

Unabomber Brother and Victim Share Story of Forgiveness and Hope

Lisa Rea

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Today's podcast from Restorative Justice International is with David Kaczynski, the brother of the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski. This podcast conversation includes Gary Wright who was one of the victims of the Unabomber.

The Unabomber conducted a campaign of domestic terror in the United States taking place over 17 years leaving 3 dead, and 23 injured. Ted Kaczynski was caught and arrested in 1996 because his brother was working with the FBI, and turned him in. Ted served 27 years in prison dying in 2023 by suicide.

David is the former director of a Buddhist monastery located in Woodstock, NY. He previously served as executive director of New Yorkers Against the Death Penalty, and as assistant director of the Equinox Youth Shelter in Albany NY, working with youth and families in crisis. He lives in Texas.

Gary Wright is a victim and survivor of one of the bombs which exploded in a computer store he owned in Utah in 1987. Gary was pierced by more than 200 pieces of shrapnel and underwent 12 surgeries including treatment for post-traumatic stress. Gary is Senior Manager and Business Architect at VSP Vision. He lives in California.

This podcast is a story of restorative justice, hope and forgiveness. In part, RJI chose to do this podcast with David and Gary because of a recent in-depth story in the New York Times. Find that story here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/29/us/unabomber-ted-kaczynski-letters.html>

RJI is honored to tell the story of David and Gary showing what is possible after severe violent crime through dialogue, and restorative justice processes.

<https://youtu.be/t1KymZe813Q>

Welcome to Rajai's podcast series hosted by Rji President Visa, right for start of Justice International is an association and network of over 6000 members and affiliates. In this podcast series, Lisa interviews leaders from around the world who support. Austro justice, including crime victims, ex offenders, exonerees and human rights experts. In these podcasts you will hear from key thought leaders who support systemic justice reform based on restorative justice principles. Now, here's Lisa raye.

Lisa Rea: Today's podcast is with David Kaczynski, the brother of the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski. This podcast conversation includes Gary Wright, who was one of the victims of the Unabomber. The Unabomber conducted a campaign of domestic terror, taking place over 17 years, leaving 3 dead and 23 injured. Ted Kaczynski was caught and arrested in 1996 because his brother was working with the FBI and turned him in. Head served 27 years in prison, dying in 2023 by suicide. David Kaczynski is the former director of a Buddhist monastery located in Woodstock, NY He previously served as executive director of the New Yorkers against New Yorkers against the death penalty and as an assistant director of the Equinox Youth Shelter in Albany, NY working with

youth and families in crisis. He lives in Texas. Gary Wright is a victim and survivor of one of the bombs, which exploded in a computer store he owned in Utah in 1987. Gary was pierced by more than 200 pieces of shrapnel and underwent 12 surgeries, including treatment for post traumatic. Stress Gary is a senior manager and business architect at VSP Vision and he lives in California. This podcast is a story of restorative justice, hope and forgiveness and part RJ. I chose to do this podcast with David and Gary because of a recent in-depth story in the New York Times. Welcome Dave and Gary. It's so good to have you so good to have you today. And I always start. I always start with saying how did we meet? And David, you're the only one I met before this podcast. But do you remember how we met?

Gary Wright: Thank you, Vincent.

David Kaczynski: Those were pretty crowded times for me, so no, I don't. I'm sorry.

Lisa Rea: Well, we network a lot at RJ I, but we met through LinkedIn, but through Bill Pelkey, Bill Pelkey with Journey of Hope from violence to healing. And I was on his board and he was on the board. This this organization. So again, thank you so much, both of you and 1st I'll start with you David, and ask you to tell the story of your brother Ted. And I know that's a very long story, but some might not be familiar with the story. Many of our listeners are from around the world and might not have heard. So tell us your story and his.

