late Night, that's how we met and his associate and former roommate and guy who let me sleep on his couch a couple times, Jesse Pliska. Thank you both so much.

Did you guys know that the official sponsor of But Her Lyrics is First Defense Krav Maga out of Virginia? Go check them out and support them. And you can be a sponsor too by joining me on Patreon. Support this podcast, get a shout out and tons of perks and access to exclusive and behind the scenes stuff by becoming a patron today. So speaking of, it's time to give my big shout out to the best patrons in the world, Recruits Stephan & Julina, and Meatheads Melissa, Lauren, Zachary, and Gaelen. And big welcome to new Meathead Byron, and little Seed Susie Ulrey from Pohgoh. Hello, I just interviewed her. Oh, Rosie. Yeah, you're grumpy? Okay, let's try that again. What the fuck was I saying? Oh, and little Seed Susie Ulrey from Pohgoh. I just interviewed her for my Meandering Conversation series exclusive to patrons, so check that out. I'm pretty sure I told her she didn't have to pay to play but I welcome the support nonetheless. Thank you, Susie. All right, time to hear from the band.

[music]

**Jen:** Yes, I like In Your Path. I don't remember why, but I've made a couple of like top five lists, and it's always in there.

**Shawna Potter:** And I talked to Dave a little bit about recording a video for that. Do you want to talk about that at all?

**Jen:** About recording a video for that?

**Shawna Potter:** Remember you were in a music video for that that isn't out yet?

**Jen:** Whoa, yes. Oh, my God.

**Shawna Potter:** You forgot.

**Jen:** I'm like, "That's still not out yet. That's right." Wow, that's the one, so it was directed and shot over Zoom. I was really impressed by that. I've been making so many videos from home or whatever, but this felt like they were in the room with me. The director of photography and a director were there being like, "Move your head this way, tilt the light. Do it again. That looks really good. Okay, now we're going to get this." So I can't wait to see how that video comes out. And yeah, it was fun singing along to that in the video. I think it's a catchy song.

**Shawna Potter:** Yeah, it's real short. So I felt like recording my part. We do it a few times and then you're done, and so I feel like any other song, it would have been a much longer process to shoot a video over Zoom, but it wasn't too bad. Because once you get the lights or once you get an angle like, okay, a minute later, you've done it. [laughs]

**Jen:** The hardest part was finding a black sheet that didn't have cat hair or a pattern on it.

**Shawna Potter:** I'm sure, I'm sure. Yeah, totally, totally. Same. [laughing]

**Brooks:** A pretty straightforward jam.

**Shawna Potter:** Short and sweet.

**Brooks:** I like to have at least one of these on every record. I feel like on the first self titled, it was YouTube Comments, and then on Capture the Flag, it was Childbirth. And then this one fits that where it's a short, sweet, little punk song that's not like an opus. It's not complicated, it just is what it is.

**Shawna Potter:** Those other two songs you mentioned, I feel like they're a little more feral, a little more wild or just weird. And I think this one is really just a more straightforward punk rock song. Do you agree or disagree? [laughing]

**Brooks:** I could maybe see that with Childbirth, but I think this song is not that different than YouTube Comments. It has two parts, it just goes A B A B. And then the B extends a little bit at the end. And I like in the B part, the guitars, one guitar goes up chromatically and the other guitar goes down chromatically, so a little crazy sounding. And because of all the little half step slides in the verse, it's a little hard to tell what key it's in. To me, it's a little crazy.

**Shawna Potter:** Okay. All those songs: YouTube Comments, Childbirth, In Your Path, they're kind of concept songs to me there. It's like I'm coming at it from this artistic concept versus here's an issue that I want to talk about, it's like a way to get to the song. And so it might just be that finding this protest chant

from the feminist collective Las Tesis out of Chile and seeing the translation English, it might just be that the words are just more straightforward and the rhythm just really lends itself to straight ahead punk song.

**Brooks:** Yeah, I can see that.

**Shawna Potter:** What else about In Your Path?

**Brooks:** I just realized looking at the music, it's in Phrygian mode, which is interesting to me.

**Shawna Potter:** Is that a good mode or a bad mode?

**Brooks:** It's a musical scale where the first step in the scale is a half step, whereas like in a major or minor, the first step is a whole step. And so it gives a cool sound. It's a little hard to analyze this kind of music in traditional harmony, because so much of it is based on the physical action of playing the guitar. But it does fall right into that mode, which is cool.

**Shawna Potter:** Anything about recording it?

**Brooks:** Oh, gosh, it's so short. I don't even remember recording it.

**Shawna Potter:** I know what you mean.

**Brooks:** I'm pretty confident that all the basic tracks made it to the final mix on this. No, I don't even think there's any guitar overdubs. I mean, Jen's guitar was overdub cuz she wasn't physically there for the original recording, but there isn't like a hidden third guitar or like a harmony guitar or anything. I think it's just drums, bass, Jen guitar, me guitar, vocals.

**Sue:** So this is the one we did the video for at our houses?

**Shawna Potter:** Yes, we were actually in it.

**Sue:** Like at our houses weirdly over iPhones. Wow.

**Shawna Potter:** What was that like?

**Sue:** Thank god Brooks was there.

**Shawna Potter:** Oh, yeah. He came over and helped you out.

**Sue:** There's no way I would have been able to do it on my own. I have a roommate, but he works at a fancy restaurant and he is at work every night. And Mike was helping his dad in Virginia who had just had open heart surgery. The two people that come over, you know what I mean?

