

**Lisa Forbes:** We need to break the cycle of the thing that is chaining them to repeating their past. It's not necessarily that they're illiterate. It's not necessarily that they need job training because I had those things. It is trauma that is chaining people to a repetition of the past. That same energy, recycling and recycling through those energy systems, if that's all the information that the brain is getting, then that's all the information the brain has to make a decision.

**Sam Fuqua:** That's Lisa Forbes and this is Well, That Went Sideways! A podcast that serves as a resource to help people have healthy, respectful communication. We present a diversity of ideas, tools, and techniques to help you transform conflict in relationships of all kinds.

On this episode, we talk with Lisa Forbes about how she draws on her personal experience with trauma and incarceration to advocate for others who are struggling to re-enter society as restored citizens. And she also describes a simple technique called *Tapping* that has helped her deal with the emotional and physical effects of trauma. Lisa Forbes is an author and keynote speaker. Her book is titled, *I Can Take it From Here: A Memoir of Trauma, Prison, and Self-Empowerment*.

I'm Sam Fuqua, joined as always by my co-host Alexis Miles. Hi Alexis.

**Alexis Miles:** Hi, Sam.

**Sam Fuqua:** We're so lucky to be joined for this episode of Well, That Went Sideways! by Lisa Forbes. Hello. Welcome.

**Lisa Forbes:** Hello. Thank you.

**Sam Fuqua:** Really glad to have you here. And, and I thought we'd start with just a, a question about the language that we use, uh, to describe people who have previously been incarcerated. The typical phrase is ex-offender, or there's even more negative, slangy term, ex-con, but you very intentionally avoid those terms and talk about "restored citizens." Can you explain why?

**Lisa Forbes:** Yes. And you know, I do wanna acknowledge that a lot of people are increasingly using the term "returning citizens." The reason I don't like "returning citizens" is because in the 14 years that I was incarcerated, I saw people being "returning citizens" to the outside world and returning right back in. So, I don't like the term "returning citizens." I use "restored citizens," and it comes from a scripture in the Bible. There's a scripture that says that, "God will restore to you the years that the locusts and the canker worm and the caterpillar have eaten up." And when I read that scripture, I said, I want that. I want the years that I feel that I had lost and that had been devoured, restored to me. And I wanted to come ho, home and be restored to the person I was capable of being and not be permanently limited by what I had done. So, the truth is very meaningful to me. It's, it's how I define myself and it's also my vision of how other people will come out and be.

**Sam Fuqua:** Can you talk about your journey, which you, uh, recount in your book, *I Can Take It From Here: A Memoir of Trauma, Prison and Self-Empowerment*. Can you give our listeners a relatively quick sketch of, of that experience?

**Lisa Forbes:** Well, I start with, it, it's really divided into three sections. It's a memoir of trauma, and then a prison, and then in self-empowerment, because those are three very distinct areas in my life, and in most people's lives that have a similar situation. So, I start with the, all the trauma that I experienced, starting at a very young age, I mean, even at the age of four, I was hit by a car. And so, just starting from that, I, I'd show, uh, the reader, take them through the different types of trauma I experienced. Sexual abuse, religious abuse, emotional abuse, bullying, sibling rivalry, pretty much anything you can name, I experienced it. I ex, and then even as an adult, I experienced it in addition to incarceration, homelessness, and a lot other things. I wanted to show people that when I was talking about trauma, I really understood what they might have been going through. I wanted people to be able to see themselves in the book who maybe have never experienced incarceration. But trauma is trauma. You can be traumatized in all kinds of ways.

And so then, I show how the trauma that I experienced directly led me into the crime that I committed. And then, that resulted in 14 years of incarceration for me, and of course, the loss of life for someone else. And then, after that 14 years, I, you know, I, I, I go into the book of how I educated myself in prison, read everything I could read, got every degree I could get that they offered, and then when I came out, I still was repeating the same patterns that had been set by childhood trauma. And so, that was recognizing that was the path for self-empowerment. The tool that I just, that I used to really set myself free and break the chains of trauma, and I wanted to introduce people to that tool and show them that if it worked for somebody who had been as traumatized as I was, who had been as incarcerated as long as I had been, for what I had been incarcerated for, a violent crime, and it would still set me free, I was confident it would set anybody free.

