

# Nicole Hockley

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## SPEAKERS

Omkari Williams, Nicole Hockley

### **Nicole Hockley** 00:00

When I think about gun violence in general, school shootings, it's not always about those who die. It's about those that survive, and the ripple effects of that trauma that can continue for the rest of a person's life and or the rest of a community's life.

### **Omkari Williams** 00:36

Hello, and welcome to Stepping Into Truth, the podcast where we take on the issues of race, gender, and social justice. I'm your host Omkari Williams, and I'm very glad you're here with me today. Hosting this podcast means that I am privileged to speak with people who are out in the world, making a difference with their day jobs, their programs, their art, their activism, and I love doing this work. If you would like to support me in this work, you can do so by becoming a member of my Patreon community. You can go to [patreon.com/omkariwilliams](https://patreon.com/omkariwilliams) and sign up. There's also a link on my website [omkariwilliams.com](https://omkariwilliams.com).

### **Omkari Williams** 01:14

My guest today is Nicole Hockley, co-founder and managing director of Sandy Hook Promise where she oversees organizational strategy, marketing and development of the acclaimed Know The Signs violence prevention programs. Under her leadership, the Sandy Hook Promise is effectively turning tragedy into transformation, averting multiple school shooting plots, teen suicides, and countless other acts of violence in schools across the country. And it is my true pleasure to welcome Nicole to the podcast.

### **Omkari Williams** 01:46

Hi, Nicole, how are you?

### **Nicole Hockley** 01:48

I'm well, how are you today?

**Omkari Williams 01:50**

I am doing well. I will say that when I was thinking about this interview I had planned on starting in one place. And then my plans got upended because we're speaking on October 7, 2021. And yesterday, there was another school shooting. And a lot of people may have missed it because though there were injuries, thankfully no one was killed. And that means the media didn't really highlight it. And that alone is a terrible indictment of our society and school shootings are now so common that they barely make a blip on our collective radar unless there are numerous fatalities. And I want to ask you what was your reaction when you heard about this latest school shooting?

**Nicole Hockley 02:35**

Every school shooting shocks me still to this day. The fact that kids should just be at school learning and enjoying community and that tragedy happens, even though I have first hand experience of it, I still find it horrifying and heartbreaking. And the fact that now school shootings where there's not a loss of life are just passed by, which is horrible enough, it's very similar to all the other incidents of gun violence that affect communities every single day that don't get any news coverage whatsoever. And it's kind of like by not bringing focus to the problem, or awareness to how widespread the problem is, that it's ignoring the massive significance of this problem in our in our country right now.

**Nicole Hockley 03:21**

So it's just not right, every loss of life is significant. But also when I think about gun violence in general school shootings, it's not always about those who die. It's about those that survive, and the ripple effects of that trauma that can continue for the rest of a person's life and or the rest of a community's life. It doesn't go away, regardless of the news cycle.

**Omkari Williams 03:48**

Yeah, we know the tragedy of Sandy Hook Elementary where your son Dylan was among 26 people, mostly first graders who were murdered. And you and some of the other parents have taken this immense personal loss and let it guide you in creating Sandy Hook Promise. And what intrigues me most about what you've done is that you're putting a great deal of focus on not just educating adults about possible precipitators and indicators of violence, but also children. What made you decide to go that route?

**Nicole Hockley 04:23**

The truth is, I think the change is going to come from our kids. I still have a huge amount of faith and belief in adults don't get me wrong. But sometimes we're more distant to the problem in a lot of respects. And I think the youth considering, this is, they are the ones who are experiencing the school shootings, they are the lockdown generation, they are not currently able or in control of their own environments. And I think that by listening to them, by having their experience lead the way to the changes that they want to see, that's where we're going to have significant generational change. This is about long term behavior change. So yes, it's very important that adults learn the signs of someone who's in crisis and how to intervene, and how to get involved in this mission. But for me, it's more important to have youth voice and youth agency and give them the tools to help create the environment that they want to see for their future and for their future children as well.

**Omkari Williams 05:21**

I really love that. And that leads me right into asking about the program that you created called Start With Hello. So would you tell us about that?