**Shawna Potter:** Right, right.

**Sue:** So Brooks took his life into his hands, came into my house, and helped me do this. There was no way I would have made it or done it on my own. So thank you, Brooks, and I can't wait to see this video. I realized that the song is cool. And in the video I kept messing up the ending because it would go one extra time than I thought it should have or something. But yeah, I don't know, this song is 90 seconds long or so, that's cool.

**Shawna Potter:** Let's say it's a minute and 11 seconds.

**Sue:** Yeah, yeah. Yeah, it's not even, it's like 72 seconds long.

**Shawna Potter:** Yes.

**Sue:** That's like nothing, but there's a lot going on. [laughing]

**Shawna Potter:** Oh, yeah. Yeah, it packs a punch. Yeah, that was my favorite part of recording the video is that once you got everything set up, it was pretty quick to get through the song itself.

**Sue:** And it has that mosh part? I mean that was for me. I have always wanted to have a part like that with the drums that start doing the thrashy thing. You know what I mean?

**Shawna Potter:** Point it out for everybody.

**Sue:** Yeah. Hold on. Wait. Let's see. Where does that happen? Goddamn. Wait, where is it? Wait, where is it in the song? I keep skipping through it.

**Shawna Potter:** I don't know. I'm sure you don't mean the end of Seeds or something?

**Sue:** Wait, maybe this isn't the song with the mosh part. Sorry.

**Shawna Potter:** Okay. I'll delete that.

**Sue:** The part that's like, [unintelligible 13:45:00] That's not this song, I guess.

**Shawna Potter:** Oh, that's the end of Seeds.

**Sue:** Oh, Seeds does a really good mosh part. It's like my favorite part. I've always wanted to have a part like that in a song and now we do. And I'm going to do some cool dance moves to that, "I'm from New Jersey. Just you wait." [laughing]

**Shawna Potter:** Whoa. So this dog really likes it when everyone is together.

**Sue:** I like that dog, I feel the same way.

**Shawna Potter:** She has a lot in common with you. Everyone, why don't we all just party together? She does not know why I am in a separate room from my partner for this hour and a half to do this interview. She doesn't get it.

**Sue:** Yeah. And she's like, "Why are you looking at that thing instead of me?"

**Shawna Potter:** Yes, exactly.

**Sue:** Kingsley used to sit next to me on the couch when I was typing on my little laptop and he would take his paw, put it on my hand on the keyboard and move it off of the keyboard so I pet him.

**Shawna Potter:** In Your Path

**Dave:** In Your Path, the song has like Fishbone vibes to me. I don't know if you listen to much Fishbone. In the fact that it's got this kind of like bounce to it and they would often do that trying to mix in like ska, reggae, punk rock, with their manic approach. But this whole just like [unintelligible 15:26:04] You have to play the drums with a bit of a swing like this [unintelligible 15:34:22] Yeah, it just makes it a little more fun as opposed to that very straight little tiny swing that little bounce that gives it a different life than the rest of the song. And it's also just crazy. And it's like, what, a minute long or something.

**Shawna Potter:** Yeah, a minute, eight or something. Oh, no, one minute and 11 seconds.

**Dave:** 1:11, yeah. So I feel like I'm just emptying the bucket. There's a ton of drum fills, it's a bunch of crazy shit. And you're yelling like "the rapist is you," right?

**Shawna Potter:** Yeah, yeah, it's the cops, it's the state, the judges and the president. Now we recorded a video for this song that most likely by the time the podcast episode for this, it'll all be out by then. But talk about making a music video during a pandemic.

**Dave:** Yeah, well, you know what, now's the time to do it. We have the technology, we can do it. But basically, it was cool. I went to my friend, Kevin Considine, who works at Human Being Productions, which is a video production company in Baltimore. And he's a good friend of mine, we've known each other since high school. And we shot this video being directed by a guy over Zoom, basically. We just hung up a blank sheet of paper, put up a couple cameras, and I just played through the song a couple times. And it was really funny, I'll say the funniest part is a director truly trying to direct like an actor, it takes this like, okay, imagine you're here and like setting the scene. I'm not a theatre person, I never have been, but I know that you guys are tech nerds, and you've been in the world forever, right? But I could feel him getting into the director role, but via Zoom, you know? So he was being like, "Okay, what's the last show you played? I really want you to tap into that energy this time and try to really sell it." And I was like, "I think I just need to do it again."

**Shawna Potter:** Dave, because you are the most chill looking drummer when you play. And you're making a face like it, I'm not saying it like it's a bad thing. No one is ever saying it like it's a bad thing, but you just have this air of being relaxed. You're not about to fall apart. Whatever beat you're playing, it is not about to fall apart. You are in control of what's happening, we're all going to be able to follow the whole way through an entire set, and you've got us, you've got our back. And so that's how you should look at it. It's a positive thing, but your face, you're just fucking chill like you just smoked out, you know? And maybe you did.

**Dave:** Yeah, maybe I did, it's very possible. But what it feels like when people say that to me after a show is you look bored on stage, you look like you're not trying. And looking like you're not trying is cool if you're playing something that you shouldn't be trying very hard. Over trying is a bad thing, right?

