

# ALYSSA MILANO: SORRY NOT SORRY

Guest: A.G.

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**\*\*DRAFT AUTOMATED TRANSCRIPT – CHECK EPISODE AUDIO BEFORE QUOTING\*\***

[00:00:08] Hi, I'm Alyssa Milano. And this is sorry, not sorry.

[00:00:34] Our guest this week is AG, co-host of the brilliant podcasts, Mueller, She Srote and The Daily Beans. She's also a Navy veteran who experienced sexual assault while serving. And a former Veterans Affairs Department staffer who lost her job in Trump's loyalty purges. Her experience, insight and humor can teach all of us. And just a warning. This episode contains frank discussions of sexual assault and trauma.

**A.G.** [00:01:50] Hey, this is AG with the Mueller, she wrote podcast, and I am a survivor of military sexual trauma. Sorry, not sorry.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:01:57] So first of all, tell me how you're doing through this Coronavirus lockdown.

**A.G.** [00:02:03] It's been pretty hard. It's been a challenge. My coping skills are being pushed, I think, to the maximum as women, as survivors. I think we generally are really good at dissociating and compartmentalizing. This has really proven pretty tough to deal with.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:02:21] Yeah, I mean, as a survivor myself, you know, that has this complex PTSD. I know that for me I'm actually pretty calm. And, you know, I have very bad anxiety, and right now I'm pretty calm, and I think it's because the rest of the world is functioning at my level of anxiety, like that's how I am all the time. So I'm like, see everybody? I told you everything's frightening, you know, in like everyone's at my level. So I'm just kind of chill.

**A.G.** [00:02:53] Yeah. It's just so interesting how it impacts everyone so uniquely and so differently. And I think that's why it's important that we're just be so kind to each other and reach out to each other, because I don't think any of us can know what any other person is going through. You know, I think that there's a part of me that feels extra lonely when, you know, you can't go and be with people. It's like when you take something away that you've taken for granted, at least for me. I don't know if this is how anybody else feels, but it's just been very difficult. And so you want that contact and more and the uncertainty, right?

**Alyssa Milano** [00:03:27] I miss my parents so very much. And because of the way this disease treats people over 60, I'm terrified for them. I'm not scared for me or for my kids or for my husband. But I spend a big portion of the day being obsessing over dad, you're not going out, right? If you need food. Let me know. I'll go food shopping for you. You know, like that thing, you know, because we've all seen these these heart breaking videos of doctors saying that they're making choices between who gets to live and who who should die. And it's just. It's really hard. It's really hard. And then the things that like before this. The things I wish I had, like, you know, before this happened. I used to say to myself, my God, I love my husband so much. If we could just find a business where we could do

together. And now he's in the house all the time. \And I'm like, OK, so we'd have to have separate offices if we had a business together.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:04:30] So let's go back for a second. Can you tell us a little bit about your early military experience? I mean, did you win list and go to boot camp?

**A.G.** [00:04:40] Yeah, sure. I was actually living in L.A. at the time. I was trying to be an actress and I was 19, similar to boot camp. And I have actually gotten some pretty great roles. You know, doing extra work with SAG. But I had run out of college money and I wanted to go back to college. So I joined the Navy and my test scores were such that I was asked to be in the nuclear program at Attend Naval Nuclear Power Training Command, which is Nuk School, which is a very difficult school to get into. And so with all the bonuses that came along with that, I did that. But there were some downsides. First of all, I was one of the first women. Yeah. What year was this? Nineteen ninety five. Well, they let women in the nuclear program for one year, 1979 to 1980, and then they shut it down again till 1995 to women. But when I got there, it was me and three other women and about six hundred men. What was that like? They set us up to fail and I'll tell you how, huh? First of all, we didn't have quarters and facilities for us. They had to move some things around which upset some people. Second of all, they had all had to take sensitivity training about how to act around women because I guess none of them know women in their regular lives. Right. And then they had to, like, stop using certain engineering parlance that might be offensive to women. And so they already hated us before they even met us.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:06:09] Right. You know, it's funny because I have found, especially in episodic television, that when a woman director comes into direct an episode. All of a sudden, and I don't know if it's a conscious thing or a subconscious thing, but all of a sudden the whole crew will sort of, you know, which is predominantly men will work slower. And I'm convinced it is to sabotage. Maybe subconsciously. But sabotage a woman's ability to make their days in their production schedule. Hmm. Like, I think that there is some sort of. Resentment that comes along, and I think that they tried to sabotage. And I think this goes, you know, it's it's always harder for women in any field. But I always found it so obvious. And I'm wondering, did they try to make the culture seem more accepting of women or was it just blatantly obvious?