**Nicole Hockley 05:30**

Start With Hello is, and I have to smile whenever I talk about Start With Hello, because it is a simple, yet elegant program that teaches children how to recognize someone who is alone or lacking connection. Is being excluded, perhaps bullied, and gives them the tools to just reach out and say hello. And create that connection and to create a more inclusive and connected society that starts within the school then expands out into the family and the community. And I think that is, you know, when we're talking about violence prevention, this is really upstream violence prevention. If someone is feeling connected, if someone is feeling seen, that changes the decisions that they make. So this is about helping kids reach out from the earliest age possible, and create those connections, be inclusive, accepting of each other's differences. And that's really the way that we need to go forward.

**Omkari Williams 06:35**

And you just sort of referenced it. But I'd like to go a little deeper, that you designed this program to go from K through 12, rather than just focusing on older children. And I believe that engaging young children in this kind of program is so important, because I think that when we teach really young children to pay attention to those around them, it's a critical piece of raising empathetic children who then grow into empathetic adults. But then on the other end of the spectrum, high school is such a fraught time. I mean, I personally was not a fan of being a teenager. And I'm curious about your experiences of this program with kids on both ends of that age spectrum.

**Nicole Hockley 07:18**

I absolutely agree with you that we have to start early. I think kids are naturally empathetic and to build those skill sets in them and kind of flex those muscles on a daily basis is important because that then becomes the way that they grow into being teenagers and grow into being adult. When we first launched our programs, we were actually very focused, and only focused, on middle school and high school. I remember a teacher once said to me that middle school was the bane of all problems. That was where things truly started. And we know that a lot of these at risk behaviors really start to manifest in middle school in high school, which is an important thing for intervention. But if you're trying to get ahead of that, and prevent it from getting to that stage, you need to focus on the earlier ages.

**Nicole Hockley 08:02**

So while some of our programs still focus on grades 6 through 12, something like Start With Hello, and flexing that muscle of empathy and teaching kindness and how to live in kindness every day, that's something I mean, really, that should be pre K. That's, you know, that's from the moment you're born upwards, and then that just becomes the way that we are every day.

**Omkari Williams 08:23**

Yeah, that's the hope in any event, and it's a really good goal to work towards. And I was looking at the curriculum that you created for the students in the various grade levels. And first off, let me just say, across the board, it's really beautiful. For each age range, you address the common experiences of

being isolated in school. And you give the children an age appropriate roadmap for how to behave that removes that obstacle of not knowing what to do, which we have, even when we're really small, you know, we'll just get into that freeze thing of, "I have no idea what to do so I'm just going to stand here and do nothing". But as importantly, it gives educators tools for addressing the social isolation of their students when they see that happening. And I think sometimes educators don't address these issues, because they themselves don't know what to do. So what kinds of things do you hear from the educators about these programs?

**Nicole Hockley** 09:22

We've heard nothing but positive feedback from educators. I mean, we built these programs and these resource guides with educators to ensure that they were aligned with teaching and Casel standards. But also that they had educators voices within them, because I think we also, to your point, we need to validate that every teacher doesn't know how to do these things intuitively, or intrinsically. And they have, they're juggling so many things at the same time when they're in a school. So the more resources and pointers that we can give them, we do, but this was built with educators in mind for how easy can we make it, but also how much support can we give them both in community with our offline groups and online groups, and also within the written guides? But also then how can they relay this to their everyday teaching curriculum so that again, it's not just a program that they teach, and then move on. It's something that can be embedded across all the work, especially in the earlier elementary school grades.

**Omkari Williams** 10:20

Can you talk a little bit about what's in some of the programming that you do, so people get an idea of how this all actually works?

**Nicole Hockley** 10:29

Sure, again, it's all age appropriate and specific. So they are kind of, I think it's like K through 2, 3 through 5, 6 through 8. We have for the youngest grades, it's an online experience with cartoon figures. This was actually developed with a grant from the Disney Corporation. So we worked to create this online environment of shapes and figures to represent young children and the experiences of what does it feel like to be alone? And how do you recognize someone that's alone? What are some starters for how could you say hello in different ways? Whether it's, you know, a head nod, or a smile, or a verbal, or, or just sitting down next to someone, or inviting them to sit with you at lunchtime?

**Nicole Hockley** 11:12

How do we interact with each other outside of school as well? So there's, there's a lot of different examples to go through. And then like questions and answers for the children decide, well, in this situation, I would do this or in this situation, I would do that. And then there's nothing, there's no wrong answers there. But sometimes, you know, it's okay, well, that's one way to do it, but what about another way that we could do it as well? So it's very encouraging curriculum, it's a very inclusive curriculum on its own. But it's just again, just giving kids those extra tools to teach them to lean in, to recognize when someone needs help, and to not shy away from it. Because that is where a lot of problems can stem from, is being passive in situations where someone actually, you know, needs help. Or sometimes just

that simple act of smiling at someone and acknowledging them is enough to make them feel more included.