**Alexis Miles:** So, Lisa, before you talk about that tool, could you talk some more about when it was you recognized that you had some behaviors that were not get getting you to where you wanted to go in your life?

**Lisa Forbes:** After 14 years of incarceration, I was only out for nine months, and I married a man who was my father's age. And I did it because, you know, it seemed like a good idea at the time. I wanted security. I wanted safety, you know. And it, so I, I thought I was making a good decision. But when I got into the marriage, I realized that actually I had just recreated my childhood. So, I grew up the youngest of six children. He was my father's age and had five children older than me. So, I was almost down to the da, to the last detail, right back in my childhood. Married to someone who was like my parent and the youngest of six children. And then, when I saw that not only those very minute details were lining up, but then he treated me just like my mother treated me. His, his children treated me just like my siblings treated me. At one point I said, I, I've been here before, you know. And so, for me that was the feedback loop. Other people's feedback loop is that they keep returning back to prison. For me, it was, it was when I recognized that I was doing the same things that I, all these decades later, that I was doing when I was a teenager. I was in a marriage reacting to someone and being treated as if I was a kid. And it was, when I saw the similarity between my marriage and my childhood, it was an awakening for me that somehow, I was like a rat on a, on this, hamster, on this little wheel. It, I realized then that there was something chaining me to repeating the same things over and over.

**Alexis Miles:** And once you had that realization, is that when you discovered this tool that you're gonna talk about?

**Lisa Forbes:** Yeah. So, when I real, realized what was happening and I, I wanted to get out of the marriage, I had, um, I had, was working as a paralegal in commercial law, commercial real estate, at the time, and that, uh, market had bottomed out, basically, so I got laid off. So my ex, my husband at the time, moved out and

went to stay with one of his daughters. So, I found myself really alone for the first time ever, you know. I was in a house that was in foreclosure. I had no job, no car, no money, no health insurance, but I, so, but I knew that there still had to be something that I could do to change my life. And so, I just went online, Alexis, and I just started searching for childhood repeating patterns, you know. I just, I didn't know even what I was looking for, but I just started randomly trying to look for, you know, changing from childhood kinds of things and up popped a, a website from a man named Brad Yates. And so, he introduced me to the concept, *Emotional Freedom Technique*, or *EFT*, also called *Tapping*.

What was significant about tapping to me, because there are lots of, you know, modalities that help deal with, with trauma, but what was significant for me was, it was something I could do for myself, sitting right where I was with no money, no transportation, no health insurance. I didn't have to go anywhere. It didn't cost me anything. And, and when I realized that there was some, a tool that I could use to set myself free, in whatever situation I was in, I realized then that this was something that needed to be introduced to a lot of people. Because what stops a lot of people from getting the help they need is they don't have the money, or they don't have the insurance, or they don't have the transportation. Something stops them from going to a place where they have to pay somebody to help them.

When I realized that I could have been tapping up for 14 years sitting in my cell, you know, or I could have been tapping while I was homeless and, and living in a Motel 6 or an extended living motel. I, you know, wherever you are, you can tap where you are. If you're sitting on the sidewalk, you can tap. And so, that was the power of it to me. Then it was accessible to me and to people who had no money and no insurance, and it was free. And on top of that, it worked. So, when I started tapping and I started seeing some of the unraveling of the emotions and the pain and, and the physical, um, changes that I went through as I tapped, I mean, I, I, I cried, I screamed, I, I threw up, I kept running back and forth to the bathroom, I knew something was happening here. Something was really changing. And when I, when I started to realize how much freer I was with each tapping session, it, it really became a mission for me to introduce it to other people.

**Alexis Miles:** Well, for people who are not familiar with it, could you describe what it looks like and, and how long it takes to do it?

**Lisa Forbes:** So, tapping, each round is very quick. You can do as many rounds as you want. Um, it's based on the Chinese acupuncture system, really. So, it's not some new, fangled thing. Acupuncture has been around for thousands of years. But what tapping does is instead of putting needles into those points, you tap on it with your fingers. And so, the, the philosophy behind it is that trauma or unprocessed emotions or unprocessed pain gets trapped in our bodies. We're, we're energetic beings. And so, when we have these experiences, we, the energy has to be processed some kind of way because it doesn't just disappear. Energy can't be destroyed. So if you, if you're not processing it, then it's stuck where it is. And the philosophy in acupuncture is that it gets stuck in internal organs and in muscles that are represented by various points on the body.