**A.G.** [00:07:17] I would say it was blatantly obvious. They were new at it. We were new at it. And I mean, it's also nineteen ninety five was kind of a different time, right. Not like 1965, but still different. And there was no GYN on base, I guess they forgot to have one. And so when I needed to have a pap smear done, they actually sent me to a dentist.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:07:40] Oh my God. Are you kidding me?

**A.G.** [00:07:42] They sent a dentist. So I was like, no, that's no. So we had to travel all the way from Orlando to Pensacola to the naval hospital so I could see a I said, oh, my God, just little things like that. Yeah, here and there. Just these little microcosms of just watch that just kind of made the whole thing. Just kept you off balance the whole time.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:08:05] Right. Well, if it's okay, I'd like to get into your personal experience. Is that OK with you? I always like to ask first because I don't know what someone's feeling in that day. It is the day by day thing. It is. And I never want to bring you more pain or bring up anything that's gonna be hurtful. So but you've said that you were you were drugged and raped in the Navy and that you were told by the military police that

if you filed a report, you would be charged. I mean, what the fuck? How how is that even possible?

**A.G.** [00:08:42] They threatened to. Among other things, there was a litany of threats, but they threatened that just charge me with adultery because my rapist was married.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:08:52] That mentality of protecting the institution and the patriarchy rather than the victim. When I read your story, I related to it a lot. I thought, yeah, I can totally relate to that. Do you think it's a common experience for women in the military?

**A.G.** [00:09:10] I do. The Air Force Academy stated mission is to educate, train and inspire men and women to become officers of character in service to our nation. But more than a dozen current and former cadets have told CBS News they reported their sexual assaults to the Air Force Academy only to then experienced retaliation by their peers and their commanders.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:09:33] What do you think the prevalence of sexual assault and trauma in the military is? I've had to come up with a percentage.

**A.G.** [00:09:41] I think it's more than in the population at large. I think it's probably closer to one in three.

**Documentary Clip** [00:09:47] If I had to guess, my gosh, reporting sexual assault is not easy. You hear these stories. They all have the same ending. It never ends well. We interviewed 150 service members and veterans across all the branches of the military who experienced retaliation after reporting their sexual assault, administrative punishments and all of that stuff. We're talking about serious threats, harassment, loss of job opportunities and promotions, disciplinary actions from.

**A.G.** [00:10:30] There were even times when we were taking this to court to try to get just like what you were saying about the institution, we were trying to get the decision to press charges against rape's out of the hands of the base commanders, because if a base commander has a rape on his face, it makes him or her look bad. So they tend to sweep them under the rug. So they wanted to take the decision to prosecute these cases out of the hands of the commanders and put it into like an outside civilian group, which is like if you had onset, there would be an outside group that would it would make these decisions, not the director who could lose the whole production or the show that could lose the shot, you know. Right. It. And so when we were taking that to court to take that decision out of Kirsten Gillibrand was helped leading that charge. It had come up in court that that rape was an occupational hazard in the military.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:11:24] There is a movement to get rid of the Feres Doctrine so that you can press charges, you know, things like and I don't know if my listeners know this, but like you can't sue a military doctor for malpractice based on the Fairness Doctrine.

**Documentary Clip** [00:11:42] Imagine that someone you love has been sexually assaulted. Imagine it's your daughter and she's away at college. What can she do in addition to criminal charges? She could fall a lawsuit against both the attacker and the school. Now, imagine that your daughter was sexually assaulted while serving in the military. So now what can she do? Absolutely nothing.

**Documentary Clip** [00:12:05] In the 1950s, the Supreme Court decided *Bowers v. Hardwick* versus United States, which created the Fairness Doctrine. The Fairness Doctrine states that military service members are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits. This doesn't just apply to injuries suffered during combat or training.