**Omkari Williams 12:08**

The word passive really struck me there because I think, for me is something that I feel like we as a society are really struggling with, is that people want to do the right thing. Sometimes they even know what the right thing is to do. But they're afraid of doing the right thing, or they're afraid of making a mistake. And I'm curious as to how you navigate that fear of making a mistake? Because I think that that is one of the most paralyzing things that we encounter encounter in our society.

**Nicole Hockley 12:42**

I completely agree with you. And it's that passiveness that hurts us all. And I understand the fear. And the way we deal with that in, when we're training kids, and sometimes even adults, is we validate that concern, because that is a truth that we can all stand in. That moment of not knowing what to do, or kind of not wanting to stick our heads up and be the one and potentially stand alone in that moment. And I can understand that. But it's also that for adults, I'll often say what's the worst that could happen if you do, and what's the worst that could happen if you don't? And have a think about it from that perspective. If I talk to parents who who know that something is going on with their own child, but they're afraid to reach out for help. They're like, "I don't want to be that parent". And I can understand the denial but it's like, if you know your child needs help, or is at risk of harming others, do you want to be that parent that doesn't say anything and doesn't get your child help, and potentially could end up harming, you know, someone else's child as well?

**Nicole Hockley 13:49**

So there's a lot there about validating those fears and then role modeling and teaching. And in our curriculum with the kids, not only do we validate those concerns of what it's like to feel uncomfortable reaching out, or feel uncomfortable starting a conversation with someone that you've never spoken to before. And we do roleplay within the training about, well, let's play some games about how could we do this? How could we interact there? And then afterwards say, "See, that wasn't so bad", and we're all laughing and smiling afterwards, we're all getting the help that we need. So it's a positive feeling. So there's a lot of, a lot of that that goes on. And also, you know, in some of our programs, where we're teaching kids to speak up if they're seeing someone who needs help, you know, we've also heard kids say, I don't want to be a snitch. I could risk getting in trouble myself or causing more harm. Or what if they don't really need my help? Or what if my friend's mad at me, if I do this? Again, would you rather your friend be mad at you for a short period of time? Or would you rather that friend go through a very difficult situation or hurt themselves or someone else? So it's it's very validating in role playing and it is hard. But it's also I think it's our fear that it's hard, but in reality, it's not.

**Omkari Williams 15:06**

I think that what you're saying is so applicable to so many circumstances. I mean, in the United States, right now we're in the middle of this big conversation around race. And people get into that same kind of pattern of freezing because they don't want to make a mistake. But that fear of making a mistake keeps us exactly where we are right now, rather than moving us forward in the conversations that we need to be having. So I really appreciate that you are creating a space where making a mistake is not

the worst outcome. I really think that's so important. I want to switch gears here a little bit and go to something well, as yesterday tragically demonstrated right now, a feature of American life seems to be that we cannot get through a week without hearing about a mass shooting.

**Omkari Williams 15:56**

And the New York Times recently published an article about the rise in the murder rate in 2020, which was almost 30%, above what it was in 2019. And about 77% of the murders in 2020, were committed with firearms. And the causes are not certain. There are things people suspect, including the pandemic, and its attendant stresses, easy access to firearms, distrust of the police, all of those are cited as possible contributing causes. Something I think we can all relate to in this time of COVID is the social isolation that we've experienced. I mean, I joke that I'm now practically feral. It's been so long since I've been in normal contact with other humans. But even that, with that said, I know that I'm in a really fortunate position, because I am able to understand the feelings that I'm having, and I'm able to address them in healthy ways. But children and teens, often don't yet have those skills. And it feels essential to me that we provide them with ways to process the feelings that they're having, and to be able to extend compassion to themselves, as well as to others who may be struggling. So I'm curious as to what impacts you've observed over this time of COVID. On the kids that you're serving, and what your main concerns are?

**Nicole Hockley 17:19**

There was so much in what you just said there that resonates in everything that we're doing every day, from the increased access to firearms, the increased number of violence. I think people were very surprised when they heard just how many mass shootings and acts of violence occurred last year during COVID when thinking, you know, but everyone's at home and isolated and it's, the violence did not go away. The violence is still there. And we have political uprising, racial reckoning, a lot more that has come to the surface, and much that needed to come to the surface so that we could address it as a society.