David Kaczynski: Wow, that's a tall order to do in a short period of time, but I'll try to rush through it. Ted was a brilliant, brilliant older brother. He graduated 2 years early from high school at the age of 16. He entered Harvard University on a scholarship. He eventually got a PhD in mathematics. And taught mathematics at the University of California at Berkeley as a professor, and then after about three years there he, he abruptly quit that position, dropped it out. At the time I was living in Montana, I had graduated from college and. Ted came out. Join me out there and I said, Dave, let's look at for some land together, something out in the woods, something isolated. I want to get away from this civilization and and our family had always loved nature and things. So we we. We bought a. Piece of land that Ted had found, he built a cabin there. I was working in Great Falls about 90 miles away, but occasionally we'd get together. Eventually I left Montana to take a teaching job in a small town in Iowa and. Eventually I got tired of civilization, too. I was tired, you know. We bought that land together. I think I'm going to go back, go back there and live with you on that piece of land. And Ted kind of surprised me. He said I don't want you to come. I don't want you to come look for some land elsewhere. And I had loved the the Texas Desert, Big Bend area. So actually I moved down there, spent about seven years or so living down there, Ted and I. Exchange letters frequently. On the last time I saw him in person was in 1986. He had already kind of estranged himself with some angry letters to our parents. Clearly, he was not a happy camper, but I didn't realize just really how much he was suffering. We spent about a week together. I drove back a few years later, I wrote him to tell him the good news that I had reconnected with my old high

school girlfriend, Linda Patrick, and that we were going to get married. I was going. To leave the desert. See if I could find a job in civilization and he got really angry at me. He. Wrote a like a. Long letter that was rather abusive. He criticized Linda even though he had never, ever met. And he said he didn't want anything to do with me ever again. I knew, of course, at this point about his critique of technology, the idea he had, that technology wasn't, you know, gave us the illusion of more control over our lives. But in the long run, we would lose control. Technology would take over, we'd become. Cards in the wheel of technology, so I knew his thinking about that. And in many ways I sympathized with it. I told Linda, of course, about his rejection of me and of her and. Many times I talked about, you know, the the critique my brother and I shared about the dangers of technology. One day, Linda sat me down and said, Dave, you've heard of this Unabomber guy. You know, he's published A manifesto. It's it's against technology, you think?

Lisa Rea: Yeah. Tell us about that. So it was 35,000 words.

David Kaczynski: EO was 78 pages long. I remember that much the first time I get a glimpse of it was my first time online ever. Linda took me to her college library. I read the first 6 pages. That was all that was accessible at that point, and I began to feel chills, you know, like and maybe but Ted. Never been violent. I just couldn't imagine you would do that. But Linda kept pressing me. We eventually got a full copy of the manifesto I pulled.

Gary Wright: Out.

David Kaczynski: Like 100. Of letters from my brother that I'd saved over the years. Some. With them that dealt with this theme of technology and we for a couple of weeks, 3 or 4 weeks we sat together every night after our got home from jobs after dinner and tried to see it because it possible my brother wrote that manifesto. I think it was about a month later. I remember I woke up 1 morning just feeling. Like I was waking up from a nightmare and then I realized, oh, I was waking up to a nightmare. I was literally considering the possibility that my brother was a serial murderer. The most wanted person in America. And I told Linda I thought it was a 5050 chance. Eventually, she recruited a an old old. The childhood friend of hers, Susan Swanson, who was working as a private detective at that time and she asked Susan to see if she could find somebody who could compare language. I mean in a scientific. Way that we would, you know, not give our names, would use her as an intermediary, but we'd we'd share some of Ted's writings that we retyped and have them compare that to the manifesto. They studied it for two weeks and then they said could you send us some more letters? So it took them about a month to come up with the probability that there was a 60% chance that the manifesto was written by the author of My Brother's letters. And so here we're facing this, you know, just incredible anguishing dilemma where any decision we made could lead to somebody's death if we did nothing. And Ted was the Unabomber and he killed again, we'd have to go through the rest of our lives feeling responsible. We'd have, like, blood on our hands. But also the civilization that if the Unabomber was ever caught, he'd be a prime candidate for capital punishment.