**Shawna Potter:** Maybe the term that people want to use in the future and just anyone listening, if you ever compliment Dave on how relaxed he looks, the word you're looking for is effortless. It's not like he's not trying very hard, but he makes it look effortless.

**Dave:** Right. All this stuff comes from my training. I'm a self-taught drummer, but my drum heroes are jazz guys first, right? It goes like jazz, hip hop, and then rock and roll and all the other stuff. So I was never impressed by the guys who we're playing drums with their hands way over their heads and smashing into everything. I was later cuz I was like, "Okay, that looks cool. I get it." The drummer in Black Lung is a great example of that, he plays this really small drum set. And after every show, somebody is like, "That drummer is awesome. He's so much fun to watch, we love watching him play because he puts his whole heart and his whole chest into it every time." And people are engaged by that. But again, that's



the only band he's ever been. And he's only ever been in a rock band. I've been in jazz, hip hop, funk, everything. So my training all comes from technique, what's the best technique? What's the most ergonomic way I can hold the stick, move my body? What's the most efficient way I can get through this half hour punk rock set?

**Shawna Potter:** Cuz you're sprinting. Your shows are not a marathon, It's a sprint. And it is a hard sprint, yeah.

**Dave:** Yeah. Yeah, people don't realize that sometimes, especially with War On Women, we are often the opening band on a tour, which means that our sets are short. It means that we're there for 30 minutes, and we're out. We're just going to bang for like 30 minutes. And I need to make sure that by the last song of the set, I'm still playing as hard as I was in the first song. That's where all that comes from. But I don't want people to think that I'm bored on stage, I'm just trying to play well and I understand that. Also, like, I don't want to be the main focus in this band. It's not my place to be like, "Everyone, look at me, I'm ripping these drums up." It's a feminist punk rock band, look at somebody else.

**Shawna Potter:** I think it's perfectly appropriate to acknowledge that you don't need to take up that space so that me, Sue, and Jenarchy can have it instead.

**Dave:** Yeah, straight up. I have a band where I'm the lead singer, I don't need to be it in this one also.

**Shawna Potter:** Exactly. Exactly. Exactly. And I don't have another band where I'm the lead singer, so give it to me, please.

**Dave:** Yeah. It's yours.

**Shawna Potter:** Kidding, not kidding. Not kidding. Okay. Next up is my interview with Margaret Killjoy, who is a transfeminine author, musician and podcaster living in the Appalachian Mountains. We spoke in 2020 during the height of the uprisings against racism, and police brutality. She is not directly related to the song or its meaning but her podcast Live Like the World is Dying is why she's on the show. She is all about individual preparedness. Since In Your Path is based on a protest song, I wanted to get her advice on how to protest like a pro. Margaret Killjoy, thank you so much for joining me on But Her Lyrics. This is so cool.

**Margaret Killjoy:** Yeah, thanks for having me.

**Shawna Potter:** I realized that we've never met. We're video chatting, but this is my first time seeing you not in a still photograph on my Facebook feed. So introduce yourself to everybody first.

**Margaret Killjoy:** My name is Margaret, Margaret Killjoy, and I guess I'm an author and musician, and anarchist and podcaster and kind of can't stay still in terms of projects. And I've been doing a lot of them for long enough that, yeah, I'm starting to figure out how to do them.

**Shawna Potter:** We get there eventually, don't we? Yeah, I definitely have a Jane of all trades, master of none. So I only know you from designing the cover of my book, Making Spaces Safer. And it's beautiful. It's perfect. It's the perfect cover. Everyone that I've talked to about it loves it, thinks it's so appropriate. I guess I would like to ask, "How difficult was I to work with?" [laughing]

**Margaret Killjoy:** Oh, you were great to work with. Actually, you are slightly more hands on than the average AK Press author.

**Shawna Potter:** Really?

**Margaret Killjoy:** And that was a good thing. Well, because I remember you actually had feedback and ideas. One of my other jobs is that I design books, both the inside and outside for AK Press. And I remember the earlier drafts of the book, I was trying to do this thing with boots, combat boots, and I went through a bunch of versions. Yeah, and it just didn't work. But no, covers are always fussy. It's really easy to make a cover, and then it's never good. And I'm annoyed. Because I've been doing this for years, I've been making covers professionally for a long time and I can still never just sit down and be like, "Now I've made a cover. Whereas the inside of a book? Yeah, I can just sit down and make the inside of a book and it's fine.

**Shawna Potter:** It was also great in Making Spaces Safer.

**Margaret Killjoy:** Oh, thanks.

**Shawna Potter:** Yeah. Out of curiosity, did you ever read my book?

**Margaret Killjoy:** I have not read your book. I have skimmed your book. And I did read the Zine version, right?

**Shawna Potter:** Oh, yeah, the pocket guide.

**Margaret Killjoy:** I read the pocket guide, and I skimmed the whole book. But I was impressed. I don't know, even just reading the pamphlet about it, I was impressed that you actually approached the issue with nuance. And it was actually the first time I ran across this particular issue approached with more understanding that it's a complicated issue instead of just like, "Here's the rules."

**Shawna Potter:** Yeah. Wow. That's a big compliment. Thank you. I crave nuance in conversations in social justice. And we don't always get it especially from general media, and our curated feeds. And I just want to talk about how complicated everything is, which is not always fun, or possible, so that means a lot that actually you caught on to that. Cool. Well, I brought you here today to talk about protesting safely and effectively. Am I correct that over the last year or so you've been sharing your own personal research regarding the safety of certain protective headgear?

