

GINGER GORMAN

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ONLINE TROLLS

DEFIANCE #018
WITH PETER MCCORMACK



DEF018 - GINGER GORMAN INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTION

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ONLINE TROLLS

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Peter McCormack: 00:01:48

Hi, Ginger. How are you?

Ginger Gorman: 00:01:50

Hi, I'm hot. It's hot in Australia at the moment.

Peter McCormack: 00:01:54

Yes, it is. I've just been to South America. It's pretty hot there as well. But now I'm in Austin, Texas. So thank you for agreeing to do this.

Ginger Gorman: 00:02:02

Thank you for having me.

Peter McCormack: 00:02:04

No, it's great. So, let's give a background to why I want to make this show. So you can understand where I'm coming from. And then what I want to do is go

into your story. And then I just want to dive into the world of trolling. So, I have a couple of shows, which you're aware of. I have a Bitcoin show, and I have this other show, but the Bitcoin show is what I'm known for. And I guess over the two years I've been doing that I've got a Twitter following now, which is, let's say 74,000. But I've also got a few platforms. I've got Reddit. I've got YouTube, and different places I put out content and make comments.

Peter McCormack: 00:02:38

I found myself becoming a troll at times and also being trolled. But in the last week, some of the trolling that came at me was quite aggressive, quite fall on, and I found myself at a point where I was in a hotel room. I was almost having a mental breakdown. It all came on a bit strong. So, kind of going through a bit of a self reflection, wondering if I've brought it on myself. Wondering if my behaviour is appropriate, but also wanting to dive into the world of the people who troll back and just get a better understanding of all of it.

Ginger Gorman: 00:03:13

Okay, so let me ask you a couple of questions first. What were people saying to you? What was the nature of what they were saying to you?

Peter McCormack: 00:03:22

So, it's a range of things. Anything from your show sucks and your crappy at your job, which that's fine. I'm okay with that. Two people saying, mocking some of my tweets for being a bit cringy. And again, I'm okay with that. I can take that. Then to a whole group of people calling me a pedophile and posting across all my channels. And that all happened at the same time. That one felt coordinated. And then there was some stuff that I think was a misunderstanding or misread of a situation where kind of became cancel culture, whereby there was a coordinated group of people trying to get one of my sponsors to cancel me by repeating a message that I was pro censorship and supporting scammers.

Peter McCormack: 00:04:05

I guess the two latter ones came at the same time. I guess what it was is the volume. I've been trolled since I started this but the volume in the space of a week. We're talking 100s if not over 1000 messages. And I had this moment, and I even put it out on Twitter, "Look, I'm taking a break. This is too much. It's affecting my mental health," which also got me trolled and I can see why. A sign of weakness, you're a snowflake.

Ginger Gorman: 00:04:36

Although that is quite a smart thing to do. And we can talk about tactics later. But there's so many things I want to talk about in what you've just said. But can I ask you another question before I do that, which is, was the trolling that you are getting of the caliber of trolling that you had been doing or was it more extreme?

Peter McCormack: 00:04:56

See, that's an interesting question. One of the interesting things that comes out of this is when I put the show out, a lot of people are going to hear this that have seen me troll and be trolled back. See me put out my message saying it's too much, I'm going to have a break and then not really taking a break. And it's going to come with a hell of a lot of judgment. But I'm willing to be transparent and go through it and take that flak, but no, it's not the same. And I will say the key differences, the quite full on personal attacks. And don't get me wrong, I might have mocked some people in the past.

Peter McCormack: 00:05:28

Usually if I've mocked them, they've mocked me first. What I don't think some of the people who are trolling understand is they are one person maybe with 300 followers who are saying something, I've seen a few other things, but they're not sitting on the receiving end seeing the full weight and volume of what's coming in when it's hundreds in a day.

Ginger Gorman: 00:05:48

Look, this is one of the huge misconceptions about trolling is that... In fact, look, I mean, I've been investigating and talking to trolls for five years and building these relationships with them. And I'm talking about really extreme trolls that are linked to terrorism and suicide incitement and murder and other things. We have this idea that it's a guy usually alone in his mom's basement and he's a loser, and he doesn't really know what he's doing. And he's not bright. You know, none of the above. So trolls work in syndicates, in coordinated groups, and some of these very organised syndicates like outlaw motorcycle gangs, and they have presidents and vice presidents and this kind of thing. And it's very much like organised crime. But even when a group of people are attacking someone like you, there will be a Facebook group somewhere or a Reddit thread, which will be inciting people to pile on to you so it's still a coordinated attack, which is why you get the volume that you're talking about.

Peter McCormack: 00:06:57

Yeah. And I'm aware of that. So, I would say one of the things is say I'm in the cryptocurrency community, and there are people in there who their entire emo is to be a troll. A lot of it is quite funny, and a lot of it is very useful as well actually.