What would it be like? To go through the rest of my life with my own brother's blood on my hands. I don't know what decision I would have made for that. For Linda, Linda was, you know, she has just a strong moral sense. But but was understood my process and my feelings it it. And she got me to the point of, you know, now now we need to do something. Susan actually had a an old law school friend who was a a lawyer in Washington, DC with some FBI connections. Tony Basaglia, we worked through Mr. Basaglar. We since you know, a report both from the linguist and. Some things that Susan had found out. To the FBI, it took a while quite a while. About six weeks later, the FBI interviewed us. Eventually, at some point I had to tell my. Mother. Not only what we suspected, which was horrific, but also what I've done turning in my own brother. I didn't want her to. You know that Linda was any part of this, so I didn't want her to deflect her anger. I I I was going to. The FBI said they wanted to interview Mom. So I. I went to her apartment, knocked on her door. And she she said, David, you look terrible. What's what's wrong? Did something happen? Is Ted OK? And I said, Mom, as far as I know, Ted is OK. But let's go inside, sit down. I need to tell you something. And it's going to take a little while anyway. I was. I was just terrified. I was going to lose moms. Love that day when I told her. Anyway, I talked about the Unabomber. She'd heard of the Unabomber. I talked about Ted's technology critique, and and so forth. And. And she's looking at me like I couldn't believe what she's hearing. And I said, Mom, I think there's a real chance. That Ted might be this person. This summer this. And Mom's first reaction wasn't who she was. She didn't have time to think about this. She was a mother. And she said, oh, don't don't tell anybody. She probably couldn't believe it either. And I said, Mom, I already have told somebody. I've. I've shared my suspicions with the FBI and. And their. They're currently investigating.

Lisa Rea: David, let me stop you there and then we'll come back because you could go on. I know and we are going to put the link to that, that New York Times story with this podcast. So Gary, let me bring you in. You want to briefly tell your story and then also I want you to get to how you met David, but tell. The main part of your story about. And. George.

Gary Wright: Sure. And so in 1987, I was a 25 year old. So we're thinking what is a 25 year old know, what are they doing at that point probably being stupid and learning life. But I had started a company at 21 a computer company in Salt Lake City mostly based on mainframe work. And before PCs and finally got into PC work. But in 1987 I was just working and living the dream, and I've been out working early morning went out to a client site at 6:00 in the morning and for people who have PC's, it doesn't make any sense. But when the mainframe went down, payroll didn't get paid. So lots of people were just waiting at the door for me to come in and work on their computer. So did that came back to my office and it was February. And typically in Utah you'll have a a thaw on the weather. So January, February thaw and it was warm. So I was driving around some, it's open sunglasses on not a care in the world really except I'm working. Pulled into the parking lot of my office in the back of the

building and it was arranged so that there was a number of parking slots for people to pull into and one was open between my parents car and our administrative assistant accountant per car really quite close to a garbage dumpster. So I pulled in and as I was driving up, I saw this piece of wood lying kind of by the front tire of one of the cars on the passenger side of my car. And it had nails sticking out of it. And I thought, I wonder what that's there for. I mean, there's a construction number. I don't know why, but a little bit odd got out of the car, went between the two cars. So like a little alleyway. And as I approached this piece of wood, it was about 13 inches long at the bottom piece, which it was 22. By force placed together to make a four by four piece of. And the top piece was about 9 inches. There were 4 nails in it. The upper right hand corner had a nail that was bent slightly to the right or to the left. But the odd thing I paused for was I've built a lot of things, even as a young guy, and those nails were like, super bright and shiny, very different, almost like Chrome. So I paused for a second, not enough to make me do anything different. But thought that's odd. Locked up, went down. Kind of put my hand on the end of it to pick it up and immediately something was wrong. I mean, there was an instant feeling of huge pressure in my chest. It sounded like a jet. Fighter had flown over. Like, really speechy sound. And the next thing I knew, I was standing in the parking lot jumping up and down about 22. Feet back. And everything was slow motion. For whatever reason, I thought someone had come around the side of the building and shot me with a shotgun. I have no idea where that came from. But this things went into slow motion. I describe it kind of like the the movie The Matrix. I was watching things and later I found out why that is with what your brain does. But watching everything in slow motion, watching the wires into the building for the power and the and the phone going up and down in the. Line waves and watching debris float down like come Betty, I'm thinking. Oh, God, this might be it. I mean, something happened. I mean, this might be the end. Does that look like? And I heard this big, booming voice that said you'll be all right. I mean, subconscious or otherwise, I don't really know, but. I've only heard that voice twice in my. Life. But I. Could look down and see that. My clothes were just. Fragmented, I mean from my knees down my pants were gone. My shoes were kind of went from quarter on to Gray and. I see blood. Starting to come through my shirt in those days, we all dressed up and wore a. Tie and all that but. I could see that and I couldn't get my neck to go down and really see very well and what it really was was when the the wood exploded, it turned into millions of slivers of various lengths and I was like a porcupine. So under my neck there was a lot of debris. Ultimately, the the police, the ambulance was called took me to the hospital, underwent surgery that night couple weeks later, and as you mentioned that you know, a series of surgeries over a long period of time, it's about a dozen to get back to the to the way I'm now and. Functional and.