**Margaret Killjoy:** Yeah, headgear, also masks and goggles. And I've been doing a lot of research into body armor and things like that, both body armor for police less lethal. And then unfortunately, in the middle of the summer, my research took a very more serious turn when I had to start researching ballistic armor as more and more people started getting shot at demonstrations. I've been going to direct action protests for about 20 years. But this year, my mental health and my physical location means that I haven't been nearly as involved in this uprising, which is wild because it's absolutely the biggest thing that's happened in the US and in my lifetime. And sitting it out feels real uncomfortable. And so in some ways, it was a desperate like, what can I do to be useful? And I'm like, "Well, I've done a lot of this research before, I've written zines about police less lethal technology before, and I've experienced a decently wide range of them used against me and my friends." So yeah, I've been working on that project.

**Shawna Potter:** For the layman, lay person, damn, even the best feminists among us are totally sexist! Sometimes we forget. Okay, for the lay person, what is a police less lethal? What does that term mean?

**Margaret Killjoy:** So police no longer call their weapons non-lethal because they kill people on a regular basis. Things like tasers, even pepper spray, tear gas, batons, fall under the less lethal category. It's basically anything that police use that isn't a firearm. They're used in the context of demonstrations for crowd control and intimidation and brutalization of individual people to try and make people too afraid to come to demonstrations. They're mostly extensively used for subduing people. But they're absolutely not used the way that they are being directed to use by their own use of force guidelines on a regular basis. So we have to protect ourselves from them, because their goal of using this technology is to make

us stay home. And they also tend to use this technology because they can't control us and we don't want to be controlled. So we find ways to minimize the impact of these weapons.

**Shawna Potter:** Well, I absolutely identify with that feeling of you know, I also haven't gotten out there to protest directly in the streets this year. I'm a bit of a scaredy cat when it comes to my health, and I don't know if that's my upbringing. I didn't skin my knee enough growing up, I didn't climb trees, or if it's lack of health care. I don't know if I would die if I got COVID. All valid, but I just can't bring myself to go anywhere but the grocery store. And it feels weird. And I had those moments this year where I just thought, "Well, what the fuck else can I do?" And I had activist guilt, never doing enough. And eventually, I came to some things, did more safer space stuff, talked to fellow white people about how to start their white ally journey, just sharing what knowledge I did have to help people send them on their path, which might include direct action, it might not, but just taking that burden of conversation on. And so I was able to find something. So, how did you come up with, okay, well, here's what I can do, here's what I know?

**Margaret Killjoy:** It first started with basically watching people starting to use shields in the street. I've brought shields to demonstrations a couple times in my life, or worn protective armour a couple times in my life. And it's never been quite as effective as it has been this year, because it hasn't been as widely adopted as it has been this year. And basically, I was just talking with another my friends. Yeah, I suffer from a lot of medical anxiety. COVID was almost specifically designed to mess my brain up. After I am exposed the tiniest bit to the outside world, I have fake symptoms for weeks, until I know that I'm not sick.

**Shawna Potter:** That must be very difficult.

**Margaret Killjoy:** Yeah, it's a it's a whole thing. And everyone's mental health is their own thing. And people have a hard time understanding other people's mental health. So it's very easy to judge yourself for being like, "Oh, everyone just sees Margaret as old and washed up and just doesn't go out anymore and wants to make the kids do it." Or just wants to sit around and be like, "Well, in my day, we fought cops like this." And so basically, it first started off with being like, "Okay, how do I make shields?" And I talked with one of my friends who makes shields for LARPing and especially for full combat LARPing. And who's also politically radical, and we just sat there, and we figured out how we would build them. And then we built them. And then from there, it became like, but is this effective? And I fell into a research hole for several months, following up on research I did for zine, about 12 years ago, for actually the RNC

in 2008, which I wasn't able to make it too for logistical reasons. And I felt really guilty cuz at the time, I just went to every demonstration I could go to. And so I did that.

**Shawna Potter:** What was the zine called?

**Margaret Killjoy:** It was called "excited delirium: a protesters guide to less lethal technology." And it's called excited delirium because it is no longer the case, but in 2008, that's the word that they would use. Because sometimes when you get tased, you just die. And the companies and stuff that make tasers and police are like, "Oh, no, the taser didn't kill them. Excited delirium killed them."

**Shawna Potter:** What does that mean?

**Margaret Killjoy:** It basically means he went into shock. But it's a made up term for killed by a taser. That means that the taser isn't at fault. And

**Shawna Potter:** So, RNC 2008, you made a zine to help people avoid less lethal weapons or deal with them or protect themselves?

**Margaret Killjoy:** So I think a big thing is that less lethals are actually not a particularly effective method of crowd control, when it comes down to just the physicality of them. And what I want to do is I want to spread information so that people know that. It's interesting because on some level, the more you learn about CS gas can cause reproductive health problems and people with menstrual cycles, and that's really fucking scary. But overall, this stuff is like less bad than it claims to be. It's more defeatable than police want us to believe. And so I wanted to share this information so that people know because a lot of anxiety for me comes from not knowing, right? Even though COVID is spiking right now, I'm less afraid of it right now because I understand it a little bit better. And so learning, this is what a baton round is and this is how it messes you up and this is how it probably won't kill you and trying to give a we can do this feeling even though it's not safe, right? It's not safe to go out and challenge the most powerful government in the world, right? But it's also not safe to just let the most powerful government in the world continue to murder everyone in the world including us. So yeah, that's that's why I got into trying to disseminate this information as best as I could.

