

Lex Fridman Podcast #425 - Andrew Callaghan: Channel 5, Gonzo, QAnon, O-Block,

Politics & Alex Jones

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Lex Fridman

The following is a conversation with Andrew Callaghan, host of Channel 5 on YouTube, where he does Gazelle style interviews with fascinating humans at the edges of society. The so-called vagrants, vagabonds, runaways, outlaws, from QAnon adherence to fish heads, O'Block residents, and much more. He created the documentary that I highly recommend called This Place Rules, on the undercurrents that led to the January 6th Capitol riots. This is the Lex Fridman podcast. To support it, please check out our sponsors in the description. Now, dear friends, here's Andrew Callaghan.

Andrew Callaghan

I tried to color match you though. Got the black and white going. I went to Walmart before this and got the Wrangler shirt with the Texas Longhorns Tee and everything.

Lex Fridman

Is that where you shop, Walmart?

Andrew Callaghan

Generally, yeah.

Lex Fridman

I'm a Target man myself. T.

Andrew Callaghan

Here's no way you get those suits from Target.

Lex Fridman

See, you're saying it's a nice way to complement a suit.

Andrew Callaghan

I think you go Men's Warehouse, if not further.

Lex Fridman

I think you would be wrong.

Andrew Callaghan

You go further.

Lex Fridman

No, the other direction.

Andrew Callaghan

You got that from Target?

Lex Fridman

Not Target. I was joking about Target. I like Walmart better. It just felt like a funny thing to say.

Andrew Callaghan

No, it was funny.

Lex Fridman

The most expensive thing I own is this watch, and it was given to me as a gift.

Andrew Callaghan

When I was on tour, I had these \$2,700 Cartier glasses that I got for a lot of money, \$2,700.

Lex Fridman

Like sunglasses?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, but they're really embarrassing. I was on tour, so I just felt like I could do anything as far as fashion choices. Looking back at pictures for myself in that era, I'm like, "God, that wasn't..."

Lex Fridman

That was the symbol of the fame got to your head?

Andrew Callaghan

I think so, yeah. I think fame getting to your head. If you spend more than a hundred bucks on sunglasses, you've officially gone off the deep end.

Lex Fridman

You've crossed the line.

Andrew Callaghan

Totally.

Lex Fridman

That's where you go back to Walmart to humble yourself. I really love Walmart. In fact, I moved to Austin because I was at Walmart and a lady said that I look handsome in a suit. I was like, "That's it. I love this place." She just said it for no reason whatsoever. This older lady just kind of looked at me and with this genuine sweetness just said, "Oh, you look handsome."

Andrew Callaghan

She's not wrong, man.

Lex Fridman

Thank you.

Andrew Callaghan

That's part of your whole swag though.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, the suit thing. Yep. Anyway, what was the first, if you remember, first recorded interview you did?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, my first-grade teacher, Mrs. Claudia, this is back in the day like I was telling you, we just asked her about her life in Columbia and stuff like that. I didn't really get into actual journalism until my ninth-grade year. I had no idea I had an interest in it. Before then, I wanted to be a rapper. It's all about hip hop and meditation and picking psilocybin mushrooms and public parks and stuff like that. That's what I was into.

Lex Fridman

That's a lot. Psilocybin, meditation, rap, public parks.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. I was making conscious rap music. I was to the point where I had four dream catchers hanging above my bed, Alex Grey painting on the wall, tapestry on the ceiling. Just scribbling rhymes down all the time.

Lex Fridman

You said somewhere that you sucked at school.

Andrew Callaghan

Okay, well, let's step back a little bit. I had this amazing journalism course in ninth grade. I went to an alternative high school. The teacher was named Calvin Shaw. I ended up taking his class all four years and he used to let me actually leave school. I didn't like going to school, so he let me basically go around Seattle and do different interviews with people as long as I could come back by the end of the day and write a story for his class and he'd mark me as present. The first article that I wrote was about the Silk Road and the Deep Web.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, nice.

Andrew Callaghan

Because as a ninth grader when I discovered the Hidden Wiki, I thought that I was really tapping into the most secret society, elite-level black market in the world. If you remember, they had that hidden Wiki link that was like, hire a hitman. I messaged them and I was like, "All right, I want to get someone killed at my school. How much is it going to cost me?" I published my interview with the Hidden Wiki Hitman. He was probably a fed or something, but who knows? My first article was called Inside the Deep Web, A Conversation with a Hitman.

Lex Fridman

That's nice. I mean, you were fearless even then.

Andrew Callaghan

I mean, I was hiding behind a Tor browser, so there's not much fear to be had.

Lex Fridman

Oh, so it was anonymous?

Andrew Callaghan

It was anonymous, but I did publish it under my name. You're right, I could've been in danger.

Lex Fridman

I also saw that you said you took too many shrooms when you were young and that led you to have hallucinogen persisting perception disorder, HPPD. Can you explain what this is?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, that condition is classified by persistent visual snow floaters, morphing objects. I see them right now. I see them all the time.

Lex Fridman

The snow is in the room?

Andrew Callaghan

The snow is definitely in the room. It's all over you. Basically, it wasn't that I took too many shrooms, I think that it was... I took about an eighth of senescence mushrooms, which are the ones that come from the earth instead of cow shit. I took an eighth of those at my friend Toby's house, which is a normal amount, but I was in eighth grade. I woke up the next morning with these extreme visual distortions and I thought that it would go away. I tried to make it go away, but there's really no cure for HPPD, it's a life-long condition. It's just a matter of dealing with it and realizing that it is only visual. When people ask me, "Hey, I have HPPD, how do I cope with it?" I say, "Remember that every other sense that you have, what

you can hear, what you can taste, your feet on the ground, you're still on earth, you're still here."

Lex Fridman

Well, you said it's only visual, and yes, gratitude for being alive at all. It's great. You said that this led you into some dark psychological places, like depersonalization disorder.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. Depersonalization is the feeling that you are not real, but that reality still exists. Derealization is the idea that reality itself is an illusion created by your mind and that you're the only person alive and that everything that your brain is projecting to your visual cortex is a lie, and that you're the only living human being.

Lex Fridman

Both are pretty intense.

Andrew Callaghan

HPPD creates both of those things. When I've talked to people who have the condition, it's really either-or, but more than 70% of people with HPPD fall into either category. They're both coping mechanisms for the, I don't know what really happens. I talked to a researcher once, named Dr. Abraham, he lives in Upstate New York. He's the leading scientist when it comes to HPPD research. He's the only one who actually seems to care about finding a cure. The only known treatment right now is alcohol and benzodiazepines.

Lex Fridman

That's not good.

Andrew Callaghan

Alcoholism, something that came into my life pretty early. Alcohol abuse as a result of that experience because that helps with the visual symptoms, makes some of the static go away.

Lex Fridman

Man.

Andrew Callaghan

Never tried benzos, though.

Lex Fridman

Can you explain to me where in that spectrum you are? Do you sometimes have a sense that you're not real and something else is not real?

Andrew Callaghan

Sometimes.

Lex Fridman

Like the reality is not real?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, I experience it all the time. Like I said, my job helps with that because I get to feel like when you seek out extremes to a certain extent and you put yourself on the front lines of intense events, whether it be politically or socially or just dive into deep fringe subcultures, you get this feeling that you're real. Being filmed is also confirmation, if you can look at the MP4 file that you're in fact living here on earth

Lex Fridman

Confirming that you were in it with reality by watching yourself on video.

Andrew Callaghan

Exactly.

Lex Fridman

Is that basically the engine behind all the extreme interviews you've done?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, I got HPPD around the same time that I began this journalism course in ninth grade. I sort of always used journalism as a therapeutic mechanism to deal with some of these symptoms, especially depersonalization. There's some pretty good illustrations of what it feels like, kind of feels like you're trapped behind your eyes or that you're just this nebulous soul that's trapped in a flesh suit that you're not really a part of. You're sort of puppeteering a flesh and bone skin suit.

Lex Fridman

Trapped, or just the ability to step outside of yourself?

Andrew Callaghan

You feel like your soul is not something that is connected to your body, it's something living in your head. It's really hard to explain to people who haven't gone through derealization or depersonalization, but if you go on support groups, they always say, "How do I break free from behind my eyes?" Dark stuff like that?

Lex Fridman

Oh, so you're trapped. I mean, there's a higher state of being through meditation that you can step outside of yourself, but this is not that.

Andrew Callaghan

Unfortunately, it was the meditative path or the Eastern path that I took and fused that with psychedelic culture in Seattle that took me down the psychedelic use rabbit hole in the first place. I'd say it all started with Siddhartha.

Lex Fridman

Siddhartha, that's a good book. Have you done shroom since then?

Andrew Callaghan

No, I don't really do psychedelic drugs. A lot of people think that I'm against them, which I'm not, it just doesn't work for me. If it works for you, I'm sure they can be really fun. Especially, I know there's lots of therapeutic uses for acid and ketamine and psilocybin, but I personally abstain from those. Anything psychotropic, I try to stay away from.

Lex Fridman

Drinking, a bit?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, yeah, I mean, I didn't drink at all before I had the HPPD stuff. I would've drank later in life, but definitely, 14, 15. Every day after school, I drink a 40 ounce of Mickey's. It looks like Old English, but the bottle is green and it has a hornet on the side of it. Just became a ritual just to deal with the anxiety of that situation.

Lex Fridman

It made the snow go away?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, alcohol really works to suppress HPPD symptoms.

Lex Fridman

You said you hated classes in school, except that journalism class.

Andrew Callaghan

Okay, we need to clear this up. Because on my Wikipedia page, for some reason, for Andrew Callahan early life, it says, "Andrew hated every single class, except for one." I've had a bunch of teachers who are super cool, like this guy Tim, my astronomy professor at ninth grade, Mrs. Zanetti, my creative writing teacher in sixth grade, and this really cool dude at my college in New Orleans named Charles Cannon, who taught me a class called New Orleans Mythology. My three favorite classes besides my journalism class, and they all hit me up and they're like, "Hey, man. I saw you said you hated every class. Sorry, I couldn't be everything that you wanted me to be." I just want to say, shout out to all those teachers. I didn't hate every class. The point that I was making is that being forced into the institution of school so

young and having to take common core classes like biology, dissecting frogs, history of the Han Dynasty, stuff like that, that I didn't want to learn, but I had to learn multiple times. I learned about the dynastic cycle in ancient China three separate times at three different schools. I was like, "Who is writing this curriculum and why is it so important that I understand this process?" The part that makes school difficult, especially in college, is that you have people just going to school just to get the degree who don't really know exactly what they're interested in, and they don't even have time to figure that out because they're in a business program or a communications program with no specific interest.

Lex Fridman

Well, I think if you want to do school right, take on every single subject that you're forced into. It's like the David Foster Wallace, just be unborable by it. Just really go in as if ancient Chinese dynasties are the most interesting thing you could possibly learn.

Andrew Callaghan

It is somewhat interesting, the Silk Road and the Great Wall and terracotta the soldiers and stuff. I'm just saying, when I got to college, I signed up for journalism school and I didn't get to take a media class until the second semester and I had to take everything prior to that, and I'd already spent so much time. I just think the excruciating boredom of schooling left a bad taste in my mouth, but there was individual classes that I liked a lot.

Lex Fridman

There should be some choice or maybe a lot of choice even at the level of high school for what kind of classes you pursue.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, for sure.

Lex Fridman

You're also saying, so Wikipedia is not always perfectly right.

Andrew Callaghan

No, but it's just interesting because I've said so much in podcasts, but that's what they isolated. I've gotten that question before, which I understand it's the first thing on my Wikipedia page, but it makes me sound like a super hater. Have you ever seen this Instagram page called Depths of Wikipedia?

Lex Fridman

It's great.

Andrew Callaghan

Oh, it's so good, dude.

Lex Fridman

You said you love journalism. What did you love about journalism? What hooked you?

Andrew Callaghan

On a basic level, everybody wants media coverage. Everyone likes to be on camera and get exposure for whatever they're doing. Being a journalist and being almost like a portal for exposure for people allows you to be on the front row of everything that you want to be a part of. You get to be in the front row for history as it's unfolding because everyone wants to be covered. Being a journalist gives you a ticket to everywhere that you want to go in life. It allows you to step into different realities almost and then go back to yours and it just keeps life interesting.

Lex Fridman

Buy the ticket, take the Ride. Hunter S. Thompson, is he up there as one of the influences? Who are your influences?

Andrew Callaghan

I think the Early Daily Show was so good. Sacha Baron Cohen, huge influence. The Ali G show, especially. I think Louis Theroux's broadcasts on BBC were great. I was really into Hunter S. Thompson too, but not really until college. I really like a particular Hunter S. Thompson book called The Great Shark Hunt, where he covers the Ruben Salazar murder by LAPD or LA Sheriff's Department in Boyle Heights in the 70s. His relationship with his lawyer, Oscar Acosta, and that whole saga is great. Fear and Loathing, I like, but not as much as his straightforward reporting. Because there's the gonzo side of Hunter where he's like saying he's taking drugs and seeing shit. Then there's the other side of him, which is like an actual reporter interested in telling a story that has news value. It's two different lanes for him.

Lex Fridman

There is something about you that makes people want to say you're the Hunter S. Thompson of this generation. I don't think they mean the drugs, I think they mean some kind of non-standard willingness to explore the extremes of humanity and almost a celebration of the extremes of humanity.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. Well, that's a very kind comparison. I'll get there one day, maybe. I just went to Aspen on a little Hunter S. Thompson recon trip to go check out the Woody Creek Tavern, which is the spot that it was like his bar near his cabin. It was pretty cool to see. Unfortunately, it's turned into not a dive bar now, but it's a sit-down sort of country restaurant, but it was cool. I expected to see a bunch of gnarly Hunter, S. Thompson types doing speeds.

Lex Fridman

Doing drugs. I mean, drugs and alcohol is all part of it, somehow. It opens a gateway to a deeper understanding of humanity.

Andrew Callaghan

I will say though, as someone now who doesn't party like I did when I was younger, it's not as important as I thought it was.

Lex Fridman

I'm conflicted on this. I'm good friends with a lot of people that say alcohol is really bad for you, and I believe that too. There's something that I just as an introvert, as a person who has a lot of anxiety, for me, alcohol has opened doors of just opening myself up to the world more.

Andrew Callaghan

I'm actually a fan of alcohol, moderate drinking. I'm saying my life before, I would say 2019, 2018, especially, there was the chaos on camera, but then there was my private life, which was chaotic partying all the time.

Lex Fridman

Oh, I see.

Andrew Callaghan

I convinced myself much like Hunter did that, that was the secret sauce in the core, in my spiritual core, that gave me the creativity. Then I cut out a lot of that stuff and I'm just as creative. It's interesting, I think one of the hardest parts about addiction is that if you're functioning highly creative addict of any kind, your brain and the addictive part of your brain convinces yourself that it's all part of the cross purpose and that it has this symbiotic inspirational thing going on, but it's not true. It can be, but it's typically not.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, it's not a requirement. You can sometimes channel, you can sometimes leverage all those things for your creativity, but the creative engine, it lives outside of that.

Andrew Callaghan

Have you read Hunter's daily routine in the year up to his death? It was like 15 grapefruits, an eight-ball of coke and just a certain amount of shotgun shells for him to fire into the sky every morning. There's no way, and he didn't do anything creative in those final years. The creativity goes away and gradually you just become a party animal, like Andy Dick.

Lex Fridman

A caricature of yourself.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

I mean, that's why life is interesting. You make all kinds of choices and sometimes you can create works of genius in a short amount of time based on drugs and no drugs. Einstein had that miracle year where he published several incredible papers in one year, 1905.

Andrew Callaghan

Did he do drugs before that?

Lex Fridman

Lots of coke.

Andrew Callaghan

I was like, I believed you for a second. I'm like, did Einstein have blow? I don't think he did.

Lex Fridman

How do you think he gets that hair? Come on.

Andrew Callaghan

It's true.

Lex Fridman

I'm just asking questions.

Andrew Callaghan

High confidence hair.

Lex Fridman

Look into it.

Andrew Callaghan

You know what I mean?

Lex Fridman

Yeah. Well, no, he's a well put together, sexy young man. The hair came later.

Andrew Callaghan

Was Albert Einstein attractive as a teenager? Not teenager, was he attractive as a young man?

Lex Fridman

Sexually attractive? I'm turned on by Einstein at all ages. I don't discriminate.

Andrew Callaghan

Are you more turned on by the work that he did or his physical being?

Lex Fridman

No. Sometimes I fantasize what it would be like to be in the arms of Einstein. I couldn't even get that out.

Andrew Callaghan

In the arms of Einstein.

Lex Fridman

I want to feel safe.

Andrew Callaghan

It's a good idea for a rom-com

Lex Fridman

To be a little more serious, General Relativity, that space-time can be unified and curved by gravity is an incredibly wild and difficult idea to come up with. It's a really, really difficult thing to imagine, given how well Newtonian classical mechanics physics works for predicting how stuff happens on earth. To think that gravity can morph space-time, both space and time, and it permeates the entire universe, it's a field. It's a really wild idea to come up. There's one human on earth to intuit that is really, really, really difficult. It's really sad to me that he didn't get a Nobel Prize for that.

Andrew Callaghan

Was there people saying he was crazy when he was around, or was he universally recognized as an OG of this?

Lex Fridman

No, I think once the papers came out, he was widely recognized as a true genius. Before that, he wasn't recognized. He had a really difficult life.

Andrew Callaghan

Backing up, where does a black hole go after something gets sucked into it?

Lex Fridman

You mean is it a portal to another place, that kind of thing?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

No. Well, we don't know. It could be. It could be that the universe is kind of like Swiss cheese full of black holes. There's something called Hawking radiation where because of quantum mechanics, the information leaks out of a black hole, so it is possible to escape a black hole. There's a lot of interesting questions there.

Andrew Callaghan

I hope we get to the bottom of that.

Lex Fridman

There's a super-massive black hole at the center of our galaxy, which doesn't seem to scare physicists, but it terrifies me.

Andrew Callaghan

Oh yeah, for sure. Astronomy can be terrifying.

Lex Fridman

We're all like orbiting, I mean, we're not just orbiting the sun, but the sun is part of the solar system, is part of the galaxy, and it's all orbiting a gigantic black hole.

Andrew Callaghan

Have you ever spoke to someone who's been to outer space?

Lex Fridman

Jeff Bezos, he flew his own rocket.

Andrew Callaghan

Wow. That's pretty cool.

Lex Fridman

Astronaut that's been to deep space, no. Well, maybe I've spoken to an alien that just hasn't admitted it.

Andrew Callaghan

I want to do a research paper or a report about space madness. It's supposed to be this torturous feeling that you get when you look away from earth and into the abyss after you've exited Earth's orbit or whatever, because there's one specific psychiatrist who knows how to deal with space madness, and I want to figure out how and interview people with it.

Lex Fridman

Is this a real thing?

Andrew Callaghan

Yes.

Lex Fridman

Is there a Wikipedia article on it?

Andrew Callaghan

Yes. Look up space madness treatment.