**Nicole Hockley 17:55**

But with the kids it's been a heartbreaking year from COVID. And I look at the tips that we get into our anonymous reporting system and look at the trends. And we have had significant increases in kids reaching out with mental health concerns, especially depression, anxiety due to COVID, isolation. And now about 46% of the tips that we get are from kids that are ideating on suicide and self harm, which is a significant uptick. And we're hearing things like kids are calling in saying, I feel like a burden on my family. We're going through, my parents are in, financial crisis right now and I'm a burden to them, I should just go away. Or, I have I haven't seen my friends in ages, my support networks are gone. The kids that had remote learning, they're like I don't have access to my school's counselor anymore and school was my safe place.

**Nicole Hockley 18:51**

We've seen significant upticks in child abuse as well, kids calling in. We've had to make interventions where they're like, I'm home and my grandmother is hurting me or my father is hurting me. So there's a lot that's been going on behind the closed doors and the isolation that has really been affecting our kids, and it's been harder for them to reach out. So we've been really urging schools to take mental

health, as we return to school now, much more seriously. And ensure that supports are in place to not only allow kids to reconnect and to really learn how to have social interactions in person with or without masks, but also to help all those kids that have had severe trauma this past year. Because that trauma hasn't gone away just because we're emerging from COVID or going back to school, that trauma exists and needs help before it escalates into something much more. So teaching kids coping skills, anger management skills, this is all critically important to their long term mental health needs that we're just seeing the tip of the iceberg now.

**Omkari Williams 19:59**

What you were saying about the trauma that has occurred across the board felt so important for me because we're not addressing it. It's not just the children, it's adults. And we as a society are really in this, I feel, very precarious place because we need to address what's happening. And we don't actually have mechanisms in place for it. And I think that one of the benefits of your program is that it does actually have mechanisms that make it possible for at least people to speak out and say, "This is what I'm going through". And just doing that, in itself is a first step and such a critical step in having the trauma become something that is not completely internalized, but something that we can address in our lives. So I really appreciate that that is part of your program. Thank you for that.

**Omkari Williams 20:52**

I want to ask you, what you would like to see happen in the next, say, six months or a year, as we do, hopefully, consistently reemerged from the COVID crisis, and go back to our workplaces and our schools, in terms of how people start to engage in ways that that might be more productive in forwarding a conversation on how we prevent gun violence, how we prevent the causes that ultimately lead to a child thinking that taking their life is their only reasonable path. So what changes are there that you would like to see in the next year?

**Nicole Hockley 21:38**

Oh, gosh, I wish I had my magic wand to make all the changes happen that I want to see happen over the next year, and over my lifetime. I want adults to lean into this more, I want them to understand that their kids are in crisis. And that we need, as adults and parents or caregivers, we all need to be more engaged in the well being of the youth that we support. And make the space and time to speak with them and hear about what's going on in their life and their concerns. Get them help if needed. Validate how they're feeling. Because when we all think about how we as adults have been feeling this past year, it's the kids that are hurting as well. So I want parents to take the time to do that.

**Nicole Hockley 22:24**

I want to see more schools prioritizing the need for mental health supports, and upstream violence prevention, because the kids need help and parents can get involved in advocating for that within their schools and districts as well. I also want to see more support from state and federal policies on how we can have laws that help enforce this. So funding for community based violence prevention initiatives, we know that that's part of the Biden Harris administration. And I want to see that happen much more within the next six months to a year. Communities know what works within their community. So give them the funding to be able to help these kids and help these families. And I also want to see people learning the signs, how can we recognize a warning sign for potential violence or self harm. And again,

not be that passive bystander, but be that upstander that leans in and gets that person to help where they need.

**Omkari Williams 23:25**

Something that Sandy Hook Promise has done is some very powerful public service announcements. And for me, the hardest one to watch is the Back to School Essentials. And I'm going to link to that in the show notes. But in it, you see kids with everyday items, figuring out how to use them to protect themselves from an active shooter. And it's really powerful and tremendously painful to think about what we are doing to our kids because of our refusal to take serious measures to address gun violence. I did not grow up having active shooter drills and I find this whole thing traumatizing. I cannot imagine what it's like to be a child, and have that be a normal part of your life. So in the research that you've done, what are the impacts that most concern you about this kind of thing where our children are regularly being taught how to protect themselves from someone who is trying to kill them for no reason that makes any sense.