**Shawna Potter:** I wanted to ask, what are some just basic protesting tips you can give people that maybe have mostly, if they've been to a protest, they just held a sign and walked around and it was not a big deal? They weren't worried about their safety. What are some things we need to worry about? Cuz I hear that thing of bring something to cover your face not only to keep yourself anonymous, but also just

in case something sprayed in the air, goggles or something. And then I've heard bring milk, pour that in your eyes if there's tear gas. Oh, no, don't use milk in your eyes cuz there's sugar. So, what are the things? What are the basics?

**Margaret Killjoy:** So this is sort of bullshit. Anything goes in your eyes. Clearly, don't pour pepper spray into your eyes unless you really want it. But who am I to tell you what to do?

**Shawna Potter:** No kink shaming.

**Margaret Killjoy:** Yeah, exactly. If you just want attention from a cute street medic, you just pepper spray yourself. So water goes in your eyes. The mechanical action of flushing with a squirt bottle is what flushes out your eyes of chemicals more effective than anything else, it's not actually about trying to neutralize the chemicals. And there are some specific disadvantages to using other stuff. I hate medic culture where it's like, "Oh, you don't know the right thing. So it's wrong of you to pour milk in someone's eyes. It's wrong of you to pour half Maalox half water in people's eyes, right?" Which are both things that people have done a lot. There's some specific disadvantages to both of those. The disadvantage of milk is that it's gross, right? And if you get that stuff on you, and then you go to jail for 12 hours, and you're just sitting with your clothes soaked in milk, it's gross. And there's the small chance of an allergic reaction and a small chance of crud growing in your eyes or whatever, right? But if all you have is milk, I'm also a vegan, so it's really funny for me to say this, if all you have is milk, I would rather have milk in my eyes than pepper spray in my eyes. I was talking to a doctor friend who wasn't dealing with this stuff for a while and I was like, "Well, what happens? These goggles might break, right? Or swim goggles, there's a chance that if you get hit really hard in the eye with swim goggles, there's a chance that doctors I've talked to are like, "Oh, maybe." But it's mostly a rumor that swim goggles because of the suction will pop your eye out, right?

**Shawna Potter:** Oh, god! Yeah.

**Margaret Killjoy:** Now, the thing is, if you weren't wearing those swim goggles and you got hit in the eye, something hard enough to do that, you might be dead. So it's better to get hit in the face with goggles that aren't the right goggles than to get hit in the face without goggles. So a lot of this stuff is like the best helmet is the helmet you have, right? And so with water, you want water in your eyes. And the downside of Maalox, of antacids, is that it actually has been used at demonstrations to pick people off for a rest, and it specifically shows up more on darker skin, the residue of Maalox. And so, police can say that person got pepper sprayed, and then be like, "Therefore that person was a demonstrator, therefore

that person might be going to jail today." And so that's a weird minor thing but it was definitely used in the Ferguson demos a couple years ago to target people for arrest, and it specifically disproportionately impacts people with darker skin. So okay, in terms of a helmet, the trick with a helmet is you don't want to be the only girl with a helmet at a demonstration, because then you're going to get targeted for arrest. But if everyone's wearing helmets, you don't want to be the one without a helmet, because everyone's wearing helmets because they're used to getting stuff shot at their heads or batons aimed at their heads. And if nothing else, you can get away with wearing just a bicycle helmet. Because you could be like, "Oh, maybe I just got off a bicycle." It doesn't target you the same way, right? But bicycle helmets aren't particularly great. If you want a plausible deniability, the cheapest, easiest, most effective helmet for your money is a skateboarding helmet. You get one that's actually rated, they're often about \$20. And a skateboard helmet, it has better impact protection. It's harder to break through with a projectile than a bike helmet. And if you want to move up from there, a lot of sports helmets are substantially more effective against repeated impact. So if you're trying to be at the front line holding the banner and you think police might be trying to use batons, sports helmets are substantially better. However, if you get hit in the head at the demonstration, it almost doesn't matter whether or not you think you got a concussion, you should lay off of demonstrations for like a week at least. Because repeated head injuries are a really bad deal. And then from there at the very high end, you can get a ballistic helmet. And more and more people in places like Portland have been moving to ballistic helmets. And ballistic helmets are usually rated. It's 3A, which is basically protective against handgun rounds. It's also really scary to talk about like, "Hey, now you need body armor to go to a demonstration." The thing to still remember is that it's not safe, but it's still doable. People do this, and most people don't get shot when they go to demonstrations.

**Shawna Potter:** Statistically, of course. And we don't want to scare people off from going to any demonstration because like you were saying, there is such power in numbers. And so go, bring some water, bring a bandana, bring some goggles, maybe bring a helmet, good walking shoes, snacks, right? For you and a handout to others and water for you and others. And then is it you write the name and number of a lawyer on your arm and Sharpie? What information should people be bringing with them?