Lex Fridman

Well, now I don't trust Wikipedia after what you told me.

Andrew Callaghan

I know. They think I hate classes.

Lex Fridman

I thought you meant more about the fact that you're isolated out in space that we need social connection and it's difficult.

Andrew Callaghan

I think it's just a feeling of extreme insignificance that you might get sometimes when you look at the night sky, but it's that times a thousand. It's like an existential void that's created after looking into the abyss and then realizing how small earth is in the grand scheme. You just start to really have a strange new perception about the pointlessness of existence.

Lex Fridman

I don't need to go to space for that.

Andrew Callaghan

Only a handful of people have been to space, but I'm sure they're all pretty well off. The psychiatrist has to be in the multi-millions.

Lex Fridman

Well, technically, we're all in space because earth is in space. I wonder if you have to go to space to talk to the psychiatrist.

Andrew Callaghan

Probably, so.

Lex Fridman

Well, technically, we're all in space, so that's a boundary he can't have.

Andrew Callaghan

Not everyone believes that, as you've seen from my work probably.

Lex Fridman

You're right. Those are important people that are asking important questions.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

You hitchhiked across us for 70 days when you were 19. Tell the story of that.

Andrew Callaghan

Well, this connects to what I was talking about with the boredom of school and these common core classes. After my first year of school where I lived in the dorms, like an old-school dormitory building at a school in New Orleans called Loyola University. I wanted to just do something, I felt so bored. I was working for the school newspaper for that whole first year, it was called the Maroon. I didn't have the ability to write my own stories. I had to defer to an older editor and they would give me stories to write about. They were all about on-campus happenings, like the Pope visits New Orleans, or glass recycling to be restored in the French Quarter or hover boards banned on campus due to safety concerns. It just felt like, all right, well, I wanted to be a gonzo reporter. I'm not sure if working my way up through the traditional newsroom hierarchy is going to get me to that point. I started reading a bunch of old hobo literature, like post World War II vagabonding stuff, and there was this book called Vagabonding in America by an old hobo named Ed Buryn. I read this and just basically, obviously, some of it was outdated. They had stuff in there, like the hobo code, like, oh, this moniker on the side of a fence means this person has free soup or something like that. They didn't have stuff like that.

Lex Fridman

That's great.

Andrew Callaghan

What it did tell me, it told me about train-stop towns, like Dunsmuir and places in Montana where there was a friendly attitude toward drifters, and that still persists from the 60s and 70s to this day. Even though, in my opinion, movies like Texas Chainsaw Massacre have ruined hitchhiking culture in America, because now everyone thinks you're going to decapitate them if they pick you up. After my final day of courses at Loyola, I literally left all of my belongings inside my dorm and took the streetcar to the Greyhound station, got a

one-Way ticket to Baton Rouge, and I was like, "I'm going to hitchhike across the whole country back to Seattle with no money." That was the plan, and it worked out.

Lex Fridman

I love it. I traveled across the United States before in similar kind of plan.

Andrew Callaghan

Were you on the silver dog? The Greyhound Bus.

Lex Fridman

Greyhound is pretty nice.

Andrew Callaghan

That's a step above hitchhiking.

Lex Fridman

That's way better than hitchhiking, because I don't want to-

Andrew Callaghan

Hitchhiking, Greyhound, Amtrak.

Lex Fridman

Amtrak, no, that's elitist.

Andrew Callaghan

What's in between Greyhound and Amtrak? A car, that's what it is.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, it's a car.

Andrew Callaghan

It's a car.

Lex Fridman

A shitty car.

Andrew Callaghan

Okay, cool.

Lex Fridman

I lived in a shitty car.

Andrew Callaghan

You lived in a car?

Lex Fridman

Yeah, when I was driving across the United States.

Andrew Callaghan

Solo?

Lex Fridman

With a friend, some solo, and I would eat cold soup.

Andrew Callaghan

I love cold soup. What I like is the cold chickpeas in a can. You get the water out and just dump them into your mouth. Those are good. Beef jerky, KIND bars. KIND bars are really good for the road.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. I mean, all of that is great, but too much of it is not great. Too much cold soup, not great. Too much beef jerky, not good.

Andrew Callaghan

What was the route you took? Was it Chicago across, or was it Philadelphia across?

Lex Fridman

Philadelphia across.

Andrew Callaghan

To LA, or where?

Lex Fridman

San Diego is a window, but it was a zigzagging, went up to Chicago and then all the way down to Texas.

Andrew Callaghan

You went Philly, through Appalachia, up to the Midwest. Did you cut over through the Southwest down to San Diego?

Lex Fridman

No. I went straight down to Texas, all the way down to the Midwest.

Andrew Callaghan

Did you cut from Texas West through New Mexico and Arizona to get to San Diego?

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

That is the best road trip place. Interstate 40, like Albuquerque, Flagstaff, Vegas, Kingman, the Mojave Desert, Yuma, doesn't get better.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. I mean, and you're kids, so you don't care and you're throwing caution to the wind, and I met some crazy, crazy people.

Andrew Callaghan

It gives me some sanity whenever I'm feeling kind of out of control or bummed out, I just remembered that the road is still out there. The open road never goes anywhere, and it's kind of like, I see an invisible door in the corner of the room all the time. That makes me more comfortable because I'm like, "Hey, at the end of the day, if I'm bummed out, I can go hit the road and I'm sure there's going to be a fun time ahead."

Lex Fridman

Yeah, get that Greyhound ticket and go.

Andrew Callaghan

I would say silver dog half, because sometimes I got to ride the dog when no one will pick me up. There's some places in the country where no one is going to pick you up. Kansas, Missouri, they're not going to do it.

Lex Fridman

Maybe you're not charming enough. You thought about that?

Andrew Callaghan

I was 19, fresh, clean-shaven. I was pretty charming, I'd say.

Lex Fridman

All right.

Andrew Callaghan

The older you get, the harder it is to hitchhike because they think you're an escaped convict or some type of psycho wanderer. Some of these people are like what we call punishers, it's people who never stop talking. They see someone hitchhiking and they're like, "Yes, I'm

going to talk at this person." You can tell their eyes are wide, they're like, "What's up?" You're like, "Oh, shit." It's six hours of just like, oh, cool. Nice. Yeah.

Lex Fridman

That's rough.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

You're right. I like people that are comfortable in silence.

Andrew Callaghan

Then that also raises the question, are they about to kill me? You know what I mean?

Lex Fridman

I think that's a you problem, not a...

Andrew Callaghan

You know what's funny? Is almost everybody who picked me up when I was hitchhiking was like a day laborer. It was almost all Mexican day laborers who picked me up.

Lex Fridman

Oh, interesting.

Andrew Callaghan

Because I think that in some places down there, that's a typical thing to do, hitchhike to work. A lot of people don't have cars, but they still have to get to their jobs. A lot of people ask me, "Hey, where should I drop you off? Where's your job at?" I'm like, "My job is to explore." They were down with it.

Lex Fridman

See, for me, it was really easy because you just say, I'm traveling across the United States. I think people love that idea and they want to help. They romanticize, because they also have that invisible door. Everybody has that invisible door, I just want to go.

Andrew Callaghan

You know what I'm talking about.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. I mean, I don't think-

Andrew Callaghan

It can anchor you a bit, just to remind you that every pattern that I've fallen into is voluntary, and it's for my own stability and mental health.

Lex Fridman

Well, that's why I'm renting everything and I'm making sure tomorrow I can just go. I gave away everything I own twice in my life, just very like, I'm ready to go tonight. Let's go.

Andrew Callaghan

What's the hardest item you've had to part with in this experience?

Lex Fridman

There's nothing.

Andrew Callaghan

You've never had a material object that was really hard to let go of?

Lex Fridman

No.

Andrew Callaghan

You'd give that watch to somebody if it meant object?

Lex Fridman

You're right. That's probably the only, I've never had to let go of that though. That's the only thing I own. This means a lot to me, but everything else. Then again, listen, because this watch is given to me by Rogan, who's become a close friend. Whenever I romanticize the notion that this watch means a lot to me, he's like, "Don't worry about it. I'll just get you the same one again." I was like, "God damn it."

Andrew Callaghan

It's a pretty sick ass gift though.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, it's pretty sick. I'm not usually a gift guy, but when somebody you look up to gives you a thing, it's a nice little symbol of that relationship, so it's nice. Other than that, no. Even this, whatever. The relationship is what matters, the human is what matters, not the...

Andrew Callaghan

Agree, 100%.

Lex Fridman

You had something like this?

Andrew Callaghan

Not really. I mean, there was a hard drive that I lost that had all of my childhood pictures on it and stuff like that, that I think about all the time because I left it on a train. Certain memories, you think about it, you just get off. I just think to myself, someone has that somewhere. I have dreams about reuniting with the hard drive.

Lex Fridman

You and Hunter Biden have the similar kind of dream.

Andrew Callaghan

I don't think he wants to reunite with that one. Dude, it's crazy. All he did was smoke crack, right? Or was there more stuff going on?

Lex Fridman

I think there's prostitutes involved.

Andrew Callaghan

Oh, okay. Whatever.

Lex Fridman

I think you got to look into it.

Andrew Callaghan

I think I have to look into it too.

Lex Fridman

I don't know. Was Jack Kerouac somebody that was an inspiration at all in this road trip?

Andrew Callaghan

No.

Lex Fridman

Did you even know who that is?

Andrew Callaghan

No.

Lex Fridman

The Beat Generation and all of this?

Andrew Callaghan

I didn't know who it was, and then after I did the... Ultimately, I wrote a book about my hitchhiking experience years later, and everyone was like, "Have you read *On the Road*?" Then *On the Road*, I probably heard the title of that book every day, at least 10 times for two years. I'm sure Kerouac is a great guy. I mean, I'm not too familiar with the Beat Generation.

Lex Fridman

It's a great book. You read it, or no?

Andrew Callaghan

I refuse to read it. People even have gifted it to me, being like, "Hey, man, you're going to love this one." I'm like, "Is that *On the Road*?" Honestly, people have given me a book with wrapping paper on it, and they're like, "This is right up your alley." I was like, "That's fucking *On the Road*, isn't it?"

Lex Fridman

They give you a different cover.

Andrew Callaghan

I'm like, "Anything, but that." I'm sure it's a great book, it's just the comparison thing drives me crazy. Big respect to Kerouac. Would never speak down on anyone in the Beat Generation.

Lex Fridman

What are some interesting moments you remember from that, those 70 days?

Andrew Callaghan

Man, there was so much. I mean, getting mistaken for a gay prostitute on my first hitchhiking ride in Louisiana was pretty funny.

Lex Fridman

I can see that. Where did you come from and where did you go?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, I mean, the journey began in Baton Rouge, and the first destination was Houston, which is about four and a half hours west on Interstate 10. I'm in Crowley, Louisiana, I'm on the side of the road, and I guess this was a cruising truck stop. It was known for being a place where male lot lizards would go to procure clients, and I was there.

Lex Fridman

Lot lizards are?

Andrew Callaghan

It's a derogatory term in trucker culture for a prostitute who hangs out at the Love's or Pilot Flying J. Large interstate truck stops. Now, trucker culture as it once is pretty much finished because of the live stream cameras they have inside of the trucks now, so you can't snort Sudafed or pick up anybody. You can't even pick up a hitchhiker or you get fired.

Lex Fridman

Killed all the romance.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, definitely, the old-school outlaw trucker lifestyle. Unless you're an owner operator who's not even in a union, which is a real cowboy way to haul loads, you can't do that.

Lex Fridman

You were mistaken for a lot lizard?

Andrew Callaghan

Mistaken for a lot lizard by a small man from Honduras with a spiky leather jacket covered in studs.

Lex Fridman

Nice.

Andrew Callaghan

Didn't speak any English, but I thought he was just a nice guy, and then he pulled over at a... There's private theaters in the South where they have confessional booths set up and they have three channels and people go in there and, you know.

Lex Fridman

Porn?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, People go in there and please themselves.

Lex Fridman

Masturbate?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. I thought he was taking me to one of those, and I was like, "All right, cool, man." If this guy wants to go jerk off, I'm just going to wait in the car. It's all good. I don't discriminate. Then I was like, he buys a booth for me, and I'm like, "Okay."

Lex Fridman

That's nice.

Andrew Callaghan

I'm not really in the mood to watch porn with this random guy. He gets in the same booth as me and he starts jerking off right next to me and I'm like, "Oh, man." I don't think this is chill. I'm like, "Dude, can you stop jacking off?" He's like, "What do you mean? I thought this is what you want to do. I have money for you. What's up?" I was like, "Oh, no, I'm just a regular guy." He was super cool about it. He started laughing. He was like, "Oh, my bad, man. I thought you were selling something." I said, "No." He said, "Oh, it's all good." He gave me a ride all the way to Houston.

Lex Fridman

That's great.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, we talked about anything except that for the rest of the car ride.

Lex Fridman

That's great, you just rolled with it. Oh, sorry about that.

Andrew Callaghan

I had about a foot and a half on this, guys.

Lex Fridman

Honest mistake.

Andrew Callaghan

I wasn't too scared, I also had a knife in my pocket, but I didn't want to stab him, especially not at a place like that.

Lex Fridman

That didn't leave a bad taste in your mouth, stuff like that?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, I figured that can't happen again. It can't keep happening. Because I was like, all right, if I got this out of the way the first ride, the following rides are going to be spectacular.

Lex Fridman

I mean, who among us have not been mistaken for a lot lizard?

Andrew Callaghan

It's a fact. You heard it here first.

Lex Fridman

What else? What's some interesting, beautiful people that you've met along the way?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, I used the app Couchsurfing to find places to stay.

Lex Fridman

Nice. I remember Couchsurfing.

Andrew Callaghan

Now you can only submit like five Couchsurfing requests a day, unless you're a premium member, which means you also host people.

Lex Fridman

Wait, Couchsurfing is still around?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, totally. Oh, nice.

Lex Fridman

It's evolved obviously into a different thing.

Andrew Callaghan

Airbnb is a kind of competitor to that, right? Couchsurfing is free though. Couchsurfing, they call it the CS community. Basically, there'd be these Couchsurfing super hosts in different cities. There was one in Santa Fe, this firefighter dude who had 15 other couch-surfers there, chilling.

Lex Fridman

Nice.

Andrew Callaghan

I would do it everywhere. A lot of them were Catholics, so it was their way of giving back. A lot of them were nudists. I didn't realize that there's a small little section at the bottom of someone's Couchsurfing profile that says clothing optional. That means if you go there, I thought it meant like it's cool if you walk to the bathroom in your underwear. No, if you go there, everyone is going to be butt naked. I made that mistake a few times, not that I'm anti-nudist, but I wasn't ready to take that leap of faith. It was just great. Couchsurfing

hosts were amazing. That was just great. It was this constant thing where I felt like, wow, people were so welcoming. I'm not having to pay them a dollar for this experience. I

Lex Fridman

I love Couchsurfing. For like, again, for me, being an introvert, just crashing on a person's couch, being essentially forced into a great conversation is great.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. The one thing that gets exhausting about hitchhiking is constantly thanking people, being in constant superficial gratitude everywhere all the time like, oh, thanks for letting me sleep on your couch. Thanks for the food. Part of the reason I wanted to live in an RV later in life is to avoid having to constantly live in this like, thanks so much type of frequency, because it's exhaust- ... live in this thanks so much type of frequency. Because it's exhausting to constantly, "Hey man, thanks."

Lex Fridman

I think the shallowness of that interaction is exhausting, not the thanks.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. It was a true favor, of course I love giving people gratitude for that. But just this thing where everyone who picks you up... You get eight rides a day, you're thanking eight people a day like they're the second coming of Jesus. You start to feel a little bit debased.

Lex Fridman

What'd you learn about people from that journey? That's your first time really going into it.

Andrew Callaghan

That the American public is just so kind overall. They're so embracing depending on who you are. And specifically though, the Christian family people of the US who drive in minivans and have that fish sticker on the back where it's Jesus' fish, and then they have the family sticker where each member of the family is a stick figure, those people never picked me up and would flip me off with their whole family. Sometimes they would throw full Dr. Peppers at me, as a family, while I stood on the side of the road.

Lex Fridman

As a family, together.

Andrew Callaghan

They'd yell shit like, "Go to hell hippie," when I was on the side of the road. And so, it's weird that the most charitable Christian American family values people never gave me any charity or even conversation. They were antagonizing me and saw me as a hippie leftover from the '60s who needed to go to work, go to Vietnam. I don't get it. But the people who really

extended a hand to me is people on the margins. People working on seasonal visas, people whose cars have less than a quarter tank left, people struggling with addiction. Who saw me struggling, or at least they thought that I was because they assumed I was hitchhiking not out of adventure but because I had no car, and were willing to sacrifice their day almost sometimes to take me exactly where I needed to go.

Lex Fridman

That's beautiful, man. I've had similar kind of experience that people who are struggling the most are the ones who are willing to help you when you're struggling.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

There's people in religious contexts and other kind of communities that just judge others. Because they've constructed a value system where they're better than others because of that value system, and that actually has a cascade that forces you to actually be kind of a dick.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, I never thought about that. That's so true. Do you think about morality and religion a lot?

Lex Fridman

Yeah, yeah, yeah. I've been to certain parts of the world where religion is really a big part of life. I'm just always skeptical about tribes of people that believe a thing and they believe they're better than others because they believe that thing. That could be nations, that could be religions. I mean, in Ukraine and Russia, I've seen a lot of hate towards the other. And that hate, I'm always very skeptical of. Because it could be used by powerful people to direct that hate just so the powerful people can maintain power and get money. This kind of stuff.

Andrew Callaghan

It's a scary thing to see how easy it is for high up political people to mobilize the hate of just the average working person and can almost convince them to sabotage their own countrymen, who they share more in common with than the politician they look up to, just to advance the agenda of one party. That's what we're seeing now.

Lex Fridman

Are there some places in America that are better than others? Can you speak negatively of... Like aforementioned Joe Rogan talked about Connecticut nonstop. Can you pick a region in the United States you can talk shit about?

Andrew Callaghan

To talk shit about? Oh, for sure.

Lex Fridman

Or, from that experience. Let's just narrow it down to that.

Andrew Callaghan

Oh, Colorado. Oh, jeez.

Lex Fridman

Really?

Andrew Callaghan

Yes.

Lex Fridman

I know so many people that love Colorado.

Andrew Callaghan

Dude, Dallas, Denver. I used to think Phoenix sucks, but I love Phoenix now. The way they build these cities to just be so circular and massive, it's just like, "Stop."

Lex Fridman

You don't like circles?

Andrew Callaghan

I like grids, man.

Lex Fridman

Oh, you're a grid guy.

Andrew Callaghan

Manhattan, New Orleans, San Francisco.

Lex Fridman

What is it about grids that bring out the worst in people? Circles is where everyone is just-

Andrew Callaghan

Everyone's just vibing out, loosey-goosey, but the grid gets people locked in hateful. I don't know, man.

Lex Fridman

I've never heard anyone talk shit about Colorado, I have to say. It's kind of refreshing because it provides a necessary balance for the Colorado Wikipedia page.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. Oh, Oregon too. I got problems with Oregon.