Lisa Rea: Of a what period of time were those? Surgeries.

Gary Wright: Well, about six years. Yeah, it was in and out. The first surgery that day. Second surgery to go in and reattach a nerve. And all of that stuff was a

couple of weeks later, 18 months later, to go in and do tendon graphs and things like that. Then after that teeth and yeah, it just was an ongoing process.

Lisa Rea: Oh.

Gary Wright: Of being a pincushion, I think. But yeah, I mean, All in all the the physical side. You're built to recover the way you do and how much dedication you put into making yourself better. To the best of your ability, the mental side is a whole different story, and we probably don't have enough time to go into that. But the mental side is infinitely more difficult than the the actual process of going through the surgeries. But we wanted to get to a point that kind of how David and I met and David and I had met. It was really odd, you know, there was nine years between when I was attacked and when the Unabomber was actually captured was capped. 3rd the day before my birthday, actually April 3rd and I didn't meet. I didn't even talk to David until one day there was Susan Swanson, the woman that he mentioned, the private investigator when I was hurt, my admin, my accounting person, is the one that did the composite drawing. It's the first time there was ever. A link to. What a person looked like in this case. So there was quite. A bit of restriction on access to me, so much so that I couldn't even get part of my public records for the longest time. I mean, I had to go through the federal government to get them. But Susan had reached out to me after she had spoken with David and and Linda and sent me a nice little card and said, hey, you know, this is who I am. I was wondering if you would be open to speaking with with David and Linda and if you would like to give. Me a call. I did. I gave her a call and said, yeah, I'll talk to him anytime. And so some time passed, I believe in my head, it seems like. That was about October time.

David Kaczynski: Right.

Gary Wright: And in November Ish, I get a phone call. But I wasn't at home and there was a message on my answering machine. But at that time it said you've reached the right house at the wrong time, so please leave a message. My last name being right. And David had to leave that message on my answering machine. God, that had to be uncomfortable. But maybe a week or so later, I actually got the call my daughter picked up the phone while I was doing dishes and said, hey, Dad, there's somebody on the phone for you. I picked it up and David said, hey, I'm, I'm David Kaczynski. I think you know who I am. You know, I just wanted to call and apologize on behalf of my family. And I just told them, I said Dave, look. You. Know our family members. They can do whatever they do. It's it's not your apology, but I I really appreciate it. And I've seen the way that you and your mom have been in the news and the way you reacted to reporters and. I really appreciate that and let him know that if there was any time you needed to talk, you could call me 24/7. And I said, sometimes you just need to get stuff off your chest because it it can't necessarily be a family member or somebody close to you.

Lisa Rea: Right. Were were you ever hoping to have direct contact with Ted Kaczynski?

Gary Wright: Don't know that there was ever a hope for it. Could have asked some questions, but as more time went on and it became probably more I felt like dangerous to have that conversation because it it could have been twisted. And you know when you're not there to speak it as you know your words can be taken. Very differently. And there were a lot of people that were following him at that point. As far as you know, Ted for President and this and that, that was going on. So maybe could have gotten some answers, but I I mean, looking back now, probably never would have happened. I mean, if you look at David and Ted's relationship, I mean, I'd have been a. Tiny, tiny little piece. Compared to that relationship, and I'm sure that I probably wouldn't have received anything of real value.

Lisa Rea: Did you do? Do you now and did you then feel that you forgave Ted?

Gary Wright: Yeah, I actually forgave Ted prior to the sentencing hearing when I gave my sentencing hearing presentation. I looked right. At him and told him, I said, you know, Ted, I forgive you. I don't hate you. I don't know how. I was just kindling in your cause. And I have no idea how many people it would have taken to satisfy your need. And the response from him, I'll never. Forget, I mean, he had been riding on a yellow legal pad quite furiously and taking notes. He just looked up. Our gaze locked and I knew exactly that I'd transferred ownership of all of it. I mean, he now. Had to bear the brunt of it.