**Margaret Killjoy:** Usually at a demonstration, a large demonstration, there'll be a legal support number. And the idea is that you write that down in Sharpie. There's a lot of etiquette around where you write it. Some people don't write it in a visible place because then they could be like, "Oh, that's a demonstrator, she has the legal support number written on her arm in Sharpie." Other times you're like, "Yeah, of course, I'm a demonstrator." If you do decide to dress wearing all black, which is cool, because that helps

keep other people who wore all black safe, even if you're not up to no good, but you support people who are up to no good, be very careful about entering and leaving the demonstration wearing those clothes. A lot of people then just bring a small backpack with a change of clothes, specifically maybe like a bright-colored shell, something that folds up small. Some people go so far as to change their shoes on the way out. If you are up to no good, you need to make sure that you're not wearing anything identifiable. And often also not wearing the same thing every night, unfortunately. It turns into this very consumerist culture. Another thing to remember is that, diversity of tactics, one, it goes both ways, right? Let's say you really want to escalate things, right? Or you're mad enough that you're like, "I want confrontation with the things that are oppressing us." Right? That is a perfectly valid thing. Not everyone is going to want that. And the more that you're able to work to create separations of time and space, the more solidarity you can achieve, and therefore the safer you're going to be, right? Because if you want to be in the black bloc, one of the things that keeps you safest is having the people around you not hate you. Because other people have other ways that they want to engage. It's very important to respect the other ways that people want to engage. And this also goes back the other way, right? There are often times that people do things at demonstrations that I'm like, "I don't think that's cool. Why did you break that bus shelter? What was the bus shelter doing to you? It's public property? Why would you do that?" And I might be frustrated by that, right? But I need to remember to keep things in the context of the greater thing that's happening. And there's some stuff that I'm like, "Now if someone's attacking random people in the name of activism, to hell with them." You need to stop them.

**Shawna Potter:** And it's probably a white nationalist dressed up like a black bloc member anyway.

**Margaret Killjoy:** Yeah, totally. Yeah, and someone attacking someone that probably is the case or attacking someone, random person. We do need to be careful, often the people that you think might be provocateurs are actually just people who are really upset about how the world is. And also, not assuming the gender and race of people that you can't identify those things about is important. One of the reasons that people wear black bloc is because there are black people in the black bloc who are substantially more likely to be targeted by police. And it's an effective way for them to keep safe. Yeah, learning and solidarity is complicated, right? Because sometimes you have to have solidarity with people where you're like, "I don't actually agree with what they're doing." But it is actually what makes our movement strong. Diversity of tactics in both directions is absolutely what makes a strong movement, and therefore keeps us all safer.



**Shawna Potter:** What are some things that trans folks, disabled folks, people of color, what special considerations should they keep in mind when it comes to protesting? And what are the things that allies should be doing or be mindful of to help those folks?

**Margaret Killjoy:** That's a super good question. For my own, if anyone's listening to this and can't see me, I'm a white trans woman, where I have no physical disabilities, I have some mental health issues. And so that is the point of view that I'm coming from when I say these things. Marginalized people, including actually, cis women, are substantially more likely to be targeted by police violence. I've personally found that police are substantially more likely to target small people, and small people often translates to being a woman, but not always. And I've seen a line of protesters, the cops pick the small person and grab them. And so one of the most important things that you can do is physically keep those people safe. If someone is being targeted by police, you can interfere with that to whatever degree you feel ethically comfortable with, or strategically comfortable with. I think that nothing says love like an arrest. Nothing just says, I will put myself on the line before this other person. And sometimes it even goes so far as like, there's this footage, actually from Baltimore of, I think this guy is still in jail for it. But I can't remember, someone told me once recently, but about 10 years ago or something this black man is being arrested in the middle of the street and a white man comes up and tackles the cop. Black man gets away, white man goes to prison. And I'm not saying that needs to happen every single time, right? But trans people have a particularly hard time in jail. Especially, some trans people might choose, I choose, for example, at demonstrations most of the time to present as a cis man. I don't totally pass as a cis man but it is the way that I would choose to interact with the state.

**Shawna Potter:** It's just something that you feel keeps you a little safer.

**Margaret Killjoy:** Right. And I carry an ID and my ID has my legal name and my birth assigned gender on it. Because I'm not fucking with trying to be like, "No cop, that's not my real name, call me this." I don't respect the police so I don't expect them to respect me. However, if court were to drag on, I would definitely need to come out as my actual name in order to get support. And there's also stuff around like mobility, right, with demonstrations that people tend to forget about. One, don't move too fast. There's certain types of demonstrations that are going to need to move fast. And if you're in that type of demonstration, don't leave people behind. And there's this get away if you can attitude that happens. Now, if you think that you getting caught might lead to specific felonies, because for some reason people might think that you're associated with something bad that just happened, maybe you need to get the hell out, right? But overall, if you're just there, don't leave people behind and keep track of who's having

mobility issues around you. Yeah, and race stuff gets really complicated as trying to be an ally, or especially as an accomplice, there's just a framework that's been presented out of indigenous radicals around...

**Shawna Potter:** Being an ally isn't good enough.

**Margaret Killjoy:** Yeah, we want people who throw down with us and see our struggles as interrelated. Which actually involves a lot of thinking for yourself, rather than just following what you perceive as marginalized leadership. Because there's going to be people with a wide variety of opinions within each marginalized group about how to engage. And it gets complicated. My personal belief, this is not me speaking on behalf of the movement, whatever, is that white people probably shouldn't escalate stuff in primarily POC struggles, but should read the room and stick with the temperature of what's happening. We should also not peace police people of color, we just shouldn't peace police anyone. But we shouldn't escalate when that's not the vibe. But anyone who chooses to, we should have their back. And that's how I've gone about my own involvement in struggles that center bipoc issues, but everyone's also going to have different attitudes about that.