So, when I first was introduced to it by Brad Yates, just watching him on a video, I just followed the points. And, I didn't really know like what to say when you're tapping. But he had a script that you could start off with. It was, and it's called *A Big Book of Tapping Scripts*, or something, and you could download, it's free. And so, I went through the scripts and found one that said, "I have these really old hurts." And so, I just followed the tap, the, the tapping points are, you know, they, they're familiar if you're familiar with acupuncture or it's really easy to look it up online. Uh, so it's, you know, in between the, the eyebrow points, on the side of the eyes, under the eyes. Common, other people might, uh, know these as chakra

points. So it really, those systems are different names, different approaches to the same basic philosophy that there are energy points in our bodies, which are energy bodies, you know, I mean, we're not really this, we're not solid, right?

So, the energy points in our bodies are, are tapped on and while you're tapping on these points, you're talking. And so, I started off just following his script, I have these really old hurts, and just generally describing in his script what the hurts might be, but it didn't take me long before I could go to my own personal, really old hurts, right? And, all you do is really tap through those points and, and talk. And you'll be surprised at how once those points start releasing what's in them, you can really feel that something is changing in your body. And the first, and, and to the point, even that, you know, that sometimes they tell you if you are really, really getting triggered by something just, you know, kind of stop, re, regroup, and go do something else, drink a lot of water or whatever. But I actually had physical symptoms, you know, of, that I could feel the release. Um, I, I could just tell each time I wasn't as triggered after I tapped. Sometimes I might do one tapping round or something, and sometimes I, it, just depending on how I felt. I might tap for an hour, you know, but I tapped until I felt tapped out. And, and I could, once I, I saw the power of it, I saw the changes in me, I knew this was something that was effective.

**Sam Fuqua:** So, as I'm understanding your description of, of the physical part of tapping it, it reminds me of, uh, acupuncture.

**Lisa Forbes:** To a, yeah, to a certain extent, except that it's combined with, with talking. And it's combined with, with speaking specifically about the issue that is, that you're triggered on. And that it's done with the intention. So, one of the ways you start, for instance, with tapping, is by tapping on the side of the hand. And it starts with just a basic intention that as you start dealing with these things, you are gonna decide that you still, you love and accept yourself and forgive yourself as you are, you know. Tapping is not something that is done from the point of "you are broken." It's done from the point of that you are well, and we just need to remove the things that are making you feel unwell. But it's really done from a basis of self-acceptance, self-love, self-approval, and you start with the fact that even though I have whatever this problem is, I deeply and completely love and accept myself. Even though I have whatever this problem is, I deeply and completely love and forgive myself.

You'll be surprised how just trying to get people to do that, it's so hard for some people to, to just say, I love myself. And that, because you realize that they don't, you know. I forgive myself. Because people really are holding themselves hostage to guilt over things that they've done or shame over things that have happened to them, you know. I approve of myself. You try to get people to start with those things because you wanna start from a healthy place. And that if, that you are worthy of being loved. You are worthy of, you are forgiven. And that you are accepted just as you are. If you start from that healthy place, it allows your mind and your emotions to relax into letting some of those things go and knowing that it's safe to do that.

**Alexis Miles:** And Lisa, I recall when I, I had an opportunity to meet you earlier this year, and I recall a story that you told about being in the workplace and feeling defensive if someone corrected you.