Lisa Rea: So do you think he understood that you forgave him?

Gary Wright: I as to the best of my ability, I knew it was a shock. Now whether he ever realized what that meant, I don't know. But. That that real time reaction was unbelievable as far as Yep, we, we actually just one right at the other and I and I knew that the the transfer would happen. So I don't know what he really felt and it's it's hard to imagine when you're referred to as an experiment. So I was experiment 121 and then somehow humanize that. So I I don't really know.

Lisa Rea: What do you think that? And I'm saying all this too, because we work with a lot of crime victims around the country and around the world and through restorative justice processes and. And as you probably both know, forgiveness is not always required or pushed. On to crime victims, but often it can happen through a restorative justice process, so it seems like in this case it happened for you because almost because of David, but also yourself, just your own process. Would you? Yeah. David, you have a comment about that.

David Kaczynski: Yeah, I mean, I remember, Gary. Telling me at one point that he didn't want to go through life as as an angry, bitter person, and that he didn't want his children to grow up, seeing him as an angry, resentful human being. In a sense, that's what Ted was. You know, Gary wanted to walk a very, very. Different path and I think that was scary. That was his, his, his psychological and spiritual process. And I deeply respect. OK.

Lisa Rea: And and Gary, what was that process like for you just getting to that place to forgive and and as I I've read both in the New York Times, but also I've seen some videos and there's so much content out there, but you talk about your faith, so,

So what happened? What? What allowed you to forgive? At that time, after all that injury to yourself.

Gary Wright: It it was a, it was definitely a journey and I talk a lot about forgiveness. Number one, I think the first thing I had to do was redefine what forgiveness meant because there's lots of people have a lot of opinions. What forgiveness means, like acceptance or you know you're you're saying it's OK. I don't think anybody was OK. That that's not the case. Forgiveness in my world was redefining it to say I cared enough about myself that I wouldn't let anybody see me as less than what I could become. Right. And that meant kids, friends, family, whatever that might be, that redefinition. Is pretty powerful. When you can put it. Into action for yourself. I think that it is a very I I call it a a selfish choice and and I say that because it's not about what anybody else thinks. I mean, I'm sorry, but it really isn't. I mean, you might lose friends over it. You could. You could have a lot of things happen with your relationships, but it's what you're you're willing to choose to live with. And I chose this day. It said I wasn't going to be angry. And I surely knew that even though. You don't get the opportunity very often to demonstrate your value system, especially to your kids. That. Doing that, they would see it.

Lisa Rea: Yes.

Gary Wright: So I don't think it's prescriptive. I don't think it's for everyone. I I surely don't ever think that I would sit anyone else's shoes and judge whatever their choice was because we're all on different journeys. I can say for me personally being able to let that go, it was no longer my focus. Therefore I went out and did all the crazy things and and things I wanted to do in. Life and still. Do so. I I didn't have that, but.

Lisa Rea: OK. And David, I think I asked you this via e-mail as well, but for other victims or survivors contacted by you and your family, given that there were three dead and 22 other than Gary who were injured.

David Kaczynski: Well, it was a bit of a journey for me. I remember one night, maybe a month after Ted's arrest. I think Janet Reno, the attorney general, had announced she was going to seek the death penalty for my brother. I I just felt, oh, my God, I felt like I was the victim of this whole thing. And and Linda had heard it much too often, she said. David, you're just thinking about yourself. Think about all those people who were harmed and hurt my wife and I are Buddhists, and we have a meditation practice. And the next morning, when I went into our little shrine room, I saw that she had put up 3 candles on the shrine. And and for the next years years following we we meditated with those candles. I didn't have to ask what they represented. They represented the three lives that Ted had extinguished. And so. Linda and I. Made a joint decision. We had to apologize. I mean that was the main thing, but I have. To say it was this little selfish. Open that apology to to say, Gee, I wonder if anyone would reach back to me, you know? Would they understand? Would they appreciate what they may be? Maybe want to get together and talk sometime. Share feelings. We didn't receive many responses. We didn't actually have Garry's address

at that point, but. But so I never sent a letter to Gary. It was the phone call that I made later because Susan had. Urged me to do that. But I was I I felt some like. Wow, I'm on the other side of this. Canyon abyss. You know the victims are on that side. I'm on this side. Our families on this side. There's no bridge across the the abyss. I've. I've felt like almost like. The world had been blown apart in a way and and. I mean it. Maybe it sounds overly dramatic but it but it it kind of felt that way. Like I I had a deep. Feeling of need to kind of crossover somehow and. You know, understand their. Feelings a little bit better and for them to understand some of mine. And.