**Shawna Potter:** Yeah, that's the whole point, right? Is that we're centering them, we're listening to them, figuring out what they need where they're a support, and therefore we shouldn't make it any harder on them. If we're not helping, then we're making it harder. So, how can we help? That usually doesn't involve bringing more attention. Or, "Hey, cops were over here."

**Margaret Killjoy:** Yeah. Although, okay, this is a weird trick. You can kind of "Hey, cops are over here." to get cops off of somebody.

**Shawna Potter:** Oh, yeah. No, I like that. I love distraction as a bystander intervention method. And so that fits in with that idea of just having fun with your protest, having fun with your intervention. It's like, "Hey, look at me over here."

**Margaret Killjoy:** Yeah, totally. Yeah, I've had really good luck with this terrible situation and I didn't save anyone, but watching someone get beat by police once away from the demonstration because they ran and the cops chased them and tackled them. And cops are predator animals without higher functioning as far as I can tell, when they're in their work mode in this particular way.

**Shawna Potter:** Cue the lawyers. Just kidding, no one listens to this show (laughs)

**Margaret Killjoy:** (laughs) Well, just tactically, we need to understand that literally cops are people, right? So dehumanizing them doesn't actually... We need to be aware that humans can do horrible things. But in this particular case, there's animal instinct with where you think you're in charge, someone has escaped, you track them down, and you beat the hell out of them. And you can't interfere with that. And obviously, it's not always safe, right? But I remember one time this happened, and I just started screaming obscenities really loudly at the cop like, "What the hell are you doing?" And the cop stopped hitting the person and started walking towards me. And I was like, "Well, this is going to go badly." But then the cop realized that they were busy arresting someone and they couldn't leave that person just lying there. So then they went back, but by that point, I had diffused their energy. And they were no longer in a I'm going to beat everyone up mode. The person still got arrested. But another thing for basic protest tip is grounding techniques. Back in the day, the old radical pagans were really good at this stuff, where they would just basically teach techniques about how to stay calm in really intense situations. Another really important protest tip is literally like one of the strangest things that you can do. I tend to think of things in terms of magic, when I think about how music is magic and affects people's moods. It's a very complicated thing that's hard to scientifically understand so I'm just going to use the word magic for it. But one of the simplest spells you can cast is calmness. You can basically one, be a calm person. And two, is counterintuitive, but you can shout calmly.

**Shawna Potter:** That's interesting.

**Margaret Killjoy:** If everyone starts running, that's bad. Sometimes you can get everyone to run by being like, "Hey, we're all going to count down from 10 and when we get to one, we're all going to run." That's a really good way to put some space between you and the cops in a controlled way. But when the cops come in and start swinging on a crowd, that crowd might route. And the thing is, if you go back to mediaeval battles, which is the closest analogue we have of all these melee weapons, as soon as there's a route, that's when people get hurt. Most of the deaths in mediaeval warfare as far as I understand happened as everyone's running. And maybe some medievalist is listening to this and if so, tell me I'm wrong. I'd actually love to hear more about it cuz I love geeking out about that shit. But if you're in a demo, and everyone starts running, because the police are doing something, I've always yelled don't run. Medics who have more training about this say yell calm, calm. Because when you yell, don't run, don't run, there's a chance someone might hear run run. But I've done this actually in multiple countries where even English isn't the first language. And there's actually just something about the cadence of yelling don't run or be calm or walk, I guess is another thing people yell, that tricks something in your

brain. And it's awful cuz you're telling people what to do, but it's just this animal thing where you're just like, "Oh, right, we're not running. That's what we're doing is we're not running."

**Shawna Potter:** I'm just hearing so many things that relate to bystander intervention, which is what I teach all the time. So this is like a version of delegating where when you actually ask someone for what you need or what you want in that moment, it snaps people out of what's going on and they want to follow those directions cuz there's finally direction, right? So all of a sudden, you're saying "No, no, no, we're not walking. We're not walking." Then everyone's like, "Oh, okay, someone's in charge." Yeah. And they're just waiting to know what happened, just staying calm using de-escalation techniques, distracting. It's all related.

**Margaret Killjoy:** Oh, that's great, then you have a perfect skill set for this stuff, right?

**Shawna Potter:** Okay, I guess so. Okay, I'm ready, ready to get out there.

**Margaret Killjoy:** And that's actually something too, right? Is everyone should think about what they can bring to a demo. And not just like the coolest sign, although cool signs, they get across social media, it's great. But, what are you good at? And how does that relate? Maybe you're good at feeding people, and then be the person who brings tons of snacks. Or maybe you're like, "I'm really calm in a situation." And then be like, "Okay, I need to go where there's chaos and exude calm." And or maybe, literally, I feel like my only good skill set at the moment is I'm really good at not getting arrested.

**Shawna Potter:** It's important too, I guess.

**Margaret Killjoy:** Yeah.

**Shawna Potter:** Yeah, you're right. But everyone has a role to play and they can all be different. And sometimes it's just about just being there, adding to the numbers. And I think that's lovely.