**Lisa Forbes:** Mm-hmm.

**Alexis Miles:** Can you talk about that and how tapping impacted that kind of a feeling?

**Lisa Forbes:** Mm-hmm. So, one of the things I talk about with trauma, because you know, I always tell people I support criminal justice reform initiatives and second chance initiatives, but I really feel that if these things are not combined with trauma resolution, we're not getting to the root cause of recidivism. Because the question is not always, can I help you get a job? The question is, can you keep it? It's not always, can I help you get an apartment? Sometimes the question is, can you keep it? And, I'm trying to get people to get to the point where they can keep it and take it from here. And so, I realized that I had that problem in, in work where I was so triggered by anything that felt, anytime someone corrected me, it felt like rejection, you know. That, the, the really how you feel about yourself, you bring into the workplace, right? Or into any relationship. And so, um, it was hard for me to have someone tell me what to do. I had issues with authority because I had never been dealt with fairly by authorities, beginning even with the authority of parents, you know. And so, I interpreted everything in the workforce through my own lens of, of pain and trauma. And so, you know, I, I see people in the workforce. You say the least little thing to them, they go berserk, you know. You can't, uh, you can't correct them. You can't direct them. Or, you know, even down to the more, uh, violent things. If you say something to somebody, they go out and come back with a gun, you know.

These are people who are really, you have to get, you have to be well enough to be in the workforce in order to function at the level at which you're, which you're capable. And, one of the things that, uh, frightens people about people who are especially have had violent crimes and they're in the workforce, is that people say, "Well, how do I know you won't do it again?" And so then, that gets people relegated to where they're off in certain sections in the workforce. They're down in the basement, right, of, I've been, the person down in the basement, you know, where people feel like they don't really have to be around you, but you're there. I'm saying people who are, who have, you know, gotten all these degrees and skills and they have talent, need to be able to come into the workforce at the level at which they're actually qualified to be there. You shouldn't be in the mail room if you're qualified to be in the boardroom. But, you have to be well enough to be there. You have to be able to have the emotional maturity, and the, the, the, uh, emotional intelligence, to, to sit and, and have conversations with people and interact with people and, and take correction. And, and these are things that I find sometimes that people who have traumatic backgrounds are very challenged by. And so, I share in the book how I can relate to that because I was challenged with that as well. Every time somebody said something to me, I just whistle, you know. I would fight back. And, I knew that was coming from me. They were just doing their job if they're my supervisor, you know. I couldn't stand to be corrected. So, that is an issue with trying to get people in the workforce, you know, at, uh, levels of where you can actually make some money.

**Alexis Miles:** Lisa, you are super smart. You started reading at three. Graduated from high school at age 15. You read hundreds, if not thousands, of books while you were in prison. Does this technique of tapping work for just the average person or, or does it require somebody who's just really well read, you know, um, very smart, to do?

**Lisa Forbes:** No, it, the tapping is for anyone. You don't, you don't even, and if you can't read, you can tap. You can follow along with a video, right? You can tap. So it, it's, there's not a connection between you being able to, you know, know a certain amount or read at a certain level to be able to tap. Again, that was one of the beauties of it for me. It was something that I knew that if people who were currently incarcerated, sitting in their cells watching videos, could be instead tapping, and changing their lives while they were in there, you know. Um, Alexis and Sam, the crazy thing is when I first got out, I went to a place called the Safer Foundation in Chicago, which is supposed to help ex-offenders get jobs, you know. And they actually told me that they were not permitted to help me, to place me in the workforce, because the Illinois Department of Corrections had put on my release papers that I needed therapy and was not qualified to be

in the workforce. And I said, "I've been sitting in your day room for 14 years. If you felt I needed therapy, why wouldn't you give it to me then?" You know. And so, that, when I, again, came across tapping, I was like, man, if people could be tapping while they're in there and giving themselves the healing that is not available in there, because when you're inside, most of the time the, the idea of therapy is a psychotropic drug.

If you say, I'm depressed or whatever, first of all, they're gonna put you on suicide watch, which means they're gonna put you in a strip cell. So, don't ever tell anybody that you're depressed. If you just say, oh, I'm down, or whatever, then they'll say, then they will diagnose you with depression and give you a, a, a psychotropic drug. That's their idea of therapy. But if those people could just be sitting in their cells or in the day room free, whether in a group or by themselves, tapping on themselves, they could be working their own magic and they wouldn't need anybody's permission to do it. And, you know, about the, I wanna say something quickly about the availability of tapping. I was, uh, after I learned about it, I came across a video by a man named, um, Eric Curie. He had a video, a DVD, called *Operation Freedom: The Answer*, and he showed how he had, uh, produced this video. They, these EFT practitioners had gotten a pilot group of combat veterans who had PTSD, and they, they were so traumatized when they came home that their, their families were leaving them. People were afraid of them, you know. They were getting put out of their homes.