Lex Fridman

Oregon?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. Well, here's the issue. And I don't like just calling people racist because it's kind of a two-dimensional insult, but you have the most racist state with the most psychotic anarchist city in the middle of it. What is going on up there? How did this happen? The yin and the yang is so extreme that there must be something in the [inaudible 00:39:43].

Lex Fridman

What do you have against anarchism?

Andrew Callaghan

Nothing. I used to be an anarchist. When I was in eighth grade, I had his friend named Mads who was part of a group called Seattle Solidarity, which is like an Antifa precursor. So, I grew up going to black bloc protests. There was a particular shooting, the murder of John Williams, who is a Native American woodcarver in downtown Seattle. He got killed by a Seattle police officer named Ian Burke. John Williams was carving a pipe from a woodblock with a pocket knife. He's deaf in one ear. Officer pulls a gun on him and says, "Put it down." He doesn't hear him. He shoots him six seconds later. That police involved shooting is what instantly turned me into a very critical of law enforcement kind of person when I was super young. As someone who used to see this guy who got murdered... He was a 55-year-old man. I used to see him around Pike Place where my mom lived. It's a public market in downtown. That to me, put me into the anarchist political sphere, just channeling the anger of that experience. And the officer got no charges by the way. You can look up the video. It's horrific. And it didn't get reported. The officer, I'm pretty sure, is still active duty. Situations like that early in life channeled me toward political extremism. But I grew up to realize how incompatible that anarchistic worldview is with reality and with American society. It can only exist in a small, little chamber. You can't apply that to the industrial heartland of the country.

Lex Fridman

And I think also, anarchism... I've gotten to know Michael Malice who's written quite a bit about anarchism. And it also exists as a body of literature about different philosophical notions that resist the state, the ever expanding state in different kinds of ways. It's always

nice to have extreme thought experiments to understand what kind of society we want to build, but implementing it may not necessarily be a good idea.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. Emma Goldman, I'm a huge fan of her writing. Also, the prison abolitionists that are associated with the anarchist movement, Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, all that stuff, influential. I still adhere to a lot of those principles when talking about stuff like radical prison reform and stuff like that. But I drifted more toward having a more open mind as I got older.

Lex Fridman

Extremism implemented in almost all of its forms is probably going to cause a lot of suffering.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

You worked as a doorman on the, I could say, legendary Bourbon Street in New Orleans.

Andrew Callaghan

That's right.

Lex Fridman

Where you saw what you described as... This might be another Wikipedia quote by the way. This is where I do my research.

Andrew Callaghan

Does it say hellish scenes?

Lex Fridman

Hellish scenes, in quotes.

Andrew Callaghan

Wikipedia is damn right about that.

Lex Fridman

All right, thank you. That's a win. That's one in the win column. So yeah, tell the story of that. What's it like to work on Bourbon Street? What kind of stuff did you see?

Andrew Callaghan

I was a host at a fine dining restaurant on the corner of Bourbon and Iberville. That's the first street if you go from Canal Street onto the corridor. This is across from a daiquiri spot. It's the middle of the tourist corridor of New Orleans. And the spot was kind of a tourist trap. It was called Bourbon House. The food was good. Chef Eric, I don't want you to see this and think you don't make good end dewy sausages. But it was overpriced. We had to maintain this fine dining facade on a street where almost everyone is throwing up fighting or is half naked. There was this policy. We had these giant glass windows next to the tables. So if you're eating at a Bourbon House, you can look out onto Bourbon Street and you can see as you're dining, a full panoramic view of all these partiers throwing beads, boobs, all that. We had this policy where if we're serving someone, we can't look onto Bourbon Street if something crazy is happening. So if there's a fight or something like that, we can't look. I remember I'm fucking serving a table. There's a dude in a Batman mask, butt naked, with 12 pairs of beads, just jerking it, back to jerking it.

Lex Fridman

Full on.

Andrew Callaghan

He's jerking it, right? And every single person at the restaurant's out there like, "Look." They're taking pictures. And the manager Stephen looks at me, he is like, "Keep your fucking eyes on the table." So I'm serving these people and I'm like, "You like red beans and rice, or would you like something Creole?" And there's just this dude. And ultimately, the manager went out and escorted him further down Bourbon Street. But I would get off work at around midnight every night. And that was when Bourbon Street is at its most chaotic. I lived in the French Quarter as well. I lived about 12 blocks down Bourbon, in a small Creole cottage, in a cute little orange, old-school New Orleans, one story spot. I lived in the attic above these gay meth dealers named Frankie and Johnny.

Lex Fridman

Oh, wow.

Andrew Callaghan

So, I would get off work and I would basically have to walk through this battlefield. I mean, it was a battlefield. Getting home was out of the Warriors movie.

Lex Fridman

The best of humanity on display.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. It was like Kensington, Philadelphia, but just alcohol. You know what I mean?

Lex Fridman

Oh, it's all alcohol. But it's a lot of visitors, right, from outside?

Andrew Callaghan

Almost all visitors. And that would set the floor for the weekend. For example, if the Raiders were playing the Saints, Raider Nation. And they do not play around. If it's the Patriots, that's a whole different crowd. They think they're better than everybody else.

Lex Fridman

Well, they technically are better than everybody else, but yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

But people from Massachusetts aren't like the cream of the crop in terms of American superiority.

Lex Fridman

Strong words, yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

No offense, but I mean.

Lex Fridman

No, I'm sure they won't take that as an offense.

Andrew Callaghan

They are good at fighting though, I'll tell you that.

Lex Fridman

All right. Great.

Andrew Callaghan

New England has hands compared to some places.

Lex Fridman

Which places are those? Colorado?

Andrew Callaghan

Colorado has no hands. The West Coast, not too much hands.

Lex Fridman

That's why you feel safe talking shit about Colorado.

Andrew Callaghan

But if you get to the corn-fed parts of East Colorado, these guys got hands bigger than my head, they'll beat the of me. But anyways, I'd walk back to my house on Bourbon Street and I would be sifting through this battlefield. And I had a friend at the time who was like, "Yo, we should do a taxi cab confessions type spin-off," where we ask people to confess a deep dark secret and we post it the next day. We tried that and it went viral on Instagram instantly. It was mostly incest stories, people admitting to incest. I know it's a common southern stereotype, but there's some truth to it. There were some murder confessions. That was pretty crazy. We never really posted any of those.

Lex Fridman

How did you get people to confess?

Andrew Callaghan

Pretty easy. And New Orleans has a homicide solve rate of 22%. So, most of the time, they'll just tell you. I remember I was walking down Bourbon and I asked this kid, I was like, "What's your deepest, darkest secret?" And he told me, he's like, "I just smoked a dude in the Magnolia." It's a project house in the third ward, project development. And he said, "I just smoked a dude in the Magnolia playground for touching my sister," molesting his sister. And I was like, "What?" And he was like, "Yeah, look it up." And I was like, "All right, hold on." And it was like, man found dead in Central City playground, appeared to be homeless, shot execution style. So I told the kid, I was like, "Why'd you tell me that?" He's like, "Man, put that out there. I'm trying to go viral. Tag me too."

Lex Fridman

Oh, wow.

Andrew Callaghan

Dude, I don't think you understand that even if you're a juvenile, he was probably 15, you can get juvenile life in Louisiana for a homicide even if it's justified. So, I just deleted the footage in front of him. I was like, "I'm going to delete this footage. See that trash button? I'm hitting it right now. Don't tell anyone that again." And he was like, "All right, I appreciate it," and he walked off. It's the little moments like that I always remember.

Lex Fridman

Anything for the Gram, I guess.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. After a while though, it became repetitive. Because there's only so many things that people can confess to that go viral.

Lex Fridman

Oh, so you were trying to see what?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, I mean, there's the incest one. Some people just say, "I eat ass." Everyone said that. Or, I cheated on someone.

Lex Fridman

I've seen a surprising number of people on your channel mention eating ass.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. How seriously you said that will live in my head for the rest of my life.

Lex Fridman

That's good. I want to live in your head saying that a lot of people mentioned eating ass.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, a lot of people do mention that. Also, that's kind of where I developed this magnetism for freestyle rapping. Everywhere I go, people rap, not sure why. I mean, as a former rapper myself in middle school and for the first year of high school, I think that maybe it takes one to know one. But everywhere I go, people start rapping. If you and me went outside of this podcast studio and walked around for five minutes, I could find somebody.

Lex Fridman

Who is rapping.

Andrew Callaghan

I can tell who raps or who can rap, who has eight bars in their head that they're ready to go.

Lex Fridman

I think also, there's something about you that creates the safe space to perform their art.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. The Quarter Confession series was the first time you saw the suit.

Lex Fridman

That's when the suit came out.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. It was kind of like a Ron Burgundy, Eric Andre inspired type.

Lex Fridman

Where'd you get that suit?

Andrew Callaghan

Goodwill.

Lex Fridman

Goodwill?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. Always.

Lex Fridman

Wow. I was playing checkers, you were playing chess. Good job.

Andrew Callaghan

I mean, Goodwill has a surprising amount of identical gray suits for sale.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. I've actually gotten suits at thrift stores before. They're great.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. A lot of people donate suits. And I was going for oversized suits, which are the cheapest ones there. It was \$12 to \$25 every time for the outfit.

Lex Fridman

If I wanted to look super sophisticated, like I'm from another era, I would go to the thrift store. Because usually, the patterns they have, it's just a more sophisticated suit. Which is what you kind of picked out. It made you look ridiculous but in the best kind of way.

Andrew Callaghan

The tough part about Quarter Confessions for me is that everybody that was featured, for the most part, would more or less regret being a part of the show. And that over time just gave me a bad feeling where I was like, "You know what? I kind of feel like I am doing an ambush interview." Especially because presenting as so agreeable, yet the intention is to make something funny. And I get that that's what people do in the satire sphere. I'm sure Ali G and Bruno and Borat did the same thing. And I don't think it's unethical because that's all for the purposes of comedy. It is what it is. But for me, I wanted to do something different.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, because there's an intimacy to confessing a thing, and then you just don't really realize the implications of that.

Andrew Callaghan

And the atmosphere of Bourbon Street is like anything goes, it's a free spirited place. But if you transport that energy digitally to a different place like Colorado, they might look at it and be like...

Lex Fridman

Different place in time. Five years later, that same person has a family and stuff like this, and all of a sudden they're talking about eating ass.

Andrew Callaghan

Right, exactly. Kids have to think about that. Or imagine if there's a video of your grandma or grandpa out there, when he was a kid, talking about eating ass. That's a horrible experience. To discover that about your respected elder later in life, it's tough.

Lex Fridman

I don't even know where to go with that. But literally the opening question was, tell me your deepest, darkest secret.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

You just come up to somebody like that?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

How often do you get a no? What's the yes to no ratio?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, the weird thing is we don't really extract answers from people. What makes a good interview is when they're ready to talk. The more you have to talk and try to get an answer out of them, it is just not a good vibe. So we kind of look for people who appear to be already ready to talk, open body language, they seem confident and verbose, and we approach them first.

Lex Fridman

There's a look.

Andrew Callaghan

We wouldn't approach a shy person and be like, "Come on, tell me." No.

Lex Fridman

What about a person with pain in their eyes?

Andrew Callaghan

Oh yeah, we're interviewing them.

Lex Fridman

So they're ready to talk, they're just not... There's different ways to be ready.

Andrew Callaghan

Right.

Lex Fridman

I see homeless people a lot, and they always look fascinating. And the ones I've talked to are always fascinating.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. We just did a video in the Vegas tunnels, trying to... Obviously it got taken down by Fox, but whatever.

Lex Fridman

I was going to make a joke that I didn't see it.

Andrew Callaghan

We tried to help a lot of them by getting them IDs. And when I made the documentary, I had this idea that if... It's a big roadblock for them is getting identification. Without IDs, you can't check into a homeless shelter, you can't do day labor, you can't qualify for housing, nothing. So when we interviewed them, they'd basically tell us, "If I had my ID, I wouldn't be here." And so we said, "Okay, we're going to really help this time. We're not just going to talk to them about their struggles. We're going to actively go out and get them IDs at the DMV." So, we did that and nothing really changed in their life. And we sat down with a recovery specialist who works directly with them day in and day out. And he explained to me that he's been trying to do the same thing I tried to do in a one-week period for the past 10 years. And that they have deeper underlying traumas and pain that need to be dealt with far before they even take the steps to enter society as a housed person.

Lex Fridman

That's a heavy truth right there.

Andrew Callaghan

Breaking that shame cycle has to come first. Because you got to think, right? I'm from a generation that romanticizes vagrancy and homelessness to a certain extent if it's called

Van Life or if it is done in a way that's sort of like Rolling Stone, Willie Nelson, hit the road. People who are above 50, they feel really embarrassed to be in the spiral of homelessness. They feel like failures. A lot of them have kids who they weren't there for. That's not the kind of pain that can be dealt with by giving someone a tiny home. It's a good step forward. But for someone to really make a change, they have to want to change. And so it is, how do you help someone and guide themselves in the right direction? And if you're too paternalistic and you use shame as a method to get them to clean up, they're going to end up right where they started. That's a tough truth to accept because a lot of people want a quick fix to things. And I don't blame people who go out and give bologna sandwiches out to the homeless.

Lex Fridman

And each case is probably its own little puzzle.

Andrew Callaghan

Each person is so complex. Now, imagine drug abuse. What that does for the brain? Trauma, childhood trauma. There's so much to unpack. And then just the belief that they're the undesirables, that they don't deserve to be a part of society because they failed a fundamental obligation like taking care of their kids.

Lex Fridman

If we could take a small tangent to, you mentioned this Vegas video, which is fascinating. It was taken down recently by YouTube, or YouTube took it down based on-

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, it was illegal.

Lex Fridman

... Fox 5, I guess.

Andrew Callaghan

So, the documentary was an hour and 45 minutes. We used 10 seconds of a news clip that was publicly broadcast by Fox 5 Vegas. And according to the Copyright Act of 1976, you're allowed to use any publicly broadcast news clip in a transformative capacity in any documentary film or research paper or broadcast or anything. They, specifically this corporation called Gray Media that controls the TV stations in almost every small town, they had lawyers hit up YouTube. And YouTube complied with an illegal copyright strike to get our video immediately removed. And I'm a YouTube partner. I'm in the YouTube partner program. So, to think that I wasn't forewarned, it's a bit strange, but it also smells like corruption to me to a certain extent.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, you shouldn't have that amount of power. At the very least, they should have the power to just silence that five second clip maybe.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. But I'm taking them to court because I have the means to be able to do so. I'm a larger creator. I have an audience. I have that financial backing to do it. I can't imagine how many people out there are smaller creators with not as much of a fan base they can mobilize against someone like Fox 5 or the money to go to court. So I want to take them all the way there to set precedent for future cases, so that these giant mainstream media conglomerates can't copyright strike documentary filmmakers at will. It doesn't make sense.

Lex Fridman

Oh, thank you for doing that. That's really, really, really important. And that's really powerful. And it might hopefully empower YouTube to also put pressure on people to not... YouTube is in a difficult position because there's so much content out there, there's so many claims, it's hard to investigate. But YouTube should be in a place where they push back against this kind of stuff as a first line of defense, especially to protect small creators. So what you're doing is really, really important.

Andrew Callaghan

Appreciate it, man.

Lex Fridman

And it sucks that it was taken down. Do you have any hope?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, I talked to my YouTube partner today, and he said that the Fox 5 lawyers have two weeks to comply with my counter appeal. But I spent 20 grand on human voiceovers in five different languages. I invested probably in total like 70K into this video. So even if it gets reinstated, the steam's kind of been taken out of its trajectory.

Lex Fridman

But also, it's just a really important video, it is good for the world.

Andrew Callaghan

Why the hell would Fox 5 have a vested interest in having the video taken down?

Lex Fridman

I just hate it when people do that to videos or to creators that are doing good in the world.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. It's not an expose on the mayor of Las Vegas. It's an attempt to show the civilian public how to get involved in a local nonprofit and potentially intervene in the lives of the tunnel people.

Lex Fridman

Well, fuck Fox 5, the other Channel 5, as you said.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

Well, thank you for pushing back and highlighting it. Hopefully, it gets brought back up. But yeah, defending other creators so that other creators can take risks and don't get taken down for stupid reasons.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

So, Quarter Confessions was written?

Andrew Callaghan

No, it was all real life reality TV documentary. But it caught the attention of a larger company called Doing Things Media. And they contacted me pretty much a week after I graduated from college in the May of 2019, and they said, "Hey, how would you like to produce a show?" I was like, "What do you mean?" They were like, "We'll get you an RV. We'll pay you 45K a year. We'll pay for gas, for food, for two hotels a week. Go out there, make content. And we'll be in the background just powering it all."

Lex Fridman

And that was the birth of All Gas No Brakes.

Andrew Callaghan

Yes. All Gas No Brakes was named after a book that I wrote called All Gas No Brakes, a hitchhiker's diary, which chronicled the 70-day journey that we were just talking about.

Lex Fridman

It's a tough book to find, by the way.

Andrew Callaghan

Oh, yeah. There's only a few copies left. I'm thinking about doing a reprint at some point down the line, but I sold off the last a hundred copies like a month and a half ago.

Lex Fridman

Until then, you guys should go read *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, read-

Lex Fridman

You should read it. I don't know if you've read it before.

Andrew Callaghan

If you can't get my book, get *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac.

Lex Fridman

It's great.

Andrew Callaghan

It's the best.

Lex Fridman

When's your birthday? I'll send you-

Andrew Callaghan

April 23rd. I'm a Taurus. Coming soon.

Lex Fridman

Typical Taurus, yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

I'm a typical Taurus man. I'm a Scorpio moon. You should write that down.

Lex Fridman

What's the time when you were born?

Andrew Callaghan

11:30.

Lex Fridman

11:30 at night? Of course.

Andrew Callaghan

Typical. This guy knew it. That's the real science. Anyways, the idea of All Gas No Brakes as a show was to combine the, I guess, road dog ethos of the All Gas No Brakes book with the presentation and editing style of Quarter Confessions. So, it was to take quarter confessions on the road. That was pretty much like a simulated hitchhiking experience. But with the editing and punchy effects of Quarter Confessions, which is like I wear a suit, we do the Fast Zoom-ins, little effects, stuff like that. Man, those were the best years. It was just so fun. I mean, imagine. You're fresh out of college. You were just a doorman interviewing people about making out with their cousin and stuff. And then boom, this company that you've never even heard of is willing to buy you an RV and give you 45K a year, which to me at the time was more money than I could possibly imagine. So, I called my dad. I was like, "Dad, I need you to find me an RV." Because he's the only guy I know who knows about cars, and even he doesn't know much about cars. He's like, "All right, I'm on it." The RV was 20,000. And the first event that we were called to cover was the Burning Man Festival. And that was tough because Burning Man is not too keen on filming. It's supposed to be a non-commercialized escape from reality. They have a gift economy set up. It's based upon mutual participation and non-exploitation. And so, the idea of making a Burning Man video was tough at first. Because burners oftentimes, and this is not all of them, are pretty well off in general. A lot of them have tech jobs, are pretty high up in Silicon Valley. And Burning Man is where they go to take the edge off and basically become their burner persona. On the playa, they become reborn. And they take ketamine and they wear kaleidoscope glasses and steampunk hats and they snort MDMA and they run around the sand. Listen-

Lex Fridman

Do you snort MDMA?