**A.G.** [00:12:22] Oh, that. Yeah. No, this was more about legislation they were trying to pass to try to get this decision to press charges out of the hands of the commanders. But I do know that one of the people who made the documentary with *The Invisible War* documentary Willia did actually tried to sue the secretary of defense in the government. And I think that it was the Fairness Doctrine that blocked from happening.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:12:47] Well, it's so interesting because members of the military are governed by an entirely different set of laws. Do you think that that played into your rapist's ability to just totally avoid consequences?

**A.G.** [00:12:59] Yeah, I'm not sure if that was a conscious choice or some knowledge that they had or if it was just because of the culture. Yeah. And, you know, I guess knowing that nobody ever gets in trouble for this, like you said, then it's sort of a free for all.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:13:22] Right. Did you have any legal recourse at all?

**A.G.** [00:13:25] No. No, I was too terrified to tell anyone. By the time they were done questioning me and threatening me and telling me I would lose my benefits and my G.I. Bill and my health care and my signing bonus, and I'd be on a ship in the middle of the ocean swabbing decks for 20 years, making no money like they sufficiently scared the shit out of me. So I didn't tell anyone.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:13:51] It's so crazy to me. And people might not be aware of this, but members of the military are not able to sue the government for sexual assaults that happened while serving. So how did this experience affect your military career?

**A.G.** [00:14:35] I got out. I actually had to have surgery on my feet. And so they actually randomly coincidental. They said, you know, we could either do this surgery on your feet or you have to get out of the military. And I saw that as a way out. So I took it.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:14:49] And after leaving the Navy, what did you do?

**A.G.** [00:14:53] I married somebody I met in the Navy. We were quickly divorced and my mental health just deteriorated. I didn't know why, because not only did they sufficiently scared the shit out of me, so I didn't report the rape. They actually made me believe that I wasn't right, that it was my fault. And then what what. What had happened was a bad decision on my part, to quote them. It was so ingrained in me that it was me who did that to myself, that when my very best friend was assaulted, I was saying the same things to her, that they had said to me, like, why were you drinking? Why were you flirting with that guy? Right. Why did you put yourself in that situation? Here I am, victim blaming my best friend, because that's how I felt about myself. And so I try to be very gentle with women who do that because I often wonder if it's because they themselves are survivors.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:15:49] Oh, I'm sure. I'm sure. And also just we've been conditioned to even if we don't believe it, but to at least hear it and say it. Right. Like, that's kind of been our imprinting from the cultural patriarchy of sexual assault and sexual violence.

**A.G.** [00:16:08] Yeah, 100 percent.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:16:10] You know, and I hope that that's shifting now and that my daughter won't have to deal with that. But, you know, it's terrifying, especially I've really since mee too happened. And I sent that tweet. I have had to deal with my own sexual trauma. And ways that I didn't necessarily deal with. Things that I thought I dealt with. And I just didn't I mean, I always remembered being sexually assaulted twice, and now, as you know, after me, too, there's been more times than that. And it didn't come to me until women were sharing their stories with me. And then it just became unavoidable. Did you have any hope trying to process what had happened to, you know, through mental health?

**A.G.** [00:17:09] Like I said, because I didn't even realize anything had happened to me, so to speak. I started having panic attacks. And at one point I thought I was having a heart attack. I was 30. I was young, but I thought I swear, I was having a heart attack as 2006. So I was 32 years old. So I drove myself to the V.A. because I had no other health care and I'd never been to the V.A. before. But I was like, I'm a veteran so I can go there. Right. And I said, I'm having a heart attack. And they sort of chuckled. They're like, no, you're not having a heart attack. And that's when they started in with the questions about, you know, maybe this seems like a Pinchuk. Maybe you have anxiety. Were you in combat? You know, did you see blood or. You know what? And I was like, no, no, no. And just kept coming back to the V.A. and, you know, eventually signed up for some mental health, cognitive behavioral therapy. And through talking it out, you know, eventually I was like, well, this one thing happened one time and the right big, big red sirens, bingo flares go off. And then, like you said, you can't sue the government. So I filed a claim with the Department of Veterans Affairs for my PTSD, for my disability. And that was traumatizing because they denied me those claims for years, which is. Just a retransmit ization of the entire thing, because they said, well, you didn't report it, so it didn't happen in our book.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:18:39] Wow.