He gathered a group of them, twelve of them, and put them through a five-day intensive tapping program to, to release the trauma and bring down the PTSD and reunite their families and get them all working on this therapy on their own. And then followed them over a period of two years to demonstrate that the five-day program had actually lasted over the years. Their lives had changed. These were people who had been in combat. They were veterans. They had PTSD. So, tapping is something that works for combat trauma. It's something that worked for me with all the types of trauma that I had. It doesn't really matter what type of trauma you had. It doesn't have to be incarceration. People are traumatized in their relationships. People are in prison in their houses. Whatever your trauma is, if tapping works, and you don't have to be able to do anything but tap with your fingers, you don't have to have read a thing, it's, it's effective on so many levels. I'm, I was just so, so inspired to bring it to people, uh, because it, it's really, you know, suicide is the number two cause of death in teenagers, you know. The number of suicides in veterans is ridiculously high. This is something that we can show that just brings the trauma down in people and it's free and accessible. I really think it's a tool that I, that people need to know.

**Alexis Miles:** In 2015, you launched Lisa Forbes Inc.

**Lisa Forbes:** Mm-hmm.

**Alexis Miles:** And part of the reason, as I understand it, was what you alluded to earlier, the nonprofits that existed to help people find jobs after being released from prison were, those nonprofits were not working. And you do something radically different. So, can you talk a little bit about what that difference is?

**Lisa Forbes:** So, the difference is that I wanted to focus on trauma resolution. And I, I wanted, uh, hasten to add that I am not saying that no nonprofit is doing good work or they're not working. But I, it was my experience and the experience of a lot of people that I talked with that first of all, the, the, uh, the scope of what the nonprofits could focus on was necessarily limited to what the grant makers would allow. So, that was why a lot of them could not touch me because they didn't, the grant makers would not allow them to deal with people who had violent crimes, and I thought that was a huge gap in the services they provided. Secondly, I felt like a lot of them were trapped themselves on the treadmill of needing a grant, needing a

grant, needing a grant, needing a grant. And so, they were hyping up, to a certain extent, the level of successes that they had because you have to show the success in order to get the next grant. And, I was sitting there scratching my head wondering if we've got all these people with all these successes, why do we have a 70 percent recidivism rate, you know? What, what are missing here? And so, I just really feel that nonprofits are so, that's why I feel there needs to be funding on a national level for people who are doing this work. Just like a lot of these people who are working with immigrants, they're not chasing grants, they, they're funded on a national level, people need to be funded on a national and state level so that they're free to do the work that they really wanna do.

And I wanted to focus on, in conjunction with the, the job training and the literacy and the job placement that a lot of nonprofits do, which is great and necessary work, and I support it, but I maintain that if, that there's a reason why sometimes you see the same people coming in and out of those pla, places for services, and it's because a traumatized person ultimately can only make the decisions that a traumatized mind would make. They can't do anything different. And so, if you don't address the trauma, again, you can help them get a job, but they can't keep it. You can help them get an apartment, but they can't keep it. We need to break the cycle of the thing that is chaining them to repeating their past. It's not necessarily that they're illiterate. It's not necessarily that they need job training 'cause I had those things. It is trauma that is chaining people to a repetition of the past. That, that, that same energy recycling and recycling through those energy systems, if that's all the information that the brain is getting, then that's all the information the brain has to make a decision.

So, I was reading earlier that, uh, there's a quote where, uh, this author, Viktor Frankl says, "In between stimulus and response, there's a gap," right? We think that, you know, you do something and something happens immediately. Actually, there's no such thing as immediate. Between stimulus and response, there's a gap that if, and, and if I can get in that gap and take the trauma out of it, you will respond differently to whatever the stimulus was, right? You'll respond differently to that craving. You'll respond differently to that thought. You'll respond differently to that person. But that, that gap, if it's occupied by trauma, then it just seems like you get stimulus, same response, stimulus, same response, and so you're not thinking. You gotta get into that gap and get the trauma out of it so that in between stimulus and response, in that gap, I can make a different decision. And that's what I wanted to focus on.