**Nicole Hockley 24:28**

The impact is that our kids are living in fear. And school should be one of the safest places for them to be in. Generally speaking, schools are, but schools are not immune to violence, bullying, self harm, substance abuse, dating violence, and sadly more and more they're not safe to school shooting. And when I think about the number of times I've seen on the news after a school shooting, if they're interviewing kids, you know, I've seen kids say, well, we wondered when it would happen to our school. I mean, our kids now think it's not a matter of if, it's a matter of when. And I find that completely unacceptable. And that's why we created the Back to School Essentials PSA. Was to give that experience to adults, because our kids are training in active shooter drills for what to do. Adults are not doing that within their workplace or environment. And kids are being victims of school shootings and adults have not had that experience.

**Nicole Hockley 25:28**

We're trying to bring it to life for adults to say, this is what your kids are going through and is that gonna motivate you to do something? I remember once I was at a speaking engagement, and I was speaking to a bunch of adults in a school assembly room and I said, you know, if an active shooter was announced over the PA system right now, what would you do? And it was complete silence, because the adults hadn't even thought that this is a reality for them, that this is a possibility for them. So to bring it to, this is what your kids are experiencing every day, if that can't motivate you to get involved and make change. I'm at a loss as to what will.

**Omkari Williams 26:05**

Yeah. You recently released a PSA which features teenaged survivors of gun violence. And it also was really hard to watch because these are kids, or, more accurately, these were kids, because that experienced has taken their childhood from them. They are now just very young adults, adults before they had any reason to be adults. And we can't give them back their lost innocence or their lost belief in a safe world their lost sense of trust. But I believe that story is one of the most powerful tools that we have. And what is it that you really want us to take away from the stories that those teenagers were sharing?

**Nicole Hockley 26:49**

Yeah, that was a very hard PSA to film. And I'm grateful to every person that was part of that. And for Katy Perry for letting us use the Teenage Dream song and put this completely different approach to it to show adults again, what the teenage dream has become, which is a reality of violence. And these survivors, and some of them are still very much kids, their story, their truth is something that is stronger than any acted out performance. And a lot of people when we think about school shootings, we think about the victims, which is important, those that die. But the ones that survive, and the ongoing trauma, the ongoing PTSD, whether it's a physical wound, a mental wound, both, the community impacts, the parents that are affected, that feeling of safety that's gone forever. To know that your home, your community experience this firsthand, that is something that can't be recovered. So there's a lot of resiliency there.

**Nicole Hockley 27:54**

And the survivors that were in that PSA are amazing, they are still dealing with trauma every day. And they wanted to lend their voices to this as a way to tell others, this doesn't have to be you. So I'm in this movement, because my son was killed, and I want other parents to not have that trauma. These were kids, teenagers, most of them, saying you don't want your child to be me. So that is it's incredibly powerful. And they're so brave and strong for sharing their message. But it's not a community that anyone wants to be part of.

**Omkari Williams 28:26**

No, it's really not. And they are amazing. And my heart breaks for them, because they should have been able to be amazing for different reasons. You mentioned something that I want to go back to before our time is up. And that is the impact on community because I think sometimes people sort of narrow it down and think about it as an impact on one person or one family. But it's a gun violence is a broader impact than that. Would you speak about that?

**Nicole Hockley 28:56**

Sure. I mean, whether it's, I think even for a community to have a school shooting occur I think that brings a new sense of feeling unsafe to so many people. But then when you think about children being affected and how our children connect so many families across the community. Whether it's through school, after school activities, or sports or parents that see each other in different lights, it ripple effects out. And of course when I think about Newtown because it was such a huge number of children and adults killed, you know, it's spread far, the trauma and PTSD has spread much further than just our community of 28,000 people. It affected everyone around us as well and continues to. We're at the epicenter of it but everyday violence, school shootings, it doesn't just affect those that are directly impacted. It affects those that are outside of that in it's almost like concentric circles like ripple effects, and that trauma pervades everywhere.

**Nicole Hockley 29:57**

Newtown, for example, we had a school shooting but I still get nervous going to the grocery store or walking down the street. It's that now that you know that you are not immune, you can't escape that feeling that it could happen to you at any point at any time at any place. And I think that it can pervade

any community, and that ongoing trauma and anxiety can get in the way of everything that you experienced about your life.