Lisa Rea: So most most of the victims or survivors were just unavailable. In general.

David Kaczynski: I think we only got of the, I think, 14 letters we sent. We only got 2 responses. Most just did not respond to the letter at all. The tool that responded one was sort of like thank you.

Lisa Rea: Yes.

David Kaczynski: That was about it. There was 1. Family a widow, actually someone of someone my brother had killed. Who? Who did write back and said that she had been thinking about us. And I wrote to her again and said, do you think there's a chance we could meet? And she said maybe after the trial was her response and I had to respect that, of course. We eventually did meet after the trial with my mother as well.

Lisa Rea: Yes, that's so hard. When there can't be direct contact between victim and offender when it's a surrogate, it's more difficult, but it's not impossible. In fact, just let me say this and I think I mentioned this to both of you. I ran an in prison restorative justice project and a medium security prison. In Texas in 19/19/89 and. It was surrogates. Real victims, real offenders meeting and it was. Like a six to. Eight week program, but I'd never thought that something. Like that would. Work and I was wrong. It was an incredible success and it allowed victims and offenders to come together and talk about issues that were spiritual but also talk about forgiveness, talk about restitution, restoration confession, very spiritual. Issues, but it was very important to both the victim and the offender for their healing and again they were surrogates. So it seems like even in this case, your case, the victims that remain, this fibers would benefit from something like that and that that project has actually spread throughout Texas and a similar model. Has been viewed around the world. So anyway I I'm I'm thinking of that as I'm listening to your story, David. We have a lot, a little bit more to cover here and a lot not very much time. But you wrote to Ted over 30 years with little response. I was thinking when I was reading this in the Times article, what were you hoping to tell him? And also what were you hoping to hear?

David Kaczynski: Yeah. I was hoping I could do something to make him feel. Better. I I knew how stubborn Ted was. I knew when he made a decision, you know, he forced himself to keep keep that decision. I thought it was very unlikely that he would ever answer. I would have been elated and maybe a little scared if he did not know what it would actually be like to to sit there face to face with him. But but. But I was just hoping that I could tell him some things about the kind of brother he'd

been when we were growing up. Very kind in many ways, the role model he had been for me kind. Following. Your own sort of spiritual guidance, it turned out, took us on separate paths. But but he was my role model for sort of psychological independence in a way and love of nature. So all of those things. And I wanted him to know that I knew he had cancer. I knew he was suffering. I knew he. Probably didn't like the environment he was in, certainly far removed from nature. I just thought if I could say something that would help him feel a little bit better. That was important to me when I was a child, my mother realized that Ted was pretty different kind of asocial, not trusting of people, and she said. David, don't ever. Abandon your brother, because that's what he fears the most. So part of this was honoring my promise to my mother and her feelings. She never stopped loving Ted. Even though we both utterly despised and hated what he had done to men and kill. Fellow human beings.

Lisa Rea: And your and your correspondence with him for that many years, 30 years. Did you ask for his forgiveness for going to the FBI and turning him in?

David Kaczynski: I don't know that I asked it for directly. I indirectly I probably did. I said I don't know if you could ever forgive me, but let me explain. You know the dilemma I faced and and I just wanted the violence to stop. I didn't want to hurt you. That was the hardest part. The realization that you would be hurt if I turned you in. But.

Lisa Rea: Yes.

David Kaczynski: And I did apologize. I even apologized for how I hurt him and for what he had described in the one letter he sent to me. That that he thought I had been cruel and that I hated him, and I apologized for my cruelty. And I said I loved him.

Lisa Rea: Let's move on to the sentencing. Ted received four life sentences for his crimes. What? And we kind of touched on this a little earlier, but I want to touch on a little bit more. What's the death penalty considered and how did you both view that possibility, Gary? Why don't you start?