Andrew Callaghan

Yes, you can.

Lex Fridman

I need to do MDMA. I thought it's a pill. I didn't know.

Andrew Callaghan

It's better to take it in a pill or water, but you can snort MDMA.

Lex Fridman

I definitely need to take MDMA. I'm already full of love, but that, I'd probably go on another level.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, don't snort it because it'll only last 90 minutes.

Lex Fridman

Let me write that down.

Andrew Callaghan

So anyways, we didn't know what to do because we tried to film.

Lex Fridman

Don't snort.

Andrew Callaghan

The initial idea for All Gas No Brakes was to, instead of asking people what's your deepest, darkest secret, it was, what's the craziest trip you've been on? The idea was to not satirize drunk people, but satirize people who are fried on acid. So we went to Boulder real quick, did a test interview with some lady who talked about seeing ancestral aliens during a peyote retreat. It's pretty easy to extract trip reports from hippies and gutter punks and stuff like that, or oogles. So, we go to Burning Man. We start asking people, what's your craziest trip story? And they didn't have the same type of free flowing storytelling style like a on the street, cross punk in New Orleans might have, where they're like, "I don't give a shit, I'll tell you whatever." These people were very bottled up about what they were willing to disclose. So we went on Burning Man Radio and we did a broadcast and we said, "Hey, we're psychedelic journalists." It was me and my friend Ciel at the time. I said, "We're psychedelic journalists. We're parked on Tan and I, which is a cross street in Black Rock City." And we said, "We have a 1998 Catalina Coachman Sport. It's an RV. We've set up a podcast studio. We're doing a show about psychedelic voyages." Lo and behold, two hours later, we had 10 people lined up at the RV willing to talk. That vetted people in advance for us. We did a couple interviews and that was that.

Lex Fridman

What were some of the stories from the trip reports?

Andrew Callaghan

There was this lady named Rosmah who said that she was known in several circles in Berkeley for being multi-orgasmic and could create multiple repeated climaxes using only her mind, by squinting her eyes and squeezing her eyes together so much that the pleasure spiral just went crazy.

Lex Fridman

I feel like I talked to several people like that at Berkeley.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. You know what I'm talking about?

Lex Fridman

Not that... Well yeah, that lady, I think she manifests herself in many forms, yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

Right. But still, it was on the cruder end. There was one guy named, Kimbo Slice was his burner name. He talked about taking a shit after taking a quarter of mushrooms and how he was seeing his childhood and visualizing his past life as the turds were flowing into the toilet, and just talks about the psychedelic union between pooing and taking shrooms.

Lex Fridman

So, he was very visual with his words.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. There was stuff like that. I interviewed Alex Gray, which was super cool, about his first trip in San Francisco, in 1971, shortly after the Summer of Love. I got to do some pretty cool interviews. But still, it was semi-ambush style. I wouldn't say that we were doing journalism yet. It was still comedic video work.

Lex Fridman

Was there a narrative-

Andrew Callaghan

No.

Lex Fridman

... that tied it together? It's really just a trip, comedic almost.

Andrew Callaghan

Interview and then I go Burning Man, and then it's onto the next one. I guess that could give a loose structure, but it's just a punch in slapstick thing. Everything was going good until we interviewed this guy named DJ Soft Baby. He was wearing a golden leotard with, once again, kaleidoscope glasses, shirtless dancing like you know dancing. And he was eating chowder out of a plastic bowl. And he was like, "This chowder is so fucking good." He is like, "This is the best chowder I've ever had in my life." And he starts putting the chowder on his face. And he is like, "I want the chowder all over me, yah." And we just go, "Hey man, can you just do a dance for us real quick, just for some B-roll." He does a dance. We post it on Instagram the next morning. Doing Things Media CEO calls me, Reid, he says, "All of our pages are down." And he's like, "That guy you filmed dancing last night on drugs, putting chowder on his face, that guy is at the top of MIT."

Lex Fridman

Top of MIT, I don't understand what that means.

Andrew Callaghan

He went to MIT.

Lex Fridman

That's like saying, my brother's rocket scientist, he's head of NASA or whatever.

Andrew Callaghan

Well, I mean, the guy knows people in Boston. Not in the Whitey Bulger sense, but in the reverse sense.

Lex Fridman

I have trouble believing that DJ Soft Baby-

Andrew Callaghan

Oh, DJ Soft Baby was major. It could have been Harvard. But it wasn't UMass.

Lex Fridman

I don't think there's anybody that's, quote, at the head of MIT who's putting... What was it, all over his face?

Andrew Callaghan

Chowder.

Lex Fridman

Chowder.

Andrew Callaghan

Well then, you haven't been to Burning Man yet.

Lex Fridman

Okay. I've not been to Burning Man. I would have to consult my colleagues at MIT if they know DJ Soft Baby. It probably was Harvard. Let's put it on them.

Andrew Callaghan

Okay. The top of Harvard. So, he made some calls to the heads of Big Tech and got all the Doing Things Media pages taken down. At the time, that was a vast network of pages. And we ended up having to take the... Obviously, the video came down. And he held the entire network of Instagram pages hostage. He made us agree to never post that video again, and then somehow got all of our pages reinstated. That was my first brush with powerful people on drugs, and that was probably my last brush with powerful people on drugs.

Lex Fridman

What did you transition into from there?

Andrew Callaghan

I think after Burning Man, we went to the South. Went to Talladega Race weekend, went to a Donald Trump Jr. book signing, went to a juggalo adjacent fetish mansion in Central Florida called the Sausage Castle.

Lex Fridman

Juggalo adjacent sausage. Okay. Can you run that by me again?

Andrew Callaghan

Juggalo adjacent fetish mansion in Central Florida.

Lex Fridman

Okay. Fetish mansion in Central Florida. Juggalo adjacent. Every single one of those words, I feel like, needs a book or something. By the way, who are the juggalos? Is this ICP?

Andrew Callaghan

Just ICP fans.

Lex Fridman

ICP fans, okay.

Andrew Callaghan

But I say adjacent because it's not a juggalo mansion, but there's a lot of juggalos who kick it at the mansion and it's juggalo friendly.

Lex Fridman

Oh, okay. Juggalo friendly.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, because they get made fun of in a lot of places.

Lex Fridman

Oh. Okay, got it.

Andrew Callaghan

And juggalos say outrageous shit, and they embarrass themselves and they fight a lot. They're on the FBI's gang list, which if you ask me-

Lex Fridman

ICP or the-

Andrew Callaghan

The juggalos,

Lex Fridman

The juggalos. Who's the head of the juggalos?

Andrew Callaghan

It would be Violent J and Shaggy 2 Dope. But there's associated acts like Twiztid, and there's a whole rabbit hole. Honestly, Tech N9ne is sort of a part of that.

Lex Fridman

Tech N9ne, I don't know who that is. Should I know who that is?

Andrew Callaghan

He's actually one of the top-selling touring rappers, despite having not that many streams. Tech N9ne, he's got a huge cult following in Missouri. The juggalos started in Warren, Michigan.

Lex Fridman

We should also say, ICP, Insane Clown Posse. This is a thing, this is a movement.

Andrew Callaghan

Oh, yeah. If you went to Seattle right now and punched a cop and they booked you in county jail, you may end up running with the juggalos.

Lex Fridman

Running with the juggalos.

Andrew Callaghan

They're a presence in Pacific Northwest prison system from what I've heard.

Lex Fridman

Can you tell a juggalo from a distance?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, they say, whoop, whoop. If you see a Juggalo, they'll say that also.

Lex Fridman

I'll try to look up that.

Andrew Callaghan

It's called the Dark Carnivals, the mythology they abide by.

Lex Fridman

What do they define themselves? What's the ideology?

Andrew Callaghan

A family.

Lex Fridman

No, I understand, but what's the ideology? What's the philosophical foundation?

Andrew Callaghan

They're anti-racist. They like to drink Faygo and also just cheap liquor and stuff like that. They're into drugs. A lot of circles, if you pull out a crack pipe, people will be like, "I don't want to drink with you anymore." If you're at a juggalo party and someone's smoking twizz or something, it's relatively accepted.

Lex Fridman

What's twizz?

Andrew Callaghan

Meth.

Lex Fridman

Meth, right, right. Lots of tattoos?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. The Hatchet Man is the most common one. It's a Psychopathic Records logo. It's a cartoon of a clown wheeling a hatchet. It's actually a pretty sick logo.

Lex Fridman

I vaguely remember enjoying some of the ICP music.

Andrew Callaghan

It's good.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, it's pretty good. It's funny. It's edgy.

Andrew Callaghan

They get satirized a lot, but I got love for the clowns. And also, when All Gas No Brakes transitioned away from rich, elite drug parties and into the South, that's when the fun really started to happen. Living in your RV in Alabama and Florida and stuff is the best.

Lex Fridman

Why? What is it about it?

Andrew Callaghan

People are just so friendly down there. And it is warm year round, and people are non-judgmental, and it's just great. The South gets hated on a lot, especially in the coastal states. Mississippi and Alabama are kind of like the butts of a lot of jokes and stuff, but those are great states.

Lex Fridman

No, I love it. New Mexico, Albuquerque, all those-

Andrew Callaghan

Oh, yeah. The ABQ is great.

Lex Fridman

ABQ, what's that?

Andrew Callaghan

Albuquerque. That's what Jesse Pinkman called it, the ABQ.

Lex Fridman

Oh, shit. The depth of references you bring to the table is intense.

Andrew Callaghan

It's okay.

Lex Fridman

I met a lady in Albuquerque when I was traveling across the United States, and she said, "Take me with you." In Albuquerque when I was traveling across the United States and she said, "Take me with you." I said, "I'm sorry, ma'am. I can't." But I didn't think about that lady.

Andrew Callaghan

I think you made the right call.

Lex Fridman

I don't know. On the Road by Jack Kerouac.

Andrew Callaghan

Best book I've ever read in my life.

Lex Fridman

There's a moment when he meets a nice girl on a bus and they have a love affair. It was good.

Andrew Callaghan

On the bus or [inaudible 01:10:26]?

Lex Fridman

No, no, they went to California. Well, yeah, and there was a love affair on the bus, but it wasn't sexual. It was just romantic.

Andrew Callaghan

It was in the air?

Lex Fridman

It was in the air, which there is something in the air on the bus, like a Greyhound Megabus, that type of situation. There's something-

Andrew Callaghan

Certainly something in the air?

Lex Fridman

It was a romance. There is, man. When you travel, because it's like strangers getting together and you're feeling each other out, but you're in it. You each have a story because you wouldn't be taking a bus unless you had a story. So especially if you're traveling cross-country, there's something.

Andrew Callaghan

You ever taken the dollar bus from Philly to New York? The Chinatown bus?

Lex Fridman

Yeah, I have. Yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

That's a great bus, the people on that.

Lex Fridman

It's not a fucking dollar, though. [inaudible 01:11:05].

Andrew Callaghan

There's some that are \$5.

Lex Fridman

No, no, no, no. If you book it way ahead of time, which it's like \$20. I was like, "This is a fucking lie calling it \$1." I don't know why I'm swearing. The anger came out, and I apologize.

Andrew Callaghan

Hey, swearing is okay sometimes. Last time I was on the Chinatown bus, there was a rooster walking down the aisle.

Lex Fridman

Actual rooster?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, watched him chilling. It was awesome.

Lex Fridman

Well, there's a nice part of your film with the rooster.

Andrew Callaghan

I forgot about that.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, that felt almost fake.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

Did you plant the rooster?

Andrew Callaghan

No, there's a place in Ybor City in Tampa where roosters walk around all the time. And we had a rooster parked there right by the main drag for... What did I say? We had a rooster parked? We had the RV parked at Ybor City for a long time, and the rooster laid eggs in the undercarriage.

Lex Fridman

Nice.

Andrew Callaghan

Back to the All Gas No Brakes thing though, so it was really fun making it. And then we started All Gas No Brakes in September of 2019. Six months later, the country shuts down and everything just hits the fan. I was actually here in Austin when it shut down. I was on 6th Street. I remember the, I don't just hang out on 6th Street all the time, but I was just here.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, you do. Come on, let's just be honest.

Andrew Callaghan

I do like 6th Street. I like East Austin better, but I like 6th Street too. So anyways, the NBA shuts down, everything's shutting down. So I went down to the Dirty 6 and I asked this doorman, I was like, "Are you guys ever going to shut down?" He was like, "Fuck no, bro. The Dirty 6 never closes." And I was like, "All right, we'll see about that." Next day, plywood. And then I was like, "All right." I thought my career was over when Covid hit. I was like, "What are we going to do? Nothing's happening anymore. There's no more parties or Talladega races or Burning Man's to go to." So I went back to Seattle in the RV and I just spent four months just depressed, living in the RV, trying to figure out what would happen.

Lex Fridman

But All Gas No Brakes went on still through that?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, this was the craziest thing about that period of time is that when Covid hit, I'm sure you remember, everything turned political overnight. In Seattle, if you went to a house party, you can get canceled because people were like, "Oh, you're a super-spreader." So if you wanted to socialize even with a group of four or more, you had to do so with your phones damn near turned off. And a lot of people were doing hyper social policing at that time. Beyond that, in the south and in more conservative places, they were doing the opposite. They were trying to prove that they could hang out 500 deep with no mask to make a statement against the establishment. So you had this polarization that led to more division, and that's when the anti-vax protests started. And I went to Sacramento and the passion was unreal. This is about two months after the Covid lockdowns began, and that was my first political video was at the California State Capitol in Sacramento, documenting they called it the Freedom rally, but that's typically anti-vax stuff. And it was real intensity. And that video was my most successful to date at that time. And so I was like, "Okay, am I a political reporter now? Am I covering politics? What's going on?"

Lex Fridman

What were the interviews that made up that video? What style of questions were you asking?

Andrew Callaghan

I don't know if you remember, but I was actually scared when the pandemic started. I thought that this is something that might kill us all based upon what I was consuming. And so I'd asked people, "What do you think about this lockdown?" And I've had people say, "I'm immune-compromised. If I get exposed to Covid, I have a 95% fatality rate. But guess what? I'd rather be free and dead than alive living in fear." And I was like, wow. So it was just stuff along those lines. You had some San Diego surfers there complaining about the beaches being shut down when such awesome waves were coming.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, it's interesting how that really brought out the worst in people.

Andrew Callaghan

Oh, yeah.

Lex Fridman

I'm not sure why that is. Fear, maybe. Paranoia, I don't know. It really divided people. Along the lines, as you mentioned, triple mask yourself or fight for your country.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, right. Exactly. Why are those the two options? That is literally what it was.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, it's wild.

Andrew Callaghan

And both groups think they're fighting for the survival of something. And so that's where you really run into problems, when you have two polarized groups who both think that their cause is for the common good, mutual understanding is impossible at that juncture. And so after three months of almost everybody being locked down, George Floyd happens. And I remember I saw the third precinct burning on my phone in Minneapolis, and everyone says, "Andrew, you have to go cover this." And I'm somebody, like I said, police violence has been close to my heart since I was a kid. And my first thought is, I can't do that. I'm a comedic reporter. I can't go to Minneapolis and cover this, it'll be the end of my career. And I had a friend named Lacey who I went to college with, and she told me, she was like, "Bro, this is your chance for you to do something serious. You can actually create a meaningful piece of reporting like you always wanted to before Quarter Confessions, and you can turn All Gas No Brakes into a news source." So I called Reid, who was the CEO of the company that owned All Gas No Brakes, and I was like, "Look man, I want to go to Minneapolis." I was in Orlando at the time. I was actually at The sausage Castle. And he said-

Lex Fridman

Sorry, The Sausage Castle?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, the Juggalo Mansion.

Lex Fridman

Oh, right. That was called The Sausage Castle. Right.

Andrew Callaghan

So I'm watching Minneapolis unfold on Lake Street where it was burning, and I got to the Orlando Airport and I booked a flight. I booked it on my own card, I didn't consult my boss or anything. And I was sitting in my seat on the flight and he straight up told me, he's like, "If you fuck this up and this destroys the brand, we're getting a different host. If you mess this up and you turn our show away from a party show about drinking and drugs and all that stuff and you make this a social justice show, you're done." But I was like, I just turned my phone off. I got to the Minneapolis Airport on the second night of the riots. And when I got to the airport, there was National Guardsmen in the airport and it was like a Call of Duty mission, the one in the airport. And on the speaker, they say, "If you're arriving here right now, you are not permitted to go anywhere outside of the airport. National Guardsmen will escort you to your Uber or to your car, they're going to take a picture of your ID, they're going to figure out where you're going. You are not permitted to go outside tonight." And so Lacey picks me up. There's two people in the back, two of her homegirls wearing shiesty masks. I'm like, "What are we doing? Where are we going?" And she goes, "We're going to go film the riot. We're going to Lake Street." And so we drive down there, Kmart is burning, Target is burning, everything is on fire. She has the Sony A7. She gives me a microphone and she's like, "Go talk to that guy", and that was the guy with a Molotov cocktail in his hand who had just burned Kmart down. And so I go, "What should I ask him?" She goes, "What's on your mind?" So I walk up to him and I'm like, "What's on your mind?" He said something like, "Everything that was happening here was supposed to happen. This is how we feel. Is it right? No. Is this going to benefit the community? No, but this is how we feel."

Lex Fridman

"This is how we feel", that's pretty powerful. Through a lot of the documenting that you do, "this is how we feel" is screaming through that.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. And I noticed that aside from a group called Unicorn Riot, there was no one else actually interviewing the protesters. The local news was on the bridge 15, not 15, but five blocks away filming just the scene itself, just the fire. But I saw some crazy things off camera, too. So there was two groups there. There was the anarchists, more mobilized protestors, and then there was just mostly African-American community members who

were just pissed, who had nothing to do with the organized resistance. And they were all joining forces to riot. And there was this anarchist kid who ran up to White Castle with a Molotov cocktail, and he was about to throw it at White Castle. And this black dude ran up to him and grabbed his arm and he's like, "Nah, we fuck with white Castle." And I was like, what? And so you see, if you go on Lake Street, every business is burned. White Castle remains.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, White Castle stands.

Andrew Callaghan

I also saw all these dudes rip this ATM out of a bank and hit it with sledgehammers. They were a group of friends hitting it with sledgehammers, right? They're hitting with sledgehammers, boom. All of a sudden, money starts spraying out of the ATM. I've never seen some shit like this, pouring out of it. And then these group of friends, who were just united and getting it open, start fighting each other for the money as it's flying out of it. And so it was like Joker from The Batman's army type vibes, but I got shot in the ass by the National Guard. It was no good.

Lex Fridman

Like what, a rubber bullet?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, yeah. Not shot-

Lex Fridman

How'd that feel like?