So, I started Lisa Forbes Inc., uh, and I was doing workshops with the City and County of Denver and speaking to people. And, I'm gonna really transition that into, *I Can Take It From Here Inc.*, because I, I, I really don't want it to just be Lisa Forbes' story. I don't want people to just listen to me and applaud. I want you, when you take, go through this program, to feel like, I can take it from here too. So I'm transitioning that to, *I Can Take It From Here*, and just the, the primary difference is that my entire focus is if those other nonprofits are functioning, and they should be, they're doing great work, job training, that's wonderful. But let me send you people who are trauma free. And, and then let's work together. And, and let's bring this 70 percent recidivism rate down.

**Sam Fuqua:** To shift gears, uh, to the policy level and the motivated, very skilled, very intelligent, uh, restored citizen who faces barriers to employment, are there policies in place that, that conflict with the desire of folks who have been formerly incarcerated to get into the workforce? Are there things we could change, laws we could change, rules, guidelines? Are there conflicts at the policy level?

**Lisa Forbes:** Well, one of the main conflicts is that the current second chance initiatives and first step acts, and all these criminal justice reform proposals, first of all, they eliminate, eliminate people like, that was my first problem with it. I mean, I recognize that you gotta start somewhere, but there is a false distinction that

people have between the idea of a non-violent offender and a violent criminal, right? They even use different terms: one is an offender, one is a criminal. The reality is that there are lots of people who are currently incarcerated for nonviolent offenses who are actually violent people. They just got incarcerated for something nonviolent, and they didn't get called for all the violent stuff they did, but they are violent, angry people, full of unprocessed rage. Meanwhile, there are people who I consider myself one of, who are inherently nonviolent, but who in a state of an, an emotional breakdown committed a single violent act. And, for that single violent act in a lifetime of, of non-violence before and after that, I get eliminated from every kind of second chance initiative that comes across as policy. So, that's the first thing that needs to be changed is that, a recognition that even if I went to prison for murder, I'm out now.

It's not really in your best interest as a society to not include me in, uh, preparing me for the outside world. In, in preparing me to participate in these initiatives, and preparing me to come out and be able to function because no matter what you may think of my crime and why you shouldn't have done it, most violent people, most people convicted of a violent crime will in fact be paroled. They will be out. So, we need policies that focus on these so-called worst of the worst people because if you, we don't focus on them, we're eliminating really millions of people who have, who have been long-term incarcerated and they're coming out now after 10, 15 years and we've done nothing for them. That is a tremendous gap in the second chance initiatives and the types of reforms that we are proposing by only focusing on non-violent offenders or drug offenders or the federal offenses. But what about all the people coming out with these violent offenses from the state level, which is, in fact is mostly black and brown people, right? And so, if you have traumatized people coming back to their traumatized, violent filled communities with sometimes their trauma filled families, then you wonder why you have a 60 to 70 percent recidivism rate. But it's really not a mystery. The policies are, need to be more toward preventing things rather than just, uh, reacting on the back end of it only for a certain number of people. When I went to, to organizations that everybody else was going to, to get help or get a job, they wouldn't touch me with a ten foot pole because of my crime. Yet, I'm out. What, what do you want me to do?

**Alexis Miles:** What you just said reminds me a lot of an initiative that you support. Um, the idea of having a national office of Restored American Act. So, which would help ease restored citizens back into society at many levels. I think you talk about social, cultural, economic, civic levels. Could you say more about that national office of Restored Americans Act?

**Lisa Forbes:** Yes. And again, you know, I, I, the thing is, Alexis, that we're not necessarily talking about reinventing the wheel. We're talking about giving restored citizens things that we already give other people. So, I based the proposal of that office on the fact that we have the same office now for immigrants. We bring immigrants in, and I am by no means anti-immigrant, but we bring immigrants into the country and we, we have offices set up on every state level and on the federal level to help them with job creation and language and literacy and entrepreneurship, and we give them grants and housing and we do all these things. And all I'm saying is why don't we parallel that, what we already know, to do for American citizens who are already here and who need that same help because they are coming out at, first of all, they never had, have never had any help of that nature. But they're coming out many times after decades even more advanced than the average immigrant, you know. Many times immigrants come into the country, they, they're more literate in English than the people who are coming outta prison, most of whom can't read above a sixth grade level.