Gary Wright: Yeah, the. The sentencing hearing was its own story. I mean, there was a lot to it. It was, it was crazy. You can imagine the media coverage simply from it was the biggest case in American history at that point. Longest running, most expensive. So it was big. Yes. Death penalty was on the table. And it got it got quite interesting really with the the prosecution, I had changed my thoughts on the death penalty probably when. Was early 20s watching a couple of other cases. My dad was a state trooper and I grew up in a highly, you know, death penalty oriented family. And yet I saw these cases that didn't make a lot of sense. And so I had already changed my mind about it it. It's such a personal issue in so many ways and I can see why it's. Always that 5050. Which side are you on? You know, and you're probably very slowly if ever going to change people's mind one way or the other, but having it be a bit death penalty case and then when people when. The the legal system finds out that you're not in support of what they're pursuing. You don't necessarily become the friend of the of the prosecution. And it was one of the reasons that I elected not to

sit the prosecution when we went to the sentencing hearing, I elected to go up to the witness stand and address everybody face to face because while I respected what they did, they didn't have to ostracize me and minimize my story simply because I didn't agree with the method. I mean, that's that seemed odd. To me, so that was my stance in it. I had already made my mind up, but I I felt like when I went I got my chance to say the things along my mind and you know, walk away from that particular chapter. Of life.

Lisa Rea: And the I guess the diagnosis that Ted received was that he was a paranoid schizophrenic, is that right David?

David Kaczynski: Yes, yes.

Lisa Rea: Yeah. And so how how was it that the death penalty was excluded here in this case?

David Kaczynski: Yeah, it's really, really interesting. I had met with the, you know, there's a a committee at the federal level that makes a. And to the prosecutors, they have to follow that recommendation and we had met a couple of times before they made their recommendation to seek the death penalty and and my arguments were basically twofold, considering the law. One was that it Ted, I believe my brother had a mental illness and that that would. There had been previous cases where it had been decided that people with certain diagnosis, like paranoid schizophrenia, should not be subject to the death penalty and and secondly, I made the argument that if you punish families for doing the right thing for turning in a family member to save lives, in fact, when when Ted was arrested, they found another live bomb. Under his bed. I mean, I think there's there's a there's a real validation of our of our choice in that discovery that my brother probably would have killed. Again, that if you punish families, that becomes a deterrent for families to do the right thing, you know, and that was the most horrific part of my dilemma. Do I do I get there and sit and watch my brother be executed after I turned him in? That was the. Nightmare. I didn't want to live.

Lisa Rea: And I know, as I said earlier, I know you've been active with the journey of hope from violence to healing. And can you just describe that organization? As I mentioned.

David Kaczynski: Yeah, it was primarily the board is consists of. Murder victim family members and I was honored by Bill Pelkey, a great, great human being. We we met on the the Board of the National Coalition to abolish the death penalty, to invite me into that organization, and Larry became involved later too, because we did a tour in the state of Texas. And we had, I was part of that. Gary was part of that. So there was that story. And then there was another victim offender pair. But while she turned in, his sister was killed and whose daughter was killed in the Oklahoma City bombing but opposed the death penalty was there. He had actually reached. Out and and met the the father of Timothy McVeigh. And and also our friend Bill Babbitt, Bill Babbitt, did leave the Night Live. The nightmare he turned in his brother, a Vietnam veteran with a piece of shrapnel in his brain who killed one person, Unpragmatic Statedly,

probably in a delusional state. And Bill Babbitt. Had to watch his brother be executed. Both my brother and Bill Babbitt's brother got all white julies, but. Filled Babbitt's brother was bad man. He was was black and strapped into a Gurney on his 50th birthday and put to death with his own brother watching.

Lisa Rea: In California. Yes, yes. Well, those are very powerful stories and it is very interesting, like you said about you're coming forward and part of the argument against the death penalty was the the fact that other families might never want to ever choose to if their if their wishes aren't. You know something that or weighed heavily. So we're coming to the end of the podcast. You both speak together around the country so often, and I know that you've even mentioned each other as spiritual brothers, which I really liked reading that because it sounds like you have been given the rise of political extremism. And domestic terrorism in this country and and actually around the world, it seems that your message of healing and reconciliation is even more needed today than at any time. What are your thoughts about that, Gary?