**A.G.** [00:18:40] But I was fortunate enough to be in the film *The Invisible War*. And I had retired Brigadier General Allison Hickey call me from Washington, D.C. She headed up the Women's Veterans Benefits Administration there and asked me how I was doing because she saw the film. And I said, not good. They've denied my claims three times. They said it doesn't happen. They don't believe me that it that it happened. Even though I had, like, follow up on HPV, I had to have half my cervix removed, like, all these different medical things that happened because of this. But she she made a couple of phone calls and within a week I had my claim adjudicated. And that's wonderful. But I just think of the thousands and thousands and thousands of women and men and people who who have been assaulted in the military who weren't didn't have the privilege of being in a in a film. Right. Right. And what they must be going through.

**Documentary Clip** [00:19:35] It all played out in the hotel's third floor convention after parties turned ugly, drunken aviators roamed the halls, exposing their genitals and attacking unsuspecting Navy and civilian women. When Lieutenant Coffin entered this corridor packed with partiers, a crowd of male aviators surrounded her and pounced.

**Documentary Clip** [00:19:55] People were actually closing in and trying to pull my clothes off. I got knocked to the floor and I kicked and I punched. I actually bit somebody who was reaching down my blouse.

**Documentary Clip** [00:20:09] She eventually escaped and later told her boss, Admiral John Snyder, about the incident. He promised to report it. Coffin remembers him saying something else, something Snyder denies.

**Documentary Clip** [00:20:21] He told me that's what you get when you go down a hallway full of drunk aviators.

**A.G.** [00:20:27] I mean, I think about that all the time as far as mental health goes. Like, if I'm feeling this kind of pain and I have the resources available to me to be taken care of. What about the single mom of four who doesn't have that? How painful must this be, that kind of mental anguish be for for that person? It's something we need to really get better at in this country.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:20:54] Thank you for talking about your story, because obviously every story we tell helps to get women help. So you left the Navy and then you moved in to work with the executive branch, right?

**A.G.** [00:21:09] Well, for about 10 years, I just was in hotel restaurant management, corporate auditing. But when Obama was running for president and he said, you know, you need we need to be a service to your country, kind of that whole ask not what your country can do for you. Yeah. And I was really moved by that. But I couldn't join the military again because, you know, I'm a disabled veteran, medically disabled. So that meant, you know, mental health wise, but that's kids considered mental or medical disability. So I said, well, I bet I could work for the V.A. and man, that would be great, because then I could help women navigate this system and work on getting tell a mental health setup so that women don't have to show up in a building with a bunch of dudes, et cetera. So I was really excited. And I you know, I went to work for the Department of Veterans Affairs. I took the oath of office the same day Obama did it, which was also my birthday.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:22:03] So, I mean, I'm just so impressed by your patriotism. Just to to endure what you endured during federal service and then to continue to serve is pretty incredible. How was that different than working for the Navy?

**A.G.** [00:22:19] Not very different at all. Honestly, I mean, it was 10 years later, so. Well, I will say this. The culture was different in that I felt safer and I felt more equal.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:22:31] That makes sense, I think. Right. And not only because I'm sure the cultures may be different, but also it was 10 years later. Right. So hopefully there was a little bit of progression there. Were there resources available to you as a civilian in any capacity that were not as a member of the military?

**A.G.** [00:22:54] Well, we had a GYN on site.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:22:56] Right. The little things.

**A.G.** [00:23:00] Yeah. I think that the health care at the V.A. was very way far more advanced than the health care that that we would the direct care we would receive at military treatment facilities for sure. Just with there being women's clinics, there being it's just so inclusive.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:23:16] Yeah. I mean, I gone to Walter Reed quite a few times and I'm always amazed at how vast it is and how I think. You think when you're going to a veterans hospital it is going to be all about, you know, rehabilitation and amputations and that kind of thing. Like, you don't think of it like their families being treated for cancer in their building and things like that better. So, you know, important to give our military that kind of support. And I've always been so impressed with also the I mean, when you go into the just the technology is unbelievable.

**A.G.** [00:24:01] The V.A. is fortunate to partner with most colleges and, you know, medical schools. Right. To do research. So what we know with the V.A. gets most of its nurses from universities. And it's just it's a really wonderfully integrated research system. They have very top of the line, you know, technologies and and treatments. And it's one of the best, largest health systems in the world. It's got really great feedback from from the patients. They're very focused on patient centered care. And it also has really, really good evidence based health outcomes, not just lip service.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:24:35] So, OK, so you are working for the executive branch, right? And then. Donald Trump happens. I mean, what went through your mind?