So, these are things that we are actually already offering other people, and I'm simply saying, why can't we extend that same help to Americans? And help them, you know, you'd be surprised how many bright ideas people have in prison, you know. But they come out, they don't have any money to get started, but yet we



give other people money to, for entrepreneurship training. Let's give some of that money to people who are already here. So, my proposal would simply be to mirror what we already are doing, right? We, we, there's no reason to say, well, this is some newfangled idea. No, we do it for other people. I'm just saying, why can't we do it for us? It, it, it's a, it's really a public safety issue as well, because people, many people, you know, I know so many people who have been in and out purely for just the most basic economic reasons. You know, if you, if I'm a single mother or father and I'm incarcerated and I have a boy and a girl, when I get out, I need a three bedroom apartment because my son and my daughter can't share a bedroom and neither one of them can share a bedroom with me.

So, merely the fact of my past incarceration puts an additional burden on me of needing a three bedroom apartment, whereas if I had never been incarcerated, there are plenty of people in a one bedroom with their two kids, you know. So, how am I gonna get a three bedroom apartment in Denver or anywhere else in the United States on a minimum wage job? So it causes people to, it, it breaks up families. People are home, but they never qualify to get their kids back because they're not making enough money. These are people who often say, you know, I could make five times this if I just go back to doing what I was doing. If we could help these people the way we help immigrants and other groups of people, we, we're, we bring people into the country because they're fleeing war zones and that's great and I support that. But you know, there are studies that show that children in inner cities have war zone level trauma. They are going to sleep hearing bullets and gunshots. By the time they're ten years old, they've been to twelve funerals. They've lost family members, friends. They've had shootings in schools. We know that our children in these inner cities are experiencing trauma at a level that is equal to war zones, and that has been demonstrated. So, why are we helping other people flee from war zones, but leaving our kids in our cities that are war zones? So, when I propose these things, I'm trying to propose them to show people that this is what we're doing for other people. Let's just now have the same office, but directed toward Americans who need it.

**Sam Fuqua:** Well, Lisa, how is the work going, uh, as you try to advocate for these policy changes to, uh, better support restored citizens? Are you seeing progress?

**Lisa Forbes:** Well, I, I see openness to the idea. You know, a lot of people recognize that this is something that we need to do, and by the way, with so many Americans incarcerated or having been incarcerated, you'd be surprised of the number of people I talk to in, in all kinds of positions who have a cousin or a sister or a brother or an uncle who is in this same position. And so, a lot of people are really open to some type of change and know there needs to be some kind of change. But as you suggested, Sam, there, there has to be, it has, some of it has to happen at the policy level. Because there's, I, I want to reach individuals, but really the support for this needs to be national as well as, as on the state level. But it, it, there needs to be a national recognition that this is a really, a public health emergency. The, our, our, the state of our, our mental and emotional health in this country is, is, is a public health emergency, and it's a public safety emergency. And so, it needs to be addressed that way, but that requires being able to affect people at the policy level.

And you know, when I, the people that I am dealing with and talking to, though very open to the idea of wanting to do something, I always have people coming up to me saying, you know, if you get something going, call me. I wanna be a part of it. So I think the, the opportunity for a, a really, a movement, is there. It just has to be presented in a way where, you know, it reminds me of something. I'm jumping all over the place. But it reminds me of something somebody was talking when, um, President Obama was, had been, people were saying he should do more for the people, this and that, he said, "Make, you gotta make me do it. Make me do it." And I think we still are at that point where we need accountability for the people we put in office. We need to make them do for us what they're doing for anybody else, any other group. So the,

the, the, uh, the will is there among the people. Let's see if it's there among the, the policy makers. That's, that's the key.

**Sam Fuqua:** Well, Lisa Forbes, thank you so much for speaking with us today, and thank you for all your work.

**Lisa Forbes:** I am so grateful to be here. Very nice to meet you, and to see you again, Alexis. Really, thank you so much for having me.

**Sam Fuqua:** Lisa Forbes is an author and keynote speaker. For more information on her work and her book, *I Can Take It From Here: A Memoir of Trauma, Prison, and Self-Empowerment*. You can visit her website, [lisaforbesspeaks.com](http://lisaforbesspeaks.com).

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