Andrew Callaghan

Honestly, it hurt. Yeah, it hurt.

Lex Fridman

I'm not sure what I was expecting as an answer to that question.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

I liked it. It was good.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. And then after that, I posted the video and it was very well received. And that was the pivotal point where I realized that everything was going to change.

Lex Fridman

I mean, there was still a comedic element to the way you do conversations, so the way you edit. So did you see yourself as potentially like a Jon Stewart type of character?

Andrew Callaghan

At first, but I just think human beings are just funny in general.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, the absurdity of it.

Andrew Callaghan

Cool thing about Jon Stewart is I generally like to say that anybody who works for corporate media, whether it be Comedy Central or anything owned by Time Warner, Fox, MSNBC, they can't say what they want because in order to climb up in those organizations, you have to appease the narrative of the company that you're working for to rise in the ranks. Jon Stewart I feel like has so much clout in the media world that I'm pretty sure he can say whatever he wants. I actually don't think that Jon Stewart is controlled by anybody, I really don't. I think that he can go on the show and talk about whatever.

Lex Fridman

I do think that certain people have broken the brains of, Covid broke the brains of a lot of really great people I admire. Trump broke the brains of a lot of people I admire to where Trump derangement syndrome became a thing, you can't see the world quite as clearly because of it. And I think Jon Stewart is quite a genius at stepping away. Even though the world needed him in that time, stepping away during that moment of Trump and coming back now, being able to reflect being [inaudible 01:22:12] that elder statesman.

Andrew Callaghan

My favorite Jon Stewart moment that illustrates that perfectly is whenever he went on the Colbert show. And he was just joking around with Stephen Colbert, who I think is a full-blown propagandist, about the Wuhan Lab leak theory. He was just goofing around and he was like, "It's called the Coronavirus Lab and they had it before. And now what do we have?" And it was like you could see in Stephen Colbert that he was like gun to his head type shit where he is like, "Jon, Jon, stop joking about that." And that made me realize, oh, everything that Jon Stewart did, especially for the 9/11 first responders, he's a true American. And not in the sense that the different political parties want you to believe as an American, not a do your part in social distance American, not a wave your Trump flag in the back of your pickup truck American, just a guy who genuinely stands up for what's right.

Lex Fridman

There is a degree to which you can be in those positions easily captured by groupthink though, even when you're not controlled by bosses and money and all that stuff. I think Jon Stewart has been mostly resistant, but it's hard. His position is difficult.

Andrew Callaghan

I think he's done the best job though. If someone in that obviously Democrat-connected corporate media economy, he seems to be the freest talker.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. So this is when you first became famous?

Andrew Callaghan

I'm not even sure what fame means. I mean, I just see myself as me.

Lex Fridman

When did you get the shades?

Andrew Callaghan

Oh, that was on tour. That's a whole... The shades, that's a dark time. I didn't make-

Lex Fridman

This is a meme really. I don't even know if that's a symbol of fame or whatever.

Andrew Callaghan

I didn't make journalism to become famous, I made it to give people a platform to share their stories. It just so happens that people liked it enough to where I became famous. But if I could go back and not be the on-camera guy and just platform the stories, I would. But the reality is people need a face to attach to stuff they like, and so that's just how it is. But yeah, I would say right around Minneapolis protest, Portland protest, Proud Boys rally time when I was really in there is when I started to be acclaimed as more than just a ambush meme lord.

Lex Fridman

Did that have effect on you, the fame?

Andrew Callaghan

Not at that point.

Lex Fridman

Not at that point? So you were still able to have a lightness to you?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, the country was basically closed.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

So it wasn't like there was a street to walk down where people were like, "There's that guy." So getting famous during Covid made it. So when the country reopened, it was as if my life really changed because I was like, "Oh, all these fans I made during Covid are seeing me out at the bar. This is cool."

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

At first, fame is the best thing ever because you can go anywhere in the country and these spaces that you normally feel a bit insecure in, like a local dive bar, a cool restaurant, a coffee shop where you just be another guy, all of a sudden they're like, "Oh my God, I'm a big fan." They give you free stuff. You get this sense of acceptance that you never would've gotten before, but there's also-

Lex Fridman

The dark side. It's all love, man. Just to speak to the first part you're saying it's just so much love that people have [inaudible 01:25:26].

Andrew Callaghan

It's amazing. I'm sure you know what it's like.

Lex Fridman

That's beautiful.

Andrew Callaghan

The only downside of fame really is that you can't really be anonymous again, and you have to seek out more strange environments to be anonymous in. Right now, I live in the desert basically, and I want to live in the middle of nowhere in the Mojave Desert. Not because I'm scared of people, but because I just want to be curious me again who people don't know and I can ask questions to people that I'm interested in without them going, "I remember, I seen you here" or, "I seen you there." That's the main thing. That's what I loved about hitchhiking.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, just to have an anonymity. For sure.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, it's the best. But both are great. Complaining about fame is just the lamest shit.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. Did you go to furry conventions that you covered wearing an outfit?

Andrew Callaghan

I love furries. I should do that.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, we should go together. I go all the time, we should go together. What's your favorite outfit?

Andrew Callaghan

You ever hopped into a furry convention?

Lex Fridman

No, I have not.

Andrew Callaghan

I think you might like it more than you think.

Lex Fridman

Listen, maybe I'm just afraid to face who I really am.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. Your fursona, the true Lex will come out when you're in a \$3,600 lizard suit.

Lex Fridman

Everything is possible. Lizard? Is that what they go with?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, scabies are the lizard furries. And there's a big division in the community where they think scabies are douchebag because the scaly suits are more expensive. They're about 7,000, whereas a fur suit is 3,600. And they're also taller. So when the scabies pull up to the fur fest, it's like, "Ah, fuck the reptiles."

Lex Fridman

Fuck the reptiles, I can get behind that. I'm more like a teddy bear type of guy. I think bears, maybe squirrels. I don't know.

Andrew Callaghan

Squirrels are so cool.

Lex Fridman

Giant squirrels, yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

I want to put a GoPro on one and just see what the hell they do.

Lex Fridman

You were talking about that conversation with the guy at the head of Doing Things Media. How did that end up?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, I mean, I want to clear up a few things. Reid, the CEO of Doing Things, I actually think he's a good guy. I think that he was just trying to run a business. He saw what was working for his brand, which is very college-centric, very festival-centric. And he was right to think that journalism and especially coverage of sensitive topics like Covid or police brutality would definitely not work on merch. You're not going to sell a picture of me interviewing someone at a riot like you would me interviewing a furry or a drunk dude in Alabama, it doesn't work the same. So it was a lot harder to monetize not just because of YouTube censorship, but also just because of the sensitive nature of the content. So Reid was looking out for himself as a businessman. There was a different partner, I'm not going to say his name, that was more connected in Hollywood. I think he's responsible for the collapse of the show.

Lex Fridman

What was the collapse like? What happened?

Andrew Callaghan

So right as the country's reopening, I get a DM from Eric Wareheim of Tim & Eric, and I'm covering something called the UFO Mega Conference in Laughlin Nevada, which is a beautiful river town. And he DMed me and says, "Let's make a show." And I'm like, "Oh shit, is this real?" I grew up such a big fan of Nathan for You and The Eric Andre show, and those are produced by their company, Abso Lutely. So I was like, "Hell yeah, let's do it." Three days later, I get a call that says, "Jonah Hill wants to hop on board", and I can't believe this. I'm still in the RV and I'm in Laughlin, Nevada. So I'm like, "Jonah Hill, Super Bad. Are you shitting me right now?" So I was excited. Oh, and Moneyball. Jonah Hill's a great actor.

Lex Fridman

Oh, he is great. He's great all around.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

He doesn't get the credit he deserves. Well, I mean, he's got the credit by now, but still deserves more.

Andrew Callaghan

So basically just within a week, I assembled this super team of Tim and Eric.

Lex Fridman

Super Bad team?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, pretty much of Tim and Eric.

Lex Fridman

Sorry, I'm so sorry.

Andrew Callaghan

No, that's good. And Jonah Hill. And yeah, we just pitched it around. Every single TV network rejected it, I don't know why. And they mainly did that because I was in this weird situation where I had signed a contract with Doing Things Media that I didn't realize was called a 360 deal. That's what they use in the rap world. Basically means that I can't do anything outside of them without them getting 100% of the money. So if I was to go work at Sbarro or Quiznos while I was working for All Gas No Brakes, they would get my \$500 a week from the sandwich spot. I was unable to earn any outside income. I didn't read the fine print because I was 21 and, like I told you, 45,000 a year RV sounds sick. And basically, the TV networks were like, "Why would we buy a show if the digital brand's going to be running at the same time?" Because they didn't want to stop doing All Gas No Brakes to make a TV show, they wanted All Gas No Brakes to continue as a web show while All Gas No Brakes as a future TV show at Showtime or Hulu or somewhere like that was also concurrently running, which is impossible for one man to do. And so every TV network said, "Okay, we're not doing that. We want an exclusive rights contract with this guy." Next, oh yeah, this is crazy to think about because it all happened so fast. So Jonah Hill says, "A24 Films wants to do a movie instead of a show, and they're going to let you keep the digital brand running." So this meant that I could keep doing my Instagram stuff with Doing Things Media/All Gas No Brakes while making an A24 movie with Jonah Hill and Tim and Eric. So it was just like I was excited, it sounded perfect. So they said, "Okay, what do you want to make a movie about?" And I told them, "Okay, here's what's going to happen in 2020. If Trump wins, there's going to be riots across the country. The major cities are going to burn down. If Trump loses, the militias and his loyal supporters are going to try to have a coup in DC." That's what I said. And I said, "So

I'm going to follow the lead up to whoever wins the election and I'm going to document what happens after." So they said, "Okay." And so I was to begin filming in late October during the campaign trail, maybe mid-October up until November, and then in the following months to see what would happen. This meant that I couldn't film anything for All Gas No Brakes the digital show because I had to dedicate 100% of my time to making this perfect movie.

Lex Fridman

Yes.

Andrew Callaghan

Still, one of the partners at Doing Things Media was demanding that I not only produce the movie, but also more content for the show. And I told them, "There's only so many hours in a day, man. That's going to be impossible." And I said, "If you want it to be possible, I can make it work, but I want to have half of the monetization from the show. 50% profit split", which I thought is fair. If you want me to do double work when I was getting almost nothing before, split me in on the profits. They fired us immediately, me and my two childhood friends who I hired to work on the show with me were all out of a job. As we were filming for the Now HBO project, we got our fire notices.

Lex Fridman

The guts on that person, because you should be owning probably close to 100% of it.

Andrew Callaghan

I think so too, but they didn't see it that way because they figured we made the initial investment. "We discovered him" is how they looked at it. So it wasn't Reid, but it was the other partner who wasn't Reid who said, verbatim he said this, "I have tons of connections in the comedy world. We can replace Andrew overnight." I'm not sure why he made that miscalculation. I wish he would've thought about it twice, I wish it didn't have to end like that, but it did.

Lex Fridman

Why do people do that? What's the benefit of acting like that? Because you can part amicably without the drama.

Andrew Callaghan

I think all betrayal in anything like that is motivated by self-interest, whether that be economic success, social stability, whatever it is. They figured that because I was being such a burden in asking for the profit that they could just release me and find someone equally talented and not split them in so they can make more money.

Lex Fridman

Oh, I see. Well, that's a stupid way to think.

Andrew Callaghan

People think like that, man. The word I use is sidekick syndrome. When people are a part of the production, but they're not integral, they start thinking that the front man doesn't matter or something, and that the brains of the operation are actually the people on the periphery. And so they start to believe that they can just shift things around and the audience won't care, not realizing that I was actually the one who created the show and that the lore of the show is connected to my rise outside of their jurisdiction, if that makes sense. The people who watch All Gas No Brake watched Quarter Confessions and read the book.

Lex Fridman

Well, this happens also not just financially, but just with people that part of a team, but they don't really contribute creatively to the team and they force their opinion or pressure. Whether this comes from editors or all that stuff or from sponsors, there's pressure they create when the creator alone should be celebrated and have all the power because they're the ones that are creating the thing.

Andrew Callaghan

In a way, I have sympathy because I can't relate to that because I've always been the front man of my own projects by design. So I'm not sure what it's like to be someone's owner from a content perspective. I don't understand the challenges they face. Maybe there was something that I didn't understand, I don't know.

Lex Fridman

True. Well, oftentimes if you own a thing like this, like this company, you do think about brand and then maybe have a big picture idea of what brand means. And that can be at tension with the creative project, right?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

But ultimately, freedom for the creators is the best brand.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. I remember all three of us who worked on All Gas No Brakes got fired at the same time. And we were in the RV that Tim and Eric's company bought for us, which was a bigger RV in the parking lot of a Walmart in South Philly. And the propane had just ran out and it was 15 degrees outside, so the RV was getting really cold really fast. And I just looked at my phone and it was like, "You're fired", and I was just like, "God, help me." I've had a couple moments like that and God does help me.

Lex Fridman

And they were always in the parking lot of Walmart, right?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, yeah. Although-

Lex Fridman

I know that Walmart, by the way.

Andrew Callaghan

The one in South Philly is great.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, that's great.

Andrew Callaghan

But technically now, you can't park an RV there.

Lex Fridman

Well, you're not a man who follows the rules, if you know what I'm saying.

Andrew Callaghan

Well, the thing is though, Walmart, Cracker Barrel and Big 5 are supposed to technically all let RV campers park overnight. But if there's a crime problem in the city where they're at, individual Walmarts can lobby with the corporate to take that away. So all the Portland Walmarts, you can't sleep there anymore. Any city with significant homelessness and petty property crime, the Walmarts are a no-go.

Lex Fridman

Fascinating. So that was a low point.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

But from there, from the ashes, the phoenix rose.

Andrew Callaghan

Over time, yeah.

Lex Fridman

Channel 5 was born.

Andrew Callaghan

Channel 5 was born in the March of 2021 after we finished filming for the HBO Project.

Lex Fridman

Oh, really? So you went all in on the HBO project [inaudible 01:36:45]?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. I mean, we filmed the HBO project from November, 2020 up until April, 2021, damn near. We were just picking up the pieces, going back for individual interviews, stuff like that.

Lex Fridman

So let's go to that project. It turned out to be a movie called This Place Rules.

Andrew Callaghan

It was supposed to be called America Shits Itself.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. Maybe you can tell the story of the film. You have, what's his name? I wrote this down. Joker Gang and Gum Gang, is that correct?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, the opening scene.

Lex Fridman

The opening scene of two characters just talking shit and then getting into a fight. And that I think was really brilliant how you presented that as almost like a microcosm of the division between the extremes of the left and the extremes of the right.

Andrew Callaghan

That's exactly what it was. I'm glad you picked up on it.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. And then what I really liked is that the joke, again, Joker Gang was, a little bit of a spoiler alert, I apologize, but at the end of the film was a voice of wisdom.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. I just realized-

Lex Fridman

He seems the most sane.

Andrew Callaghan

He was the voice of wisdom. He cut through it.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

I also just realized that a lot of people are going to stream the movie after watching this podcast, which is cool.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. Where do they stream it? On HBO Max, right?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, HBO Max. I never got a chance to promote them.

Lex Fridman

It's such a pain in the ass, man. I wish we could all just pay on it on YouTube or something. And HBO gets the profits or whatever, but it's such... You have to subscribe for every single thing. But yes, if you want to watch it, it's really, I recommend extremely, highly... Sign up to HBO, whatever the hell.

Andrew Callaghan

On the positive note, HBO is great to work with. They're the most professional, respectful company I've ever worked with, pretty much.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, HBO has created some of the greatest TV ever.

Andrew Callaghan

But even in the background, they get shit done. There's no wait time. They have some of the best heavy hitters on their team. For trailers, for posters, all the promotional apparatus they have is super solid.

Lex Fridman

Did you get good notes from people there, like how to-

Andrew Callaghan

A little bit, man, but-

Lex Fridman

It's a truly original documentary, meaning I just haven't seen anything like it. So there's a humor and a lightness at the right moments. Like I said, there's a rooster in your... That's like, okay, that's like a non sequitur thing as part of a storytelling. It intensifies and reveals the absurdity of the division and how ones like January 6th happens, everybody goes onto the next thing. It's like, what happened to us? It was almost like a delirium that everybody was participating in. Some weird, just like, well, like people say, mind virus. All of a sudden, we just got captured and people were just yelling at each other and doing the most ridiculous shit. And I mean, really, January 6th, the way you presented especially just reveals the circus of it all.

Andrew Callaghan

I mean, it really broke the fourth wall. That's how I would describe it because if you were at January 6th and the lead up, it felt like it was the beginning to a series of similar riots. But it just popped off so much that that was it, that you haven't seen anything like it since. There was supposed to be a second one on January 20th, it was the actual inauguration. It never happened. It was a crazy time to be alive and around, and especially the relationship that I developed with Enrique Tarrio, who's the former chairman of The Proud Boys. He's now facing 23 years in prison. It's like a trip because I went to his house in Miami maybe two weeks after January 6th. And talking to him, it seemed like he didn't think anything was going to happen. He was just like, "Yeah, man, that was crazy. I'm glad I wasn't there. They're dumb for doing that." He even told me he doesn't think the election was stolen, which is just a mindfuck. It's like, why'd you get everyone so hyped up? It's just weird to think about how so many people's lives are drastically altered forever because of that just bizarre moment in time that will always live on.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. QAnon is part of that story, what'd you learn about QAnon from that?

Andrew Callaghan

Just an all encompassing worldview. That family that I talked to, I call them the QAnon family, but it's called the Spencer family. They were non-political up until the Stop the Steal movement began in September of 2020. And within four months, their entire life revolved around the mythology and lore of Q. And I've never seen in my life a psyop just devour people's minds in such an intense way, in such a rapid period of time.

Lex Fridman

And I love how the kids in the movie are also the voices of wisdom. The Spencer family, it's the kid who goes through the full journey of believing that whatever, Hillary Clinton is a lizard, and just believing all the worst versions of the conspiracy theories. And then waking up was like, what was the point? [inaudible 01:41:34].

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. It was heartbreaking to see his disappointment in his dad for even following QAnon so militantly because he was like, "I felt like they let my dad down. I felt like they let our family down" because January 6th was supposed to be the day, according to QAnon, that the storm happens and that the military is supposed to mobilize and arrest the members of the deep state, Clinton, Soros, all that. Trump was supposed to go into a helicopter, you know what I mean? And take control of the country back from the swamp, and it didn't happen. In fact, the next day, he was almost denouncing it. Now he doesn't, but then he did. And I think it hurt people's pride a lot. My friend, Forgiato Blow, he's a Trump rapper, he describes it that way. He says, "A lot of people's pride got hurt by January 6th."

Lex Fridman

Trump rapper?

Andrew Callaghan

Oh, yeah, dude. Honestly, there's some pretty dope Trump rap out there. I'm serious.

Lex Fridman

MAGA rap?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. You would think like, "Oh, yeah. MAGA, there's no rappers there", but there's rappers. And they do a pretty good job.

Lex Fridman

They're good?