**A.G.** [00:24:51] Whenever a Republican gets elected, you have to be very wary of privatization and the V.A. is continually under attack from Republicans trying to privatize it, basically making it like our Medicare system, where veterans go to private doctors and then the government directly pays private health insurance industry. Right. Two, three, four times the price of, you know, V.A. direct care. And same with pharmacy stuff because V.A. pharmacy has a massive discount. And so private insurers are, quote unquote, losing out. Whenever somebody chooses the V.A. over the private sector. So they've been trying to privatize it for a while. So that was my number one concern. And lo and behold, he made permanent the Veterans Choice Act, which was originally set up as a response to what was happening at the Phenix V.A. with the wait lists. And it was supposed to be a temporary measure signed by Obama that allowed veterans to go out to the private insurance and private doctors and have it be paid for by the government temporarily so that we could clear these waitlists out and then we would infuse the V.A. with money and bring all the veterans back into the fold. Yeah. Everyone's happy. I was supposed to be a temporary measure. And Trump made it permanent during a rally in Tennessee.

**Documentary Clip** [00:26:04] President Donald Trump started touting his record and that of his party's. He started talking about veterans benefits when he said this. We just passed choice. That was 44 years. They've been drawing the first choice.

**Documentary Clip** [00:26:17] They've been trying to pass that one for many, many decades. They could do it. We got it.

**Documentary Clip** [00:26:22] The president is talking about the buildup that treats choice. It's a government money to pay for private health care. It's a veteran had to wait too long for an appointment at a V.A. facility where they live too far away. Congress passed a new version of it, but it was originally passed in 2014 under President Barack Obama. Mr. Trump leaves entirely the wrong impression by suggesting it was just passed and that previous administrations couldn't get it done. As for the forty four years thing, it's not clear what the president was talking about. Choice was spurred by the 2014 scandal of long waits in V.A. health facilities.

**A.G.** [00:26:58] Now we're wasting money sending veterans to private health insurance and private doctors because it does cost. So much more. It cost the taxpayer so much more money, and that's against the mission of the V.A., which was supposed to be, you know, this must be awarded of the taxpayer dollar and spend it wisely. And we're not.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:27:16] Have you seen changes already that have taken effect from Trump signing that permanently?

**A.G.** [00:27:24] Yeah, absolutely. For example, if they're referring me out now for mental health instead of taking care of it in the hospital there and the wait time, I went through the process and the wait time was longer than it was at the V.A. and the health care was poor. It was poor quality care because they there for profit. The money is there by line, not the patient.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:27:47] Right. Exactly. Mental health is such a tricky thing because I feel like doctors need to be more accessible than regular doctors because of the nature of what being in crisis mode really means. And I know it's a it's a huge frustration sometimes with me and my doctor that I feel I'm in crisis mode. What do I do? I mean, I can't text him. I can't. And I would imagine that the V.A. is probably a little bit more accessible because it's got to feel a little bit more like a community rather than the doctor patient relationship.

**A.G.** [00:28:30] They do focus a lot on patient centered care, or at least they were. I sort of, since Trump took over, have stopped using the V.A. The new secretary isn't very good at his job. And so there's a lot of whistleblowers, like an IJI report just came out last October. I spoke to Dr. Schocken, the former secretary of the V.A. under Obama, about that. And as it turns out, they are not listening to whistleblowers. They're actually retaliating against whistleblowers at the V.A. They're sometimes dissolving their jobs, getting rid of them or asking them to move across the country and in some cases, firing them.

**Documentary Clip** [00:29:10] The Navy may have fired Captain Brett Crosier, but his sailors would not let him go quietly. Chanting his name. Sailors swarmed to say goodbye to Crosier, who sounded the alarm about a growing Coronavirus outbreak on board the USS Theodore Roosevelt before departing. Crosier turned to wave farewell. Earlier this week, he begged Navy leaders to help the ship's crew. In a letter first reported by the San Francisco Chronicle. We are not at war, he wrote. Sailors do not need to die.

**A.G.** [00:29:42] They are definitely, you know, circular filing. All of these whistle blower complaints.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:29:46] I think that probably mirrors exactly what's going on with what went on with the impeachment trial. Right. How they villainize the whistleblower there. I mean, it always starts at the top.