**Omkari Williams 30:24**

Yeah. And as we've unfortunately seen, it does happen everywhere. People have been shot in grocery stores and parking lots and movie theaters. And it's really hard to wrap one's mind around, that this is the reality we're in and we don't seem to be making a great deal of progress to shift that truth. So let me ask you this, what keeps you going? What are the shifts that you have seen that make you hopeful?

**Nicole Hockley 30:53**

I'm hopeful because I've seen that upstream violence prevention, what we do at Sandy Hook Promise, and what many community based providers do, I've seen it make a difference. I've seen it save lives. Just speaking about Sandy Hook Promise, I know that we have reduced bullying in schools, because we're seeing the report backs come from school, I see the 70,000 tips that we've received in the last few years from kids. And I know that we have saved so many, you know, not only helped them connect or deal with the issues that they're going with, but we've had confirmed saves of suicide of mental health of school shooting planned attacks. So I know that we can get ahead of it.

**Nicole Hockley 31:37**

I'm not, I don't remember right now, it's at least 64 school attacks, I think, that we've stopped. That's, you know, 64 schools, that will not be headlines in a newspaper or on a broadcast show. That gives me hope, because I know it's possible. I've also seen the movement continue to build and grow in this used to be, you know, something that no one talked about, it's now talked about more readily. It's part of the political landscape as well.

**Nicole Hockley 32:02**

But I think one of the things that also gives me the most hope is the youth, especially after Parkland, more youth voice came to this. And when I started talking to you today I was talking about, you know, it's the youth that are going to create this change to the fact that that they now have more tools and ability to use their voice to create that change. That gives me significant hope for the future.

**Omkari Williams 32:24**

Yeah, they're amazing, the kids are gonna save us.

**Nicole Hockley 32:28**

They will, they will.

**Omkari Williams 32:30**

So I want to end by asking you what I ask all of my guests to do. But I just want to acknowledge that you go out every single day, and you do work that has its origin in the worst day of your life. And honestly, that takes my breath away. Thank you so much for what you're doing. Would you leave us with three actions that you would like us to take to help prevent school shootings, help prevent suicide of teenagers and young people?

**Nicole Hockley 32:59**

Yes, first, learn the signs, learn the signs of someone who's in crisis. There's many ways you can do that or you can simply go to our website, [sandyhookpromise.org](https://sandyhookpromise.org). and download the free brochure that just gives a wide range of signs to look for. And if you see those signs, take them seriously, act on them and get help.

**Nicole Hockley 33:18**

Another action is if you're a parent or involved with schools in any way to talk to your schools and ensure that mental health supports are a priority within them, and that there's funding available and that there are actions that they're doing and putting in place now to help kids. Whether it's an SHP program, a Sandy Hook Promise program or someone else's program, ensure that programs are in there. Violence prevention is more than just security and cameras. It's about teaching connection and inclusion and how to be upstanders and support each other.

**Nicole Hockley 33:49**

Third, vote for politicians that are running on gun violence prevention platforms, and help advocate. Raise your voice and your vote for things like extreme risk protection orders for funding for community based violence intervention programs, for programs that are going to help reduce gun violence. And don't shy away from being an activist in that nature, because the politicians and those creating these policies need to hear your voice.

**Nicole Hockley 34:17**

I could not agree more. And I absolutely believe that our voices are incredibly powerful, especially when we just join them with other people and speak in unison. So thank you so much for speaking with me, thank you for the work that you're doing. I'm really grateful that you are out doing this work. And I appreciate all of your efforts so much, and I can tell that it's making a difference. So thank you.

**Nicole Hockley 34:43**

Thank you so much, and I hope you have a wonderful day.

**Omkari Williams 34:45**

Thank you.

**Omkari Williams 34:47**

Sandy Hook was a tragedy that I still struggle to comprehend. Not only that it happened, but that it didn't change our gun laws in a dramatic and powerful way. Preventing gun violence should concern all of us, if we can't be safe in our schools, our supermarkets, our movie theaters, something is profoundly wrong. And we have the capacity to make it right. We have to insist on change and act to implement it in our communities and then outward from there. I am deeply grateful to Nicole and all those who created Sandy Hook Promise, and I hope you will join me in committing to acting on her suggestions and doing what you can to make gun violence, the rarity rather than the everyday occurrence it's become in our country.

**Omkari Williams 35:33**

Thank you so much for listening. I'll be back with another episode of Stepping Into Truth very soon. And until then, remember that change starts with story. So keep sharing yours.