Andrew Callaghan

At delivering the messaging they want to deliver, yeah. I mean, they think of stuff and I'm like, "That's clever."

Lex Fridman

Oh, they have some political depth to them?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

Wow. I mean, is there something more you could say about how QAnon works? Who's behind it? What's your sense of who's behind the whole thing?

Andrew Callaghan

I don't want this to sound rude or anything, I just don't care about QAnon. You know what I mean? I've put so much thought into it and I just can't seem to care about it.

Lex Fridman

Was it almost a disappointment? Because to me, it was like a thing that just captured a very large number of people's minds, and then it just faded.

Andrew Callaghan

I guess that's why. It just seems like it's gone, and the ideas of QAnon have just bled into mainstream standard conservative thinking.

Lex Fridman

But there has to be a retrospective. That's the problem I have with Covid. A lot of stuff happened, everybody freaked out. There's a lot of big drama around it. And now, everyone was like, "Okay, forgot." Just moved away. What are the lessons learned? Has anyone learned any lessons?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, exactly. And what I'm saying is I don't want QAnon adherents to see this and think I don't care about them, but as far as who is behind it, the damage is done.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, but what are the mechanisms that made it work? I mean, that's a really-

Andrew Callaghan

What do you think? Have you thought about that?

Lex Fridman

I think that these viral ideas can be driven by, and your film shows this, by just a handful of people. And they're not malevolent, they just want the clout. And there's something sexy, there's something really sticky about conspiracy theories, especially extreme ones. Some of them can have this momentum. They capture the minds of a lot of people and you just go with it. And when I hear some conspiracy theories, there's something like a small part of me that like, yeah, like excited.

Andrew Callaghan

It's possible that QAnon is a psyop to distract people away from actually uncovering what the deep state is and who is truly running things behind the scenes because the deep state is just the 1%. It's that you get people so close to any type of class consciousness, and then you totally divert everything into lizard humans who live on the moon and that Hillary Clinton is... ... lizard humans who live on the moon and that Hillary Clinton is eating babies on

camera, and QAnon did just that. They want to convince you that, one, there's no conservative deep state, which is even more hilarious, that Trump isn't connected to a huge, rich corporate apparatus of propagandists. And two, that the Democratic establishment is the only deep state and that some middle-of-the-road conservatives, that there's no grifters or manipulators outside of that three-headed snake.

Lex Fridman

There's grifters everywhere.

Andrew Callaghan

Everywhere. Everyone wants to make money, dude. This is the world that we're in. It's in collapse. Everybody wants to make money, and engagement is the rule of law. That's why these news organizations follow retention incentives. They want to make money by selling ads, so they try to create fear and constant division to enrich the corporate media establishment. And you have people who are almost realizing, "Hey, it seems like Fox and CNN might be owned by the same people and are tactically using these machines to keep us divided perfectly 50-50 to ensure that the power structure never gets disrupted." And then, you get these people, "You know who's going to save us? Donald Trump." That's the guy? How is that the guy? It's not the guy, and I don't have TDS. I'm not an orange man basher who thinks about the guy all the time, but I don't think he's the guy.

Lex Fridman

You were shirtless, lifting weights while whiskey or some alcohol was poured into your mouth by Alex Jones in this movie, and then you did the same to him.

Andrew Callaghan

That's true.

Lex Fridman

This feels like an interrogation. So Alex was a part of this film. He was throughout the narrative, and yes, you had a great interview with him. What did you learn about interacting with Alex Jones from making this film?

Andrew Callaghan

For one is that he's the exact same off-camera as he is on camera.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

It's not an act. He told me that all real Americans die before 58. He mentioned Sean Connery and a few others, and...

Lex Fridman

How old is he?

Andrew Callaghan

Getting up there.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

I think early 50s.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

I just found it fascinating, how nice his studio is. The guy's got like an MSNBC-level setup. I actually had a great time with him, you know? It's bizarre because having him in that movie created so many problems for me, and when I interviewed him, I didn't necessarily portray him in the best light. We joked around a bit, but it wasn't an Alex Jones hit piece necessarily. But I like to think that I was a bit critical of him in the film, especially the ways that he antagonized his supporters to storm the Capitol or to follow that trajectory. He told me when I met with him, he was like, "I know you think that having me in this movie is a good idea, but you're going to have some serious backlash because of that." At the time, I was like, "Man, it's fine. It's all good. We're just hanging out, drinking whiskey, doing bench presses, drinking Jameson. It's all good." First of all, I had to campaign to get him in the film because the studios were like, "We don't..." There was a bizarre time around... I think it was 2018, where deplatforming was the big thing that people were encouraging. It said giving a platform to problematic ideologies will, in turn, expand their reach. And so even extending your platform to someone who's problematic is helping them, aka destroying humanity, whatever it was. So that was the whole thing. And when I did this media training that was mandated by HBO, it was all training in how to defend from that exact question. They said, "When we put you on NPR, when we put you on CNN, they're going to ask you about platforming problematic ideologies, and you're going to have to say stuff like, 'Sunlight is the best disinfectant. I believe that extremism only goes away when you shine a light on it because leaving it in the dark will only allow it to grow.'" They gave me like 15 pointers. I didn't use any of those pointers because I'm not the kind of person who wants to be media-trained. I like to speak freely. But in the promotional run for the film, when I went on CNN, this was a crazy experience. So I went on CNN and thankfully, my friend was with me, and so I'm on CNN, and-

Lex Fridman

By the way, your friend is chilling in sunglasses, laying in the cocktail.

Andrew Callaghan

That's Larry [inaudible 01:49:32].

Lex Fridman

It's a mix of the dude from Big Lebowski and the Brad Pitt role in True Romance, you know that reference?

Andrew Callaghan

No, I'm sure it describes Larry. He kind of looks like Brad Pitt.

Lex Fridman

[inaudible 01:49:49] Yes.

Andrew Callaghan

So HBO had a press tour set up for me, and the main ones were CNN and NPR. And so they said, "You're going to go on CNN on the Don Lemon morning show, and he's going to ask you about your life, what led up to the movie, what we can expect?" So I get in the studio, it's about seven o'clock in the morning in New York. Had a show the night before at Times Square. So I'm groggy eyed, whatever. They put the lab on me, boom. I'm live on CNN, Sunday morning. And he goes, "How would you describe Enrique Tarrio's mental state in the lead-up to the Capitol insurrection?" And I'm looking around, I'm like, "Is this guy serious? Am I sandwiched in the January 6th hit piece right now? I thought it was about me." And so I told him, "It's not about Enrique Tarrio. It's about how companies like Fox, MSNBC, and even your station, CNN, use the 24-hour news cycle to enrage people to generate ad revenue and pit Americans against each other during times like that." And he said, "There's nothing fake about CNN." I said, "I didn't say you were fake news. I'm not saying you're lying, but you're directly antagonizing and stirring people up against half the country because you need money to support a dying platform."

Lex Fridman

You said that?

Andrew Callaghan

Pretty much.

Lex Fridman

Nice. Great.

Andrew Callaghan

And my mom was watching it. She was texting me. She was like, "What are you doing?" And I was like, "I don't know." And so he goes, "Why did you extend the platform to Alex Jones?" I go, "I don't know. I just wanted to drink some Jameson and lift some weights with him." At this point, I don't support that kind of media. I don't support CNN, so I didn't give them much information about Alex, but it was very awkward. They never posted the segment online. When I got off of that interview, I had a handler that A24 assigned to me. So I had someone with me and you could tell she was flustered, she was furious about what I just did. And so she goes, "I just got an email from Time Warner C-Suite." And I go, "What's Time Warner C-Suite?" She says, "I don't know if you know this, but the same people who own CNN own HBO, and it's Time Warner." And so they canceled my press tour. So my press tour was finished. All the late night shows that I was supposed to go on, I was supposed to go on the late night shows, and that was off the table because they were worried that I was a loose cannon, I think. And then, the only remaining appearance I had left was NPR in Boston, and that was supposed to be a premiere. So it wasn't supposed to be an interrogation. It wasn't supposed to be anything like that. Supposed to be a premiere in front of a live audience where they watched the film and I show up after for a Q&A. So I'm like, "All right, whatever. It's weird, they only have this one press opportunity left." I felt bad that I ruined the entire press tour by confronting Don Lemon, but at this point, I wanted to just do this final one, especially because it was a viewing, and I was like, "Cool." I sat in the audience, I watched people laugh to the film. It was awesome. So I go backstage and there's an NPR journalist waiting for me. And nothing against people who wear masks, but she had two N95s on. Two N95s is-

Lex Fridman

It's a lot.

Andrew Callaghan

It's over the line. So I go, "Hey, great to meet you." She doesn't shake my hand and I go, "Why not?" And she goes, "You've been around some people who I don't want their germs." And I'm like, "Okay, okay, this is weird. I thought this is a fun premiere for my movie." We sit down. The first thing she asks me is, "How do you think the Sandy Hook families would feel about you platforming one of the most despicable Americans in history, Alex Jones?" In front of a live audience. NPR never published this. The only recordings of it are by a fan named Rob in Boston who put it on YouTube. It's vertical phone footage. And I literally am like, "Well, the Sandy Hook family's lawyer, Mark Bankston, who represented them in court in Connecticut, told me specifically that Leonard Posner, the father of Noah Posner who died at Sandy Hook, was a huge fan of the film." And so I said that to her and that just silenced that conversation, but the whole conversation was just about exploitation and, "Why are you platforming mentally ill people and giving a platform to conspiracies like QAnon? Don't you feel like you're a part of their spread? Some would call you a misinformation reporter," all this crazy stuff. And yeah, next day hit the fan.

Lex Fridman

Fuck all those people. That film, just in case you don't get a chance to see it, you should, you were critical of Alex Jones in the most artful way. It was the correct way to be critical. It showed him to be more interested in the grift of it. And you didn't do it in a pointing fingers and saying in the NPR way that you just mentioned, but more like a human way. This is, tragedies happen all over the world and there's grifters that roll in and then take advantage of it in interesting ways, and then human beings get swept up on either side of it, and it's revealing the humor, the absurdity of it all, and it was done masterfully. For people who criticize you for platforming Alex Jones or whatever, the film, from a political perspective, probably leans very much left, heavily left, but does it without that exhausting energy of judging, two masks judging?

Andrew Callaghan

When all that was happening, when I was under fire from the mainstream press for platforming Alex Jones, I thought back to what he said to me. And doesn't mean I agree with everything he says, but he told me, "You're going to be in trouble with these people if you put me in your video." And yeah, it wasn't too bad of trouble, but definitely, I do think sometimes what the film would've been like without him. And I think that it was worth it because his scene is so funny to me and it brings me back to a different time in my life and I'm happy that scene's out there.

Lex Fridman

I think it was really well done.

Andrew Callaghan

Thanks, man.

Lex Fridman

It showed the layering of it all, the entertainment plus not considering from his perspective the consequences of riling people up in this way, that it's not just... You really highlight this in the interview. He keeps saying it's infowars, but then there's always a sense that infowars can turn to actual civil war, but maybe not. Maybe it's all just a circus we play for each other.

Andrew Callaghan

If you look at the speech he did on January 5th, he said, "Tomorrow, millions of patriotic Americans will take our country back." He eggs people on and then when it gets hot, he steps away.

Lex Fridman

But like you said, the thing he told you, he turned out to be right.

Andrew Callaghan

Oh, yeah.

Lex Fridman

And the frogs are becoming gay.

Andrew Callaghan

They've always been gay.

Lex Fridman

Well-

Andrew Callaghan

Saying frogs are straight is even crazier.

Lex Fridman

I've read stories where you kiss one and becomes a prince.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, that shit's true.

Lex Fridman

100%. You think Alex believes what he says in terms of everything he says on infowars, how much of it is real?

Andrew Callaghan

He's right about big tech censorship. I think if he's right about anything, it would probably be the heads of big tech colluding together across company lines to deplatform certain people. He's right about that. I think most of the things that he says follow the question everything narrative, and then everything is like a conspiracy or a plot or a false flag. I think that he's built up a following for so long that wants him to do that. So I think he'll question things that he probably thinks are relatively straightforward because that's the shtick of the show. The infowar is fighting misinformation and people want to see him be that guy. To a certain extent, if you're a creator who supports your family, you do follow economic incentives and people want you to be the character, and so you're going to naturally gravitate toward being it.

Lex Fridman

Do you feel that pressure yourself?

Andrew Callaghan

I did years ago, not anymore. I feel like now I can speak freely and really say what I want to say in my new life, but when I was younger, I felt like I had to be this awkward, amicable, aloof guy who just didn't think anything about anything and just was here to listen. But now I feel more confident adding some narrative and voiceover and things like that.

Lex Fridman

So for some people, especially who publish on YouTube, the YouTube algorithm, they can become a slave to the YouTube algorithm.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, for sure. And I definitely feel that sometimes. I know what works for me, but I like to think that my audience appreciates when I try new things, so I'm not totally enslaved to it.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, I try not to pay attention to views or any of that.

Andrew Callaghan

Well, you get some high views, so I'll report that for you.

Lex Fridman

So I wrote a Chrome extension that hides all the views on anything I create.

Andrew Callaghan

So you took it to that level?

Lex Fridman

Yeah, just because it's a drug, man. And I'm also a number guy, meaning if I do 30 pushups today, tomorrow I'm going to try to do 35, just enjoying number go up. That's why I like video games like RPGs, where you're improving your skill tree, you're getting an extra point, and there's some aspect of YouTube and other platforms, anything, any other platform. You're like, "Ooh, I got more today than I got yesterday." That's really, really dangerous to me because it can influence how much I enjoy a thing. If nobody gives a shit about it based on the numbers, you're like, "Oh, maybe that wasn't such a great experience. I thought it was a great experience, but maybe it wasn't."

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, honestly, I do actually feel that way sometimes. I'll put out something that I care about a lot, but if it doesn't get as many views, I'm like, "All right, it must have not been as good as my higher review videos or whatever."

Lex Fridman

That's just not true though. It might mean on YouTube that your thumbnail sucks or something like this, or whatever, however the algorithm works. But that's the thing I'm battling against to make sure I ignore all of that.

Andrew Callaghan

Right.

Lex Fridman

It's actually something Joe Rogan has been extremely good at. He gives zero shits.

Andrew Callaghan

I think it's easier to do when you're really successful.

Lex Fridman

Well, he was doing that when he wasn't successful.

Andrew Callaghan

Really?

Lex Fridman

But anything. He just follows the stuff he enjoys doing and legitimately enjoys it. He happens to be really good at it, but he gets good because he's doing the things he really enjoys and full-on passionate about, and that's why he'll have ridiculous guests and just shit he enjoys doing.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, that's pretty cool. Maybe I'll one day try to do that. For now, I'm too attached to the gratification of getting a million views in a day and stuff like that. I'm not going to lie to you and say that I've beat that or something.

Lex Fridman

Well, it's a worthy enemy to be fighting because it's a drug and it's one that should be resisted for a creator. Because I feel like it can do negative stuff to your mind as a creator.

Andrew Callaghan

Oh yeah, for sure.

Lex Fridman

Anybody that controls you is not good.

Andrew Callaghan

A lot of people are controlled by their audience. They don't have to have a puppet master on a corporate level. Audience incentive is a different type of... I don't want to say slavery, but-

Lex Fridman

Yeah, it is. And that's why variety is good, and you're doing that, always expanding. Well, let me just zoom out on this. You made a film.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

That's pretty cool.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, it was a great experience, man. It was awesome working with Tim and Eric. Awesome working with Jonah Hill. I feel the same about HBO and A24. Everybody that I worked on the film with, I have a lot of love for and I appreciate the experience. It's my first movie. It's a big deal.

Lex Fridman

It was a good one.

Andrew Callaghan

In my head, it's like I finally got to make the transition from YouTuber to filmmaker, and that was always this psychic barrier that I felt like I had to jump over.

Lex Fridman

Just the way it's shot, the humor that goes throughout it, just the narration that you're doing in a shitty director's chair, that was really well done. Whose idea was that?

Andrew Callaghan

It was actually Tim and Eric's idea. There was a really great editor named Clay who works for Absolutely, and they did all the editing pretty much in the office. And so it was Clay's idea to add a retrospective director's chair narrative arc to the whole film.

Lex Fridman

Just starting with the absurd fight and then going like, "Oh, that's a good way to start the movie." Just really, really well done.

Andrew Callaghan

Thanks, man.

Lex Fridman

Well, what about Jonah Hill?

Andrew Callaghan

Great guy.

Lex Fridman

He believed in this.

Andrew Callaghan

He did.

Lex Fridman

What's that like? What do you think is behind him believing in such a wild project?

Andrew Callaghan

I think that Jonah Hill has a good eye for what's cool amongst the younger folks. He's into skateboarding stuff. That's why he did that film, Mid90s. I think he probably saw a similar thing in what was going on with All Gas No Breaks and was like, "Shit, this could be big." And so not only did he actually fund the film, he also gave me his agent. And I forgot to mention that it was Jonah Hill's lawyers that he gave me for free that got me out of my contract eventually with Doing Things Media or freed me up to speak about what happened.

Lex Fridman

So he was also part of you gaining your freedom?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, in a weird way, even though him and I don't talk that much just because he's doing his own thing, Jonah Hill is a huge factor in my current success and just everything that I've been able to accomplish.

Lex Fridman

Just on your own politics, is it fair to say that your politics leans left?

Andrew Callaghan

I'm not really sure sometimes. I like to think that I am socially left. I think people should be able to dress and act however they want. I don't believe in restricting people's social freedoms. Economics-wise, it doesn't seem like leftist economic policy works very well on a city funding level. Like if you see what's going on in California, it seems like the city leadership is mishandling the funds in California too. So I don't know about that, but... I don't know. I don't really see myself as left or right. I just never have.

Lex Fridman

Well, if you just objectively zoom out and don't have an insane standard of the extremes, it feels like a lot of your work leans left.

Andrew Callaghan

I tend to lean toward the empathetic perspective, which I do think is more on the left than the right. But also, I'm not into super PC stuff. I don't believe in limiting free speech either. I believe in a free internet, which I think is more embraced now by conservatives.

Lex Fridman

But it does seem that... Maybe you can correct me, but I get a sense sometimes that the left attack their own very intensely.

Andrew Callaghan

It does happen, but every community has terms of exile. Think about what happens in the conservative realm, like when Black Rifle Coffee Company denounced Kyle Rittenhouse. They lost a lot of money, too. The right attacks its own, too. Think about Bud Light and stuff like that.

Lex Fridman

[inaudible 02:05:01].

Andrew Callaghan

Every community has terms of exile. You just got to know who you're engaging with and you got to make that decision carefully.

Lex Fridman

It'd be nice if there's an actual write-up of the things you're not allowed to say for each thing. And then, I wonder whose list would be longer? It just does feel like the left's list is a little longer.

Andrew Callaghan

Right. If you're a conservative and you have a T-shirt with a demon on it, say goodbye. You know what I mean? There's certain stuff that they freak the hell out about.

Lex Fridman

And conservatives are really concerned about pedophiles.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, I don't like pedophiles either, but I don't think about it all the time.