**Margaret Killjoy:** The other thing, though, is that going out and being there is really important. But there's also sometimes you look at your skill set, and you say, "What I'm really good at, doesn't involve leaving my house." Maybe what you're really good at is legal support. Maybe what you're really good at is training people from afar. Maybe what you're really good at is coordinating support, there's so many things that all work together. But if you can challenge yourself, if, and you know this better than I do, not you you, well, you do this, but everyone knows it for themselves. Sometimes you should step out of your safety when the situation demands it. But you know what that means. Stepping out of your safety might

be getting involved with legal support at all in a way that gets your name out there. It might be calling the jail and knowing that your phone number now has called the jail to harangue someone that might be as far out of your safety as you can go. And that's okay.

**Shawna Potter:** Yeah, but when there's some real fucking shit going on in the country and it's putting so many marginalized people, especially at risk of violence, it's going to take all of us getting out of our safety. Yeah, exactly. I didn't know if you had any thoughts on the song at all, what we're talking about doesn't totally relate.

**Margaret Killjoy:** Yeah, no, I was reading the lyrics and listening to the song. And I told you this before we started recording that it mostly just has me being like, "Oh, I'm so glad people are making music like this." It mostly was just like, "Yeah, I need to listen to this band more." I've listened to your band a couple times but just listening to the song, I was thinking about the role of music to shape culture, and the role of culture to shape our conceptions of what's possible, and what's valuable, and what's ethical and what we need to do. And I know that this interview is about the song specifically, but just overall, I think that that's great. It takes everything, right? It used to be that punk was the primary anarchist aesthetic in the United States 20 years ago and that's just no longer the case. And that's wonderful. But I also love that punk is still there, and not just for anarchism, but activism. And just being able to look at every subculture you look at, there are people who are paying attention to what's happening and creating an aesthetic idea of resistance. And not the aesthetic idea of resistance being like, "Oh, I wear makeup in this cool way or like I've punks on my studs." Punks on my studs? (laughs) Anyway. More of it, good. Yes, that's my answer to the song.

**Shawna Potter:** Love it. Yeah, cuz you know, if we're going to prepare for a revolution, we're going to need to dance. We're going to need some music. We're going to need some joy sometimes. And you're right, music affects our brains in really magical ways and we can use that for good which I hope our album does. Well, Margaret, thank you so much for joining me and teaching us all so much about protesting and we'll see how the next few years unfold. But I have a feeling that we will need to retain these skills and use them again in the future, even if maybe the next four years calm down a little bit. We just can't say, I don't think anyone can predict. So thank you very much for sharing your knowledge with us.

**Margaret Killjoy:** Yeah, thank you so much for having me. If things calm down, then that is a great time to capacity build and prepare and to keep pushing things.

**Shawna Potter:** Exactly. High five.

**Margaret Killjoy:** Thanks so much.

**Shawna Potter:** I learned so much interviewing Margaret. I'm so glad she had good enough internet out there in the middle of nowhere to get through my annoying Zoom interview. At some point, she started talking about game mechanics and it was exciting as a board gamer to be like, "Oh my god, I know what you're saying. Heroscape is coming in handy." So I hope you learned something and enjoyed it as much as I did. Keep listening to hear the song In Your Path in full. It's off War On Women's latest album Wonderful Hell, which you should snag any way you can because vinyl is slow. Thanks to Brooks Harlan for chopping up our song Her? to create the podcast theme song. If you'd like to support this podcast and this band, stop what you're doing and share, subscribe, and review this podcast. It's free and it helps. Okay, ready for this? To buy my book, W.O.W merch, including a new beach towel and matching flip flops, hello, super fun, to learn about upcoming tour dates, videos, campaigns, booking, whatever, go to the War On Women link tree at [linktr.ee/waronwomen](http://linktr.ee/waronwomen). I think that's how you pronounce it. So everything you need to know about the band, there's going to be a link on our link tree and I no longer have to name all the things which is very exciting for me. If you need a new overdrive or boost pedal though designed by Brooks Harlan of War On Women, head on over to [bigcrunchamprepair.com](http://bigcrunchamprepair.com) to learn more about that. And join my patreon to help me keep this podcast going. Join in at the seeds level at only \$1 a month or donate more for bonus stuff like extra episodes, behind the scenes info, and a very funny video of Sue hanging out at my house going all Beavis and Butthead on our songs. You don't want to miss it. Just a reminder, episode transcripts are available on my website, [shawnapotter.com](http://shawnapotter.com), and most of them have links or reading recommendations for further education on the issues discussed, so be sure to check those out. And then check out the video for In Your Path on our YouTube channel. Big thanks again to Rob and Jesse who instead of taking payment for their tireless work on the video, asked the band to donate to The Undocumented Womens Fund in NYC at [linktr.ee/undocuwomensfund](http://linktr.ee/undocuwomensfund). I'll put a link in the show notes and the transcription in case you'd like to donate as well.

[outro music]

## **IN YOUR PATH**

"Sleep calmly, innocent girl

Without concern about the bandit in your path

Over your dreams, smiling and sweet  
Watches your loving police”

The rapist is you!

And the fault wasn't mine, or where I was,  
not how I dressed. Es la violencia que no ves  
Another disappearance  
A punishment for being born, waiting for un violador

The rapist is you  
It's the cops and the state  
The rapist is you  
The judges and the president  
The rapist is you  
It's the cops and the state  
The rapist is you  
All the way to the president

Transcript by Betty Sulwe.

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