**Documentary Clip** [00:29:57] Since Trump's Senate acquittal, aides say the president has crossed a psychological line regarding what he calls the deep state. He feels his government from justice to state to defense to homeland security. It's filled with snakes.

**Documentary Clip** [00:30:11] He wants them fired and replaced A.S.A.P. handle the list of recently promoted his personal aide, John McEntee, and instructed him to punch the executive branch of anyone not loyal to Trump. A purge that sounds like the Soviet Union.



**A.G.** [00:30:27] It's happening in pretty much every agency. And then, of course, now we've got at least one. Mulvany was chief of staff saying, hey, we found any way to get rid of people we don't like. We just move their jobs across the country. And they've been doing that. They did that with the entire USDA. They did that with my job. So there's a big push to get like people not loyal to Trump out of the federal government. It's just it's not a fun place to work. And as such, it's also not. The V.A. is not the place I want to get my care. I go to a private doctor, pay out of pocket now from a recommendation I got from a friend with in the executive branch.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:31:03] Do people support Trump? I mean, what what are people feeling about him now?

**A.G.** [00:31:09] We've talked about there being a real talent drain at these agencies. And I hate to say it, you know, anyone who is for it or supporting him or who's leftover. I don't think I have a lot of ability to continue to run these programs.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:31:29] So you're working in the executive branch and then Russia and Mueller happened. And what do you do? You started a podcast, a brilliant podcast. I might add, one that I'm a huge fan of that I listen to every time an episode drops. I love it so much. But tell me how that came to be short.

**A.G.** [00:31:49] Well, I was watching MSNBC. It was airing a documentary about a couple months after Mueller was appointed special counsel. They were airing a documentary on Watergate called All the President's Men Revisited. And it had like Lawrence O'Donnell and Rachel Maddow. And there, you know, just talking heads, talking about Watergate. And I thought to myself, I'd bet in 20 years they're gonna do one of these on the Mueller investigation. And I was like, how do I get in on that? I want to be a part of that because I was following it so closely and I was so interested in it. And I thought, you know what? Well, podcasting, I think, is the easiest way. It's the cheapest medium to get started and anyone can do it. And so that's where I that's where my door was. So I started it up and I wanted it to be from a woman's perspective. So I contacted some women that I know and I wanted it to be funny. So I contacted women comedians.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:32:48] So smart. And did you face backlash internally at work?

**A.G.** [00:32:52] There was a couple of things that I like. First of all, I go by. So, you know, I use a pseudonym. I hired a lawyer to ensure that I wasn't violating the Hatch Act at all. And I have not smart. And then although it be tough to prosecute. Right. Because you can't let some people get away with it and then punish others. Although I can see Trump doing that. Yeah. Yeah. But my employee records were fired by Trump's Office of General Counsel and I was investigated a little bit. Wow. There's some other things that are going on that have not resolved yet. So I can't really speak about them. But it's an ongoing saga.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:33:32] Well, I'm sure he's got files on me somewhere as well. Well, enemies list. Doesn't he?

**A.G.** [00:33:39] Yeah, for sure.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:34:11] You know, I ask this question quite a bit, because there's so many things about him that are so terribly wrong, but what do you think is the most dangerous thing about Donald Trump from your perspective?

**A.G.** [00:34:26] Well, right now, I mean, and my answer would have been different. Three weeks ago.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:34:30] Right. Well, it's ever changing, isn't it?

**A.G.** [00:34:34] It gets. It's just when you think it can't get worse. But to find out from The Washington Post that he knew in January, early January about the dangers posed by this virus and slow walked. It did nothing. Didn't want the numbers to look bad. That will cost lives thousands, hundreds of thousands of lives.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:34:57] I can't even comprehend how a leader would sit on that information. And then, you know, you look at the entire GOP with this selling of stocks.

**A.G.** [00:35:11] I was just going to say that, I mean, the profit off of it. And then, you know, try to try to slow walk everything until your you know, your your son unlock and get the rights to a test kit or try to buy the vaccine from Germany and corner the market so you can profit. It's disgusting.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:35:31] Yeah. There's a special place in hell for people like that. I really believe it. What do you think is the appeal to people who still support him? Why are people still supporting him?