Lex Fridman

It's one of the things you do in the film is confront one of the QAnon folks, where his concern is that everybody's a pedophile and you showed to him-

Andrew Callaghan

Well, he calls himself a pedophile hunter and makes videos exposing Democratic elite pedophile cabals, and he's himself a convicted child molester. There's an old thing that people say that every accusation is a confession to a certain extent. So it's bizarre that some people's whole life after a big mistake will revolve around trying to seem like the good guy instead of taking accountability for themselves. It's a common thing you see all the time. Like Neighborhood Watch people, you know what I mean? What made you that? What did you do, bro? That you feel like you have to get karmic retribution by doing the reverse? I don't get it.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. Do you think to the degree you have bias, it affects your journalism?

Andrew Callaghan

No, but with the migrant situation, I don't know.

Lex Fridman

What was that covering that like?

Andrew Callaghan

I just got a lot of hate from conservatives for letting the migrants tell their stories about their journey and stuff.

Lex Fridman

What did you learn from just going to the border?

Andrew Callaghan

just the sheer desperation that the citizens of the world are in. There's people who truly believe that America is the only hope for their success and to feed their family, and I think a lot of them are getting catfished.

Lex Fridman

Meaning America has its problems too?

Andrew Callaghan

It has severe problems. There's extreme poverty here.

Lex Fridman

But in America, if you just compare to other nations, the level of corruption is much lower to where the opportunity for a person to succeed, to rise is higher.

Andrew Callaghan

I wish success on everybody who comes here, but my thing is the expectation that they have and the American dream propaganda they've been installed with isn't necessarily a reflection of contemporary American reality. So I'm talking to people who speak no English and say, "I'm here for a better life." I go, "Where are you going to go?" They say, "I have no idea." And I'm like, "Man, that's tough." And you almost think, how bad are things elsewhere for someone to abandon their family, make this journey across multiple continents and end up here with no plan? And it just made me realize how sheltered I am to a certain extent as an American. And walking back what I said a little bit, because I was just trying to make a point, but what I think of as bad poverty, let's say West Baltimore or 9th Ward, New Orleans is nothing compared to what's going on in almost half of the world, if not more. And so it just made me zoom out a little bit, and sometimes you forget about third world poverty when you live here for so long. And you get programmed to believe the worst things that are out there is like Kensington, Philadelphia or Tenderloin, San Francisco, but those are just microcosms of more or less functioning cities. Despite what they might lead you to believe, Philadelphia is a great place. So is San Francisco, but there's places where everywhere is really run down.

Lex Fridman

People focus on in major cities in the United States, like homelessness, somehow that's a sign of a fallen empire.

Andrew Callaghan

Right.

Lex Fridman

But that's a problem. It reveals some mismanagement of cities and government [inaudible 02:08:55].

Andrew Callaghan

Homelessness in Seattle and San Francisco is for sure a result of the housing crisis, especially post- COVID and all the gentrification that preceded it. And it's unfortunate now that the conservative media is saying, "Look at Biden's America," as if Biden created homeless people. And it's just disappointing because once again, you're seeing the media use real issues that should concern every US citizen and causing people to point fingers at a different political party as responsible for the suffering of others.

Lex Fridman

Do you think January 6th can happen again?

Andrew Callaghan

No. I don't think so.

Lex Fridman

So all the lessons were learned?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, for sure. People got really screwed over.

Lex Fridman

Don't you have a sense that there's a greater and greater growing questioning of the electoral process and all this kind of stuff?

Andrew Callaghan

I think that Americans overall are very comfortable with our standard of living. I think people like going to Sonic and waiting in their car and getting milkshakes, and people like going to the AMC theaters and they like going ice skating and mini golfing and going to the bar after work. I don't think that anyone wants a collapse of the basic structure of the country. Even the most politically divided don't want to see 7-Eleven go away. We are so comfortable. If you look at other countries, even Europe, look at how they protest. And look at the Arab Spring. Those guys were talking like January 6ers, and they actually took control of the government. Think about even if the MAGA crowd took over the Capitol building, it's just a building. I don't know. I just think that Americans, they talk about civil war stuff, we're so far from that. Even if the rhetoric is as divided as it was in 2020, it won't happen again.

Lex Fridman

For it to really happen, there has to be a level of desperation.

Andrew Callaghan

There has to be a level of economic desperation that's causing people to starve or some basic resource going away, water, something like that.

Lex Fridman

Who do you think wins, Trump or Biden?

Andrew Callaghan

In the civil war? Well, we know who has the guns.

Lex Fridman

No, in a game of Mario Kart? No, in the election 2024.

Andrew Callaghan

Oh. Man, I have no idea, man. I don't even know if I'm going to vote.

Lex Fridman

It's weird that this is our choice.

Andrew Callaghan

I know. I wish people were more focused on city politics. I'd rather vote yes or no for a bike lane in my neighborhood than I would for the president.

Lex Fridman

So local politics to you is where it is. And you feel [inaudible 02:11:26].

Andrew Callaghan

Oh, your vote actually matters. Let's say you have a community of 500 people and you live in Henderson, Nevada. You can influence whether or not there's a bike lane or if this is going to be a playground or an AMPM. You get to choose and you can influence 100 people to choose and boom, this is your community. You can't influence the result of an election.

Lex Fridman

Still, those at the presidential level, it sets the tone of the country. And Trump running again and Biden running again, it just feels like there's going to be a lot of questioning of election results.

Andrew Callaghan

I just can't believe those are our guys.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

That's really our guys? That's where we're at? All these smart people we have in this country, the great history.

Lex Fridman

We got Joker Gang versus Gum Gang. Where'd you find Joker Gang?

Andrew Callaghan

Well-

Lex Fridman

Is he a legit juggler or is he just-

Andrew Callaghan

No, no, no, no. Joker Gang is like a Miami Cuban guy.

Lex Fridman

Oh.

Andrew Callaghan

Is Joker 305 rawest Chico alive? I had been following him for a long time on Instagram because he used to post videos of himself popping Percocets and smoking blunts on the toilet freestyling. So I had followed him for a while. And then I finally got this platform and I said, "Oh my God, I bet you now that we have a million followers, Joker Gang will sit down with us." And lo and behold, the clout did its thing and there I was, face to face with the man.

Lex Fridman

There was a controversy a year ago where a woman came forward and said that you were pushy with her. You respected to know, you got the consent, but you were pushy about it. Looking back, can you tell the story of that? What are the lessons you learned from it?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, I've yet to speak on this for a lot of reasons. Mostly because it was a hard time and it's a sensitive subject. And I've wanted to prioritize the reporting, but I think that now I'm ready and able to do so. Everything started on December 30th, 2022, and that was the release date of the HBO project. Like I told you, we didn't know when the movie was going to come out. We weren't told that it was going to come out on that date until early November. And so it was like, "Oh my God, here we go. We got a movie coming out." I didn't even know it was going to be them. So every day for those 50 days to where I received word and to the movie announcement or to the movie release was like, I was like a kid waiting for Christmas morning. You know what I mean? Every day I saw the movie release date as the first day of the rest of my life. And so I remember the week of the movie release, it was like every day I was like, "Oh my God. Six days, five days, four days." And when it became two days, I was so excited and so, honestly, anxiety riddled because it was such a massive platform that I went out to the desert by myself out in the Mojave, got a hotel and just sat there. And then, movie release day comes. It was supposed to come out at 8:00 PM Pacific standard time. I remember it was like 12 hours left, 10 hours left. And then, eight minutes before the movie at 7:52, or I guess it was sent at 10:52 East Coast time, I got a text message requesting a portion of my fat HBO check to contribute toward apparently years of therapy bills that this person had accrued after she says that she felt that I pressured her into giving consent years prior. And I was confused, not only because of the timing, but because this is someone that I hadn't seen in years or spoken to in years and I presumed that I was on good

terms with. So I didn't respond to the text message. And then, when I didn't respond, about seven days later, this person made some TikTok videos and with the help of some friends launched an online campaign that got picked up by the press pretty quickly.

Lex Fridman

So what did you feel like when you got that text?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, it's tough because on one hand, I'm not opposed to restitution being part of a private accountability process for real abuse. If you've hurt someone to an extent that it took them out of work or something, I think they're entitled to some money. But unfortunately, as I later learned, this person had legal counsel, and this was an attempt to basically create evidence by extracting a confession from me to use as precedent for a civil lawsuit to the tune of a couple of million dollars.

Lex Fridman

It's dark.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

How did you meet this person?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, I met them when I was 22. Like I told you, I was living in an RV, making this show called All Gas No Breaks. And I would travel between cities every other day. And so I would basically pick a new city, and I got in this pretty bad habit of what I would say is essentially treating Instagram like a dating app. I would go to a new place, I'd post my location, I'd surf the DMs, and I would look for fans to meet up with. It wasn't always girls, it was just people to party with because I was also partying every night, but a lot of times ended up being girls and stuff. And so that's how this situation was. I didn't have sex with this person, had a consensual encounter that they reached out to me about two weeks after saying, "Hey, I don't want you to take this the wrong way." But looking back, I felt a lot more pressure to agree than I realized in the moment. "I don't think this is any fault of yours. I just think that you came on a bit too strong and I didn't want to let you down. So I gave in," and that language made me feel horrible, mainly because if this person had told me, "Hey, I don't want to hook up," I would've said, "Yeah, of course not. I don't want to hook up with someone who doesn't want to hook up with me." And I think that as fame increased during that time, I think I was just oblivious to how people were seeing me, especially those who had a digital relationship with me prior to me knowing them. And I don't think that I handled that the right way.

Lex Fridman

Well, thank you for taking accountability, but just to clarify, you got consent?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, I was the initiatory party in an interaction with a fan who felt it she had to say yes because of... I'm not sure why. I don't know why, but like I said, this person also disclosed to me they had a history of childhood trauma and were actively being treated for PTSD and that they felt things moved too fast for them given their situation. And so I told her, I said, "Hey, if you want to reach out, if you want to talk on the phone, I'm always here for you. I'm sorry to hear that. Let me know if we can talk further." About six months after that, I was at Sturgis Bike Week, and I remember this day, this was the hardest day. I was just chilling and I got a text from my friend and it said, "Hey, man, you're getting canceled right now." I was like, "What do you mean? Did someone find an old tweet or something? What are you talking about?" I opened my phone and it was this Instagram story of me. It was like the ugliest picture of me you can find. It was like my face open. It was screenshotted, and it said... I remember this specifically because I just couldn't believe it. It said, "The ugly loser who hosts All Gas No Breaks is a piece of shit. He knowingly abused my friend and got away with it. If you follow him, I'm going to message you and ask you why?" So this person who I don't know, I didn't even know who the accusation was coming from, they emailed every production company that I was working with, DM'd hundreds, if not thousands of people, just saying that I was this piece of shit. And I didn't even know who this person was. So I was frantically calling and texting every person that I'd seen intimately for the past year and being like, "Hey, are we on good terms? Is everything okay?" And then, I figured out that the person was coming from Florida, and I knew who it was. And so, thankfully, I reached out to the original person who I had the communication with, and I said, "Hey, I think this might've been you. This might've been your friend who posted this. Are we good? I'm sorry." I apologized again. I was like, "Listen, I feel bad that you feel this way. I want to do anything that I can to help you. Again, I apologize." And she said, "Apology accepted. I'm sorry. My friend asked if she could post on my behalf, and I'm sorry. I was going through a lot mentally, and I saw your fame increasing. And so I agreed to let her speak on my behalf," and we made amends in private. I said, "Okay, I'm here for you. Let me know." And she said, "Apology is enough. Thank you for taking the time to speak with me." And that was two years prior to this... .. "Thank you for taking the time to speak with me." And that was two years prior to this text message being sent to my phone eight minutes before the movie. So naturally, I wanted to go on my platforms and talk about what was happening, but I also didn't want to mess up the rollout of the movie. And so the PR firm was like, "We got this, we'll handle this for you." And that was, I guess by way of a TMZ thing that said, "Andrew Callaghan is devastated." I'm not sure why they thought that that was going to make people be in my favor, but it was just a picture of me on NBC that said, "Andrew Callaghan devastated by allegations." That that was their plan, I guess, to show that I was remorseful or something.

Lex Fridman

How much of this do you think lawyers pushing this when money and fame are involved?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, I wish I could say the lawyer, but I just can't, that was involved in this. But I will tell you that I try to lean away from resentment and toward accountability completely. What was my role in the situation? How can I never make someone feel like that again? What can I do? What changes can I make to make sure that, one, I never treat someone this way, and two, to never be in that position again?

Lex Fridman

Well, again, thank you for taking accountability.

Andrew Callaghan

And the main reason I talk about that is because it wasn't just that person. There was multiple people who made videos reporting similar behavior. And so it's obvious that that was a pattern of behavior of mine. And so I made the apology video to announce that I was taking some time away because I just needed time away. My entire support system collapsed. My friends at the time disappeared. I was getting obituaries texted to my phone that were like, "Hey, it's been nice knowing you. It was great to see you grow. Good luck," like I was dead. And yeah, got dropped from my agency. No one gave me tough love. No one called me to ask me if I was all right. It was just only... Everyone disappeared in a week.

Lex Fridman

Again, thank you for taking accountability, but I just hate how many cowards there are out there. When people hit low points is when you should help, when you should stand with them if you know their character.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. And it was hard to separate the initial situation that I knew was more or less a setup and the possibly genuine other accounts. And so it was like, "All right, you know what? At this point in my life, I want to be on the right side of history. I don't want to be the anti-cancel culture mouthpiece. I don't have the mental strength to fight this," especially because I was envisioning the HBO drop to be this, the world opens up to me moment and it was just the reverse, but it wasn't so much the media reporting on it that hurt me. It was just little stuff like a childhood friend that you love, seeing they unfollowed you on Instagram, or just seeing someone on the street that you grew up with and waving at them and they don't do anything back and you're just like, "Oh my God, man. This is my new life," but what are you supposed to do? Thankfully, somehow, two weeks after, I met an amazing partner who I'm still with to this day, and I was able to conquer my two biggest fears, which is monogamy and dogs. I was terrified of dogs and terrified of having a girlfriend. Now I have a girlfriend who I love and two dogs.

Lex Fridman

What was the lowest point?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, right after this happened, I entered recovery programs. Started with AA, but then I found a more specialized program that dealt with the issues that I was dealing with. I'd say the hardest point was logically deducing that the lives of my loved ones would be better off if I was gone, you know what I mean? And thinking that my mom and my friends, that their life would be better if I took myself out of the picture. And for one, I just figured their friends canceled. "Her son is a disgrace." My family's going to think they raised me wrong, and my friends, I'm a social pariah now I'm a burden. I'm better off dead. And the hard part was I would read stories and books written by parents who lost their kids to suicide, and they reported feeling a lot of anger after the suicide. So I tried to think of what's the way I can do it to get the least amount of anger on behalf of the people who would grieve? Because the hanging, someone will discover you. So I figured drinking myself to death would be the way to do it, and I wasn't able to. Yeah, that was just a dark place. I remember hating the people who loved me because I knew they would grieve, and that made me mad, if that makes sense. I was ready to go. I had no will to live. But their grief was like... I didn't want to cause that because I didn't want to hurt them. So I was like, I hated the people who loved me because they were stopping me from taking my own life. And it's weird to think that when I was going through that, if you walk by me in the street, I look like a normal guy. And so now when I walk around and I see people, I think to myself, "You have no idea what that person is going through." It's crazy that so many people are suffering in complete silence and they don't wear it on them.

Lex Fridman

Many of the people you talk to are probably that.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

Many people you've interviewed before, all this and after are probably going through some shit.

Andrew Callaghan

I also thought if I could write down what I just told you on a piece of paper and I was to do it, and then they found the note, they would take it more seriously because they would know that I wasn't lying.

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

But then you know if you do it, it reduces the lifespan of your parents by 15 years. So I looked at it like I was taking time away from them.

Lex Fridman

Well, thank you, for the most part, leaning towards accountability. That's the right path to take. What advice would you give to young men that look up to you on how they can be good men, especially in regard to women?

Andrew Callaghan

If you have any kind of platform, it doesn't have to be famous on Instagram. It could be like if you're a pillar of your community in the culinary world or whatever it is, just be hyper aware of that and remember that you are inheriting a power dynamic that can create situations where there might be some pressure that you don't even realize is there, but it's definitely there and you just have to be aware of that. And two, when meeting new partners, having hookups and stuff like that, just try to have a trauma-informed conversation about their past. Really know the experiences and the backstory of what a new partner has gone through in that world of intimacy. Whatever they're comfortable to share, obviously. But I would advise against one-night-stands. I would advise against hooking up with someone that you're meeting for the first time. Have those conversations prior because even though it might sound like a vibe killer, it's not. And if you think that that conversation is a vibe killer, you probably shouldn't be in that situation in the first place, especially now, how hyper sexualized things are and how common that type of violence is. You need to be able to have those conversations and stop and say, "Hey, tell me a little bit about your past? Is there any triggers that make you uncomfortable? Let me know how I can be the best partner to you." And I'm sure that college-age people are not having those conversations, but I'm sure that it would go a long way.

Lex Fridman

So especially when you're young, college-aged, you don't have enough experience to be able to read a person without having that conversation because a lot of times you can see the trauma without explicitly talking about it, but that takes experience and knowledge and seeing the world. When you're young and you really don't know shit, making things a bit more explicit is probably better.

Andrew Callaghan

And also, as men, were trained to believe that it's our duty to be the initiatory party in any type of sexual encounter. Like, oh, man chases woman. You know what I mean? You have to be the one to make the move, or she's playing hard to get if she's resistant to your first compliment or something. I think that that's not always how it has to be. And that extra caution needs to be placed if you're taking the initiatory role in an interaction, especially if someone has a traumatic background. They might agree to do something with you because

they're scared and you might not realize that's what's going on because you don't see yourself as a predatory person, you don't see yourself as someone who would ever consciously make someone uncomfortable or cross a boundary, but people have histories that you might not understand. And for me, as someone who doesn't have much, honestly, childhood trauma or anything like that, it's been an interesting year for me working in therapy and elsewhere, understanding how that affects the mind. And also, I understand that hurt people, hurt people, and that someone with a traumatic background isn't going to have sympathy for applying that traumatic pain to someone else, even if that person isn't the cause of what put them in that spot.

Lex Fridman

If we can go back to Channel 5, can you tell the origin story of that?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. Channel 5, during the All Gas No Breaks days, we used to tell people that we were called Channel 5 if we wanted them to stop antagonizing us while we were filming, because every town has a Channel 5. So when people were like, "What's this for?" If they were being super rude and trying to get in the camera and be hell of obnoxious, we would just say, "Oh, we're Channel 5." And they would be like, "Oh, my grandma's going to see that," and they would leave us alone. So Channel 5 was a diversion tactic during All Gas No Breaks. And it just so happened that we were in Miami Beach one time and this kid came up drinking liquor, trying to yell about whatever they yell about in Miami Beach, like titties or whatever, and we're like, "Bro, this is Channel 5. Be careful what you say." And he was like, "For real?" And he just walked off. And I said to my friend at the time, I was like, "That sounded pretty good, right? Channel 5." And he goes, "That does sound pretty good." He's like, "That's got to be trademarked though." No, it's not trademarked. It's crazy, right? There's a Channel 5 in every city, Channel 5 KTLA, Channel 5 Seattle, Como News, dude, Channel 5 itself, we own it, because no one's thought of something that simple, because you'd think you'd have to specify. We own channel5.com, channel5.news. Dude, we own it. It's awesome.