Gary Wright: Yeah, there's a life short, you know, I mean, you hear it all the time, but. If you want to be angry. That's your life. I mean, there are so many good things you can do. There are so many ways you can touch people. It just depends on what you want to go and do now. If if that's where you consume yourself. One day I pretty much believe you will look at and say man, what was I doing? I mean, I was angry for a really long time. I could have been happy. But yeah, happy doesn't necessarily mean easy. It means I have a choice to make a difference. I have a choice to focus on things that. Means something to me, even or positive. And I I don't understand a lot of the. The angst and anger, I mean pick a topic. As far as. Is it culture? Is it this? Is it that? Whatever. Oh, my God. There's a thousand ways to get to the same endpoint. Really. You think? Here's this. Right, 100% of the time. I mean, open up a little bit and take a breath. I mean, I think. That's a. That's a big thing in life is take the time, get out, sometimes get yourself grounded. Figure out what's really important to you. But if you want to die on that hill, as far as, that's the anger, anger hill you want to. I am nothing I can do about it, but it really doesn't make it very. Easy to interface with you.

Lisa Rea: Right. And so. David, what are your thoughts about that? When you look at the the amount of political extremism and domestic violence around the world and around this country? What are your thoughts?

David Kaczynski: Yeah, I think. I think what we don't realize that there's no, you know, we fall into the, we slip into this delusion of US versus them, when in fact in reality there's only us. There's only the human family. You hurt, you kill somebody, a part of you dies. In fact, I think a part of all of us dies. We are one world, all of our spiritual traditions that I'm aware of, teach love, kindness, forgiveness, and passion. These are these are the paths that lead us to peace that lead us to reconciliation. To make our world healed and whole, you think of all kinds of reasons maybe to. Beat somebody up or hurt somebody. But you know it's. Underneath it all is fear. I think. I don't think anger is there's some kind of deep fear. I think that's why my brother. He

didn't feel part of the world. But we are whether we want to be or not, we we truly are and we have to treat each other that way. We we are. We are all connected.

Lisa Rea: And I'll give you both time for closing comments at the end of our podcast. And Gary, can you go ahead and make your comments and I'll have David.

Gary Wright: Wow, that's a that's a. Big ask Lisa, I think. Probably so much. My dad used to say, you know, when you die, they're going to have to take a rock. And kill your mouth because you just. Want to go on forever? So now I'd say. It's it's a journey for me that I wouldn't wish on anybody. But honestly, one of the best things that. Could happen as. Far as if you want to invoke change, go to really hard things for yourself or others, right? I would also. Say that by taking the position I did not only did I get to understand the. Great values of the Kaczynski family. I got to meet David's mom. I got to understand the real stories that maybe get lost because they do. That puts different perspective by. Of most people out there who have been involved in this case probably know more intimately that side than any other person, which is amazing to me and I get to have the ability to have a different friendship, a different type of a friendship, some that people will never understand. Some people will never understand. It it's OK. It's I'm fine with it, but I also. Get to explore. Or life differently, because of it, I get to see two perspectives, not one. And that that is usually how you want to make decisions is having a lot of information, not just one one side, not just your own view. So very blessed to have David and Linda in my life. Yeah. Spiritual brothers. I mean, you'd call it anything you want. I mean, it's almost like we went out and. Did the blood brother thing those. Kids or something. But yeah, it's. Been a real blessing in my life.

Lisa Rea: Thank you. And David, your closing comments.

David Kaczynski: Yeah, Gary, you know, not Gary was a a life changing connection for me. It really was. I think I was on the point of just like losing hope and and. Carrie brought me hope that that healing is possible, that even in the worst nightmarish circumstances it's possible to transform those negativities into something positive and then to become a witness, to give voice to. This hope, this possibility, that human beings are capable of rising above the worst things that can happen.

Lisa Rea: Well, thank you so much for being with us today. And I, I know this podcast will bring hope to so many people, victims of severe violence, really around the world, restoration on some level as possible, and even in your case, reconciliation. So thank you so much for being here at RJ I.

Gary Wright: Thank you, Lisa.

Lisa Rea: Thank you, David.

David Kaczynski: Thank you. Thank you so much for the opportunity.

Lisa Rea: Absolutely. Thank you. Blessings. And this is Lisa Ray for RJI.

Thanks for listening to this episode of the RJI podcast series with Lisa Raye. Stay in touch and support our work at restorativejusticeinternational.com.

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Lisa Rea

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