**A.G.** [00:35:43] I think it's the fear and the xenophobia, honestly.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:35:46] You do?

**A.G.** [00:35:47] I do. You know that he paints everything as others. You know, even even with this virus, calling it the Wuhan virus or the Chinese virus. And we have to close our borders. A wall would fix this. It all boils down to that fear and hate. And I think there are just people who hate is like a drug. It's it's addictive. And I think there people are just hate addicts.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:36:14] I also think that it was the time for him, meaning there were a lot of people talk about this quite a bit. There are a lot of people in this country that felt ignored and didn't feel like they had a voice and were struggling so immensely under Obama. And instead of embracing those people like the Democratic Party should have done with the Democratic Party, did do was just say, you know what? We don't need to reach out to those people. And I think Trump spoke to those people in a way that was almost the answer to their problems. Right. And I think when you're that when you're struggling that much. I mean, eight out of 10 Americans live paycheck to paycheck. And we're going to really see what that means. Now, with the Coronavirus and and how Americans are going to struggle, and it's going to take years, maybe a decade to get back on its feet. But when you think about the missed opportunity that we had in 2016 to really reach those people and now, you know, I think that he spoke to them. And I think that that's why people voted for him. They were like, well, he's he's not a part of that political party that we did shitty under. So I'm going to vote for that guy because, you know, and he made all those promises drain the swamp and all of that.

**A.G.** [00:37:43] Yeah. It reminds me of I don't know if you've seen American history x. Yes. But when he's recruiting.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:37:50] Yes.

**A.G.** [00:37:50] Kids, he gives that speech. I think it gives people a home. They feel important. They feel better. And I think that has a lot to do with it. Yeah.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:38:00] Well, yeah. And it becomes cultish because you have a leader that is preying on the most vulnerable, that are looking for hope and looking for that dream. And I think that hope is really important. I think it's the thing that ties us all together, no matter who we are or where we're from. On a global scale, it is innately within us to hope for a brighter tomorrow. So, I mean, I think my last question for you is what brings you hope?

**A.G.** [00:38:32] Laughter and each other, this community that I've been so fortunate to build with this podcast. These two podcasts that we do is just incredible. The amount of talent and compassion and intelligence and action, they're plugged in. They're active. They're doing things. They're making the changes. And just to be connected to people like that. I think that's what brings me hope.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:39:03] Well, you certainly inspire me. Thank you so much for being a part of the podcast.

**Documentary Clip** [00:39:12] We all know that our military has a sexual assault problem. Every secretary of defense for more than two decades has acknowledged this. The problem hasn't gone away. And military sexual assault is as pervasive as ever. And so our bill essentially allows the decision of whether a crime has been committed, whether it should go to trial, be made by trained military prosecutors, not commanders. Because right now, troops don't have faith in the system. Last year alone, about 15 thousand cases of rape, sexual assault, unwanted sexual contact, and only about six thousand of them are reported. Only about 4000 openly. And of those strong souls who reported, about 59 percent are retaliated against for reporting. So we need a military justice system that is more transparent, more effective, one that is worthy of the sacrifice their troops make every day.

**Alyssa Milano** [00:40:11] The Feres doctrine, it's the classic example of unintended consequences and intentional misuse of the law to intimidate, humiliate, scare and silence victims of military sexual assault. Through this concept, military members can't sue the government for illness or injury that occurs during their service. In most cases, this was intended to keep soldiers wounded in battle from suing the government. Given that the likelihood of being wounded in battle is very much part of the job duties of a service member being raped, though, and the trauma sexual assault brings with it, that is very much not part of a service member's duties. We need Congress to fix these egregious flaws in the way we treat our service members. The Feres Doctrine must go away. We need Congress to fix this egregious flaw in the way that we treat our service members. The Fairness Doctrine must go away. We need our government to hold itself accountable and to let us hold them accountable when they drop the ball. This protection hurts people from serving our country. The women and men who wear the uniform do so because they are ready to stand up to the world's most evil regimes to protect America. When will America stand up for them?

**Alyssa Milano** [00:41:48] Sorry, not sorry is executive produced by Alyssa Milano. That's me. Our associate producer is Ben Jackson, editing and Engineering by Natasha Jacobs and music by Josh Cooke, Alicia Eagle and Milo Billy. That's my boy. Please subscribe on

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