Lex Fridman

So it was the same kind of spirit as the previous thing.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

What was the first one you did under the Channel 5 flag?

Andrew Callaghan

Miami Beach Spring Break.

Lex Fridman

I think I've seen that and it's going to be a callback. I think somebody mentioning eating ass there too.

Andrew Callaghan

That would be the place.

Lex Fridman

I believe that was-

Andrew Callaghan

There's only about five places in the US where people yell about eating ass all the time, Bourbon Street, South Beach Miami, 6th Street in Austin, Broadway in Nashville. And I'm just going to go ahead and say Times Square, you might not think it, but-

Lex Fridman

Times Square, really?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, they yell about ass there.

Lex Fridman

Times Square.

Andrew Callaghan

I would say Beale Street in Memphis, but it's not good.

Lex Fridman

Oh, yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

The median age is too high on Beale Street for anyone to yell about ass.

Lex Fridman

Oh, this is a fascinating portrait of America, through that specific lens. So Miami Beach. And then how would you describe your style of interviewing, just now that you've collected so many? If you had a style, how would you describe your style?

Andrew Callaghan

I guess before especially, it used to be like deadpan. Now I would describe it as more directed, but still relatively affable, agreeable, deadpan interview style.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, like in the face of absurdity, you're just there with a microphone. There's a comic aspect to it, and that's intentional.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, I used to look at the camera like Jim from the office back in the day. I don't do that anymore.

Lex Fridman

What about the editing? How do you think about the editing?

Andrew Callaghan

I still do most of it, but Susan helps a lot too. It's my associate. Yeah, the editing style, like I said, we pioneered this editing style that honestly was inspired a bit by Vic Berger, but we took it to real life, crash zooms, chopping up vocals a bit to add comedic timing where it didn't necessarily exist. You might add two seconds of awkward silence that are built with room tone, or you might make everything really fast by cutting silence and switching camera angles. But now, we try to be pretty straightforward because we want to be taken more seriously.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, sure. What's crash Zoom, by the way?

Andrew Callaghan

A crash zoom is when it's artificial zoom that you might add in Adobe Premiere where the camera zooms in on someone's face.

Lex Fridman

Where the resolution is not there?

Andrew Callaghan

The resolution is not there, unless you have a Blackmagic Cinema Camera.

Lex Fridman

Which you don't.

Andrew Callaghan

We don't use those. The file size is too big.

Lex Fridman

That's the only constraint?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

Okay.

Andrew Callaghan

100%.

Lex Fridman

All right. And you also do voiceover storytelling.

Andrew Callaghan

I think the first time I really did that was in the San Francisco Streets video because there's so much content about San Francisco homelessness, tenderloin shoplifting, but there's not that much context in those videos about the history of San Francisco, the housing crisis, NIMBYism, random zoning stuff that sounds boring, but has a major role in the current situation on the streets there as to why the tenderloin is neglected by police and by the City Council and the other neighborhoods like Knob Hill and North Beach was so nice. So I added that purposely to the San Francisco video. And then also, to the Philadelphia Streets video to accentuate the reporting and add some historical analysis.

Lex Fridman

What's your goal with some of these videos, like the Philadelphia Streets one? Is it to reveal the full spectrum of humanity, or is it also tell a story that's almost political about the state?

Andrew Callaghan

Number one is always humanization. That's the primary goal, is to take people in circumstances where they're often news items and remind the public that these are people with lives and concerns and dreams just like you. But secondly, we also want to start introducing more solution-oriented journalism. So not just, "Oh my God, I'm becoming aware of how horrible this is," but what can you actually do to help? And as you could see with the Vegas Tunnels video, people are responding pretty positively to it like here's how you can maybe help a homeless neighbor, help get them an ID, help them qualify for housing or get a job at the scrap yard. There's always ways to help, but so much of the YouTube world is over-saturated by just endless videos of people suffering, and the comments are always like, "Wow, so horrible." But what does that really do for somebody?

Lex Fridman

You've interviewed many rappers.

Andrew Callaghan

Yes.

Lex Fridman

Educate me?

Andrew Callaghan

There's a lot to it.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. Can you explain this drill rap situation? What is drill rap?

Andrew Callaghan

It's an evolving situation. Drill began in 2010. Some people say it was Chief Keef in Chicago. I think it was King Louie in Chicago, but I think all of it was very influenced by Waka Flocka Flame who dropped an album called Flockaveli in 2010 that was hyper violent, adrenaline-boosting, rap music made by people who were actually in the streets. So in the 90s, you had 50 Cent, you had rappers rapping about whatever, gangster shit, selling crack and beating people up, but they weren't actually doing it. Drill has a true crime component to where drill fans want to know that the person rapping about catching bodies does in fact kill people. So drill, it's pretty horrifying. It sounds great, but it started in Chicago, then it spread to England, and now it's bounced back to New York, the Bronx and Brooklyn specifically, and spread from New York to the rest of the country. So now there's probably a drill rapper every 10 square miles.

Lex Fridman

So as opposed to pretending to be a gangster and killing people, you get some credibility by actually doing it?

Andrew Callaghan

Yes. And the fans are typically not in the communities that are affected by poverty, so they're like superheroes to white kids.

Lex Fridman

It's dark.

Andrew Callaghan

And not just white kids, but just anyone who's not in the hood. It's not necessarily a race thing. There's white drill rappers too. Slim Jesus was a big one. He's out of the picture now, but there's white drill rappers.

Lex Fridman

Slim Jesus. You made a video on O Block.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

What is O Block? The place, the culture, the people [inaudible 02:37:22]?

Andrew Callaghan

O Block is a housing project in South Chicago in the Englewood area where Michelle Obama grew up. It's also where Chief Keef was born and raised. I don't know if he was born there, but he was raised there and he is the forefather of modern drill music as we know it. So these are the projects where drill began. It's also the first place where you have that intersection of drill music and true crime because O Block has a lot of rappers, and then nearby is an area called St. Lawrence, aka Tookaville, which has a lot of rappers as well. And so these two rival drill gangs basically have a lot of history and it connects to music at large.

Lex Fridman

So you've interviewed people there. Was there any concern for your safety?

Andrew Callaghan

No. I think that O Block has calmed down a lot. For one, it has security, so you can't even really get in and out. But two, I think that O Block's trying to rebrand itself a lot. It could be because Lil Durk's avoiding a RICO charge, could be for a variety of reasons. I know you don't know exactly what that means, but-

Lex Fridman

Lil Durk or RICO charge?

Andrew Callaghan

Rapper Lil Durk is affiliated with O Block, and a lot of people have been murdered and retribution for killings that Lil Durk may or may not have influenced the ordering of. But anyways-

Lex Fridman

And Lil Durk documented the killings via rap music probably.

Andrew Callaghan

Okay. I know you don't know about drill, but Lil Durk was associated with a rapper named King Von, and King Von perhaps paid for the assassination of a rapper named FBG Duck, who got killed in Chicago's Gold Coast neighborhood. It's possible. The O-Block 6 are

drill-associated, not rappers, but just shooters, and they, perhaps operating on King Von's behalf, went and killed FBG Duck. King Von was Lil Durk's artist. King Von's now dead. So there's definitely a concern that some of the Fed charges will fall on Durk. I'm not sure if that's true, but it's rumors in the hip-hop community. So O Block right now, and when I filmed the video, is trying to go through a major image rehab. If you go on any Instagram of anyone in O Block, they've all converted to Islam. And so they post pictures of themselves praying in the morning and have captions like, "Put the guns down, let's pray." So I think when I went there, they saw it as a good opportunity to do a positive rebrand. And so I interviewed a rapper named Boss Top, who was there all the way back in 2011 when Chief Keef was coming up. And so he basically ensured my safe protection, but he didn't even need to. They're all very friendly and they know exactly what's up with YouTube stuff.

Lex Fridman

I like how 2011 is the old days, like the ancient-

Andrew Callaghan

Oh yeah.

Lex Fridman

The founding fathers.

Andrew Callaghan

I was in eighth grade.

Lex Fridman

Oh, man. Time flies when you're having fun.

Andrew Callaghan

It sure does.

Lex Fridman

Lil Durk. Where's Lil Durk now?

Andrew Callaghan

Atlanta.

Lex Fridman

So he left Chicago, not safe.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, every rapper has to leave their hometown. It's what I did.

Lex Fridman

It's a journey.

Andrew Callaghan

Seattle would've taken me out, bro.

Lex Fridman

You do interview a lot of people. That's a top comment, but it speaks to the reality of the fact that you always find somebody rapping or you create the space for people to rap. What's that about?

Andrew Callaghan

I don't know, man.

Lex Fridman

Well, they're usually really good.

Andrew Callaghan

You think so?

Lex Fridman

I appreciate it.

Andrew Callaghan

Well, hell yeah, man. Rappers-

Lex Fridman

In their own way.

Andrew Callaghan

Since I touched a microphone, rappers have gravitated toward me. I think there's something happening.

Lex Fridman

You're a rapper whisperer?

Andrew Callaghan

I think there's something happening on a deeper cosmic spiritual level that lets the mind of rappers know that they have a safe place in front of our camera crew.

Lex Fridman

You have an interview with Crip Mac?

Andrew Callaghan

I do. Free Crip Mac. He's in VO right now.

Lex Fridman

Oh, he is?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah. Is that a hashtag?

Lex Fridman

Yeah, for sure.

Andrew Callaghan

That's an intense interview. People should go watch it. People should go watch all your interviews, but that one is pretty intense.

Lex Fridman

Thanks.

Andrew Callaghan

I was a little afraid for your life. Oh, Crip Mac's the safest guy in the world.

Lex Fridman

He's a sweetheart?

Andrew Callaghan

Oh, definitely dude.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, thought it was fun.

Andrew Callaghan

I feel more safer on Crip Mac than I do with any given pedestrian.

Lex Fridman

Yeah, he was loud and flavorful.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

I should say. So who's he? What's his story?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, his name's Trevor. He grew up in Ontario, California in the Inland empire, moved to Texas with his mom after his dad left. His mom started dating a cop from Houston named Mr. Gary. His mom found Mr. Gary getting anally penetrated by a co-worker, and so she booked Crip Mac a one-way Greyhound ticket to LA where he joined the Crips.

Lex Fridman

That's a good story. [inaudible 02:42:14].

Andrew Callaghan

It's true. Oh, you jumped right to Mr. Gary. Yeah. Of course. [inaudible 02:42:25]. I'm just saying that he's a classic case of somebody without a father figure who found camaraderie and sense of belonging and purpose in a street gang, which in LA is like a rule of law in most of the city.

Lex Fridman

We were, I forget in what context earlier, talking about martial arts and fighting and he's got to work on his punching form.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, I think so. He gets into a lot of fights in jail though, and from what I've heard, he wins-

Lex Fridman

He does that?

Andrew Callaghan

About half of them. So it's good.

Lex Fridman

What did he go to jail for now?

Andrew Callaghan

Firearm possession. It was a probation violation.

Lex Fridman

Oh.

Andrew Callaghan

It's too bad.

Lex Fridman

All right. So Philly, you went to the border, Occupy Seattle protests. You went to Ukraine.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

What are some interesting things that stand out to you from memory? Just as I asked the question, some interesting-

Andrew Callaghan

I was in jail at the border for a while. That was horrible.

Lex Fridman

What was that like? Was that your first time?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah, well, I didn't know that I couldn't hop my own border as an American. I'm thinking, "This is my country. I can get in any way that I want." Wrong. You can only enter the US through an official port of entry, which I learned the hard way because I got arrested by border patrol and held as a detainee at a Migrant Center for a few days.

Lex Fridman

What was that like?

Andrew Callaghan

Horrible.

Lex Fridman

Which aspect?

Andrew Callaghan

Well, I don't know. It was just to be in a place like that, and I probably sound like such a wimp right now because I know someone's watching this who's done some hard time, but we thought we were going to do at least six months in jail because the guards freaked us out and were like, "You're being charged with a federal crime. You know what you boys did is serious. We're waiting on word from San Antonio about whether or not we're going to extradite you." So we're just sitting in these cells alone, most of the time in solitary, with no pillows.

Lex Fridman

No pillows.

Andrew Callaghan

No pillows, no mat, nothing. Just a space blanket, and I was sleeping on my shoes, stinking up the place. It was no good.

Lex Fridman

You mentioned the UFO Convention.

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

What have you learned from those guys, the UFOlogists?

Andrew Callaghan

I really want to know what you think about that. That's the one question that I want to reverse on you because you've talked to so many people. Do you think that aliens have actually visited earth?

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

When?

Lex Fridman

Exact dates? I think there's alien civilizations everywhere. I talk to a lot of people that have doubts about it. I just think I even suspect there's an intelligent alien civilization in our galaxy and I just can't imagine them not having visited us. So I lean on that. What that actually looks like, I don't know. The stuff we're seeing in terms of UFO sightings, I think to the degree it's real, it's much more likely government projects. So military, Lockheed Martin, this kind of stuff.

Andrew Callaghan

So you think that they have knowledge of it?

Lex Fridman

Yeah.

Andrew Callaghan

One thing I think about with aliens is scale. So we have this idea that an alien would be a gray alien or a almost humanoid lookalike that would visit us in human form, arms, legs,

head. But who's to say that they're not able to shrink down to microscopic size with the same neural capacity?

Lex Fridman

Yeah. Or just have a very difficult to perceive form.

Andrew Callaghan

But they would go small, not big.

Lex Fridman

No, I think that would take a humanoid-like form just to be able to communicate with humans. I think that the big challenge with aliens is to be able to find a common language. So if you come to another planet and you suspect that there's some kind of complexity going on, but it looks nothing like humans, you have to find a common language. And I think aliens would try to take physical form that's similar that us dumb humans would understand.

Andrew Callaghan

Language is really interesting too. I have this series that I'm going to announce for the first time on here, but I'm really interested in endangered languages in the US. There's like 150 languages in the US with less than 1,000 speakers.

Lex Fridman

Wow.

Andrew Callaghan

And I want to help spearhead efforts to preserve some of these. For example, Hawaiian Sign language, 15 of those people left.

Lex Fridman

Holy shit.

Andrew Callaghan

Because when Hawaii got annexed, the ASL community tried to make it so the deaf native Hawaiians wouldn't be able to speak their native sign language. And so they would do it under the desks at schools for the deaf and blind, and they would get their mouth washed out, washed out with soap and stuff if they so much as did the Hawaiian hand signs. Also, the Gullah Geechee language and the South Carolina Sea Islands. Hilton Head Island and stuff, that's almost a Creole language that's been in the US for hundreds of years existing in isolation. That's being threatened by golf course developments. I don't know how into language you are, but I've been getting super nerded out about it.

Lex Fridman

Actually, I'm interviewing somebody tomorrow who's an expert in human language. He's from MIT, studying the syntax of a lot of languages, including in the Amazon jungle, the peoples that live in the Amazon jungle region. Yeah, it's fascinating. Human language is fascinating, and also the barriers that creates, and also how the games are played, to what you're speaking, by governments. This is part of the story of Russia, and Ukraine, is a battle over language. The Ukrainian language is a symbol of independence, which is why they were trying to make it the primary language of the nation. And so sometimes the language represents the culture and the peoples, and it's intricately tied to the culture of the people.

Andrew Callaghan

I've been trying to learn Navajo.

Lex Fridman

Which languages do you know?

Andrew Callaghan

Spanish and English.

Lex Fridman

Spanish well?

Andrew Callaghan

Si.

Lex Fridman

I don't know Spanish that well. So that passes me. You're fluent.

Andrew Callaghan

It means yes.

Lex Fridman

Oh, it doesn't. Ola.

Andrew Callaghan

That was good. That was real Cancun Spring break.

Lex Fridman

Well, I actually speak fluent Spanish according to Spotify because every episode is translated, overdubbed by AI in Spanish.

Andrew Callaghan

Oh my God.

Lex Fridman

Yeah. There's a very-

Andrew Callaghan

You have a Spanish robot assigned to you?

Lex Fridman

I have a Spanish robot. I sound incredibly intelligent and intellectual in Spanish.

Andrew Callaghan

Senor Fridman.

Lex Fridman

Exactly. From everything you've done, all the people you've seen, do you think most people are good, underneath it all?

Andrew Callaghan

Yeah.

Lex Fridman

So the ones that do all the extreme shit?

Andrew Callaghan

Okay, I'll put it like this. Most people think they're doing the best thing for the world. I don't think anyone, except for maybe a small fraction of sociopaths, wakes up every day and says, "I'm going to fuck somebody's life up today." I think the far majority of people are fighting for what they think is right and do want to see America succeed and want us to be in a happy place where no one is subjugated. I just think people have drastically different ideas of what means will get us there. And unfortunately, that's leading to a lot of misunderstandings between cultures. And yeah, I think that most people are good. I've been through some things that leads me to believe that a lot of people though are primarily motivated by self-interest, and that in a fight or flight situation, most people will choose flight. So I don't know if people are courageous as a whole, but I think generally good, but the energy to stand up for what's right, not sure about that.

Lex Fridman

They have the capacity though to do good.

Andrew Callaghan

I think human beings are inherently selfish as well, but I don't think that selfish is inherently bad. I think humans are primarily motivated by self-interest, but generally have positive intentions.

Lex Fridman

I do hope more humans rise to the occasion and have courage, courage of their convictions, courage to have integrity. But yeah, I think that most people are good and they want to do good, and they have the capacity to do a lot of good. That's why I have hope for this whole thing we've got going on. How do you heal the misunderstandings between people you think?

Andrew Callaghan

Listening. It's the only option we have. No forced education, no forced meetings or mediations between political opponents. Just listen to more people and really listen. Try to get rid of whatever preconceived notions you might have about how you should feel about someone you are supposed to disagree with, and just keep your ears and your heart open to people that you don't know and your life will change.

Lex Fridman

Keep your heart open.

Andrew Callaghan

A lot of people are scared to listen.

Lex Fridman

Well, Andrew, I'm a big fan and thank you for being one of the best listeners in the world.

Andrew Callaghan

Amen.

Lex Fridman

And showing the full spectrum of humanity to us so we can listen as well and learn. And just thank you for doing everything you're doing. Keep doing it.

Andrew Callaghan

Hey man, thanks so much for having me on. You're a great man.

Lex Fridman

Thank you, brother. I appreciate it. Thanks for listening to this conversation with Andrew Callaghan. To support this podcast, please check out our sponsors in the description. And now let me leave you some words from Hunter S. Thompson, "The Edge, there is no honest way to explain it because the only people who really know where it is are the ones who have gone over." Thank you for listening and hope to see you next time.