Ginger Gorman: 00:07:13

Yes.

Peter McCormack: 00:07:13

Because things happen.

Ginger Gorman: 00:07:16

And people get a shock because I am extensively if you want to stereotype me. I am a left wing feminist. My background is Jewish. I've just separated but I was in a mixed race marriage. I am what they call an SJW. The right wing trolls, which is a social justice warrior. I mean, I'm a woman. They hate women. They hate white women, especially. They hate journalists. So, I am their hate match. And if it was a dating app, I would be the perfect hate match. But I don't hate trolling. I actually think trolling in some or a lot of circumstances has a really useful social and political function. And people get a huge shock when I say that, but I think what we need to understand here, and even in the trolling that you're talking about that you've both meted out and received, trolling is not one thing. It's a spectrum of behaviours.

Ginger Gorman: 00:08:13

And so, at the one end you have mild pranks, which are frankly hilarious. Like the Rickroll, which a lot of us know about is the example I always give because so many people know what it is. Which is just where it's almost like one of the oldest forms of trolling where someone like Rick... someone clicks on a link, and it's Rick Astley's 1987 song Never Going To Give You Up, but it's hilarious. I've seen the White House do it. Everybody's done it. Rick Astley credits Rickrolling for reviving his career. And frankly, who doesn't want a bit of Rick Astley in the middle of a boring day? I've also seen a lot of trolling in the middle that has really useful political and social functions.

Ginger Gorman: 00:08:55

One of the trolls I became really good friends with, his name is MeepSheep. And he talked to me so much through the process of writing my book. My actual husband started calling him my troll husband, but he's president of a really right wing syndicate called the Gay Niggers Association of America, and

they don't prank people. They don't predator troll. They're not trying to hurt anybody. But they prank the media on a big scale. They prank Wikipedia, for example, on a big scale. Right before the US election, they defaced Bill and Hillary Clinton's Wikipedia pages with all this pornography. And look, it was really funny in a way and it also was making a really important political point about how left Wikipedia is, about who controls information, about whether they wanted the Clintons in control of the country in the future. So, it does have a lot of useful functions.

Ginger Gorman: 00:09:50

The thing that I'm interested in Peter though, is none of that really. I mean, I find that interesting as context. What I'm interested in is the extreme end, which I call predator trolling. And what I mean by that is that a person or people in a syndicate are going out to do real life harm to somebody. So, this is this distinction in what you're talking about. If someone is just calling you a prick, and they're saying your show is shit. I mean, what I would say is, that's just their honestly held opinion. Fine.

Peter McCormack: 00:10:22

That's fair.

Ginger Gorman: 00:10:23

But if they are trying to take away your sponsors, that's different. That's predator trolling, because what they are actually doing then is trying to cause you real life harm. And the economic harm from trolling is absolutely catastrophic. One of the things I did in my book, which has never been done anywhere in the world, as far as I can tell, because I looked for the data. So, I'm just going to backtrack a little bit, but I started investigating trolling about end of 2014, beginning in 2015. And once I started writing about it, what happened was streams of people started to write to me, and they would be telling me these stories of their destroyed lives. So I've lost my job or multiple jobs. I can't get another one. My reputation has been wrecked online. I have PTSD. I have depression. I've been medicated. I've been to court to try and stop the perpetrator. I've had to get surveillance systems in my house. I've had to get a bodyguard. These costs and harms on and on and on and on, right?

Ginger Gorman: 00:11:28

And because journalists are looking for patterns in things, once I looked at all of the people that had written to me, and I was trying to see all these different stories of people who had been extreme cyber hate targets, I could see that it was costing so much money. And I was like, "Okay, if I could have a dollar

figure on this, then all the people that say you're a snowflake and to pull your big girl panties up," they would have to shut the fuck up. Because I would be able to say this is how much money it costs and money talks.

Ginger Gorman: 00:12:02

So, one of the things I did was I started ringing all these economists going, help me, I need to get this data. I couldn't find any data anywhere. They were like, "What's Facebook?" Trying to get off the phone as quick as possible. What the hell is this chick talking about? And then there's this one genius economist in Australia. His name is Richard Dennis from the Australia Institute, and he's kind of a visionary. I don't know why I didn't call him first to be honest with you. And I picked up the phone to him and he was like, "Oh, my God, this is really important. We're going to help you get the data." I paid for it out of my own money, but they didn't nationally representative polling for me.

Ginger Gorman: 00:12:41

And so, they pulled a bit more than 1500 Australians, adult Australians. And we found that 44% of adult Australian women had experienced online harassment and 44%... Sorry, 44% of adult women and 34% of men. It's 8.8 million Australians, we only have 25 million, right? It's a huge percentage of the population. 1.3 million had experienced extreme cyber hate, so predator trolling, and the cost was \$3.7 billion. So that's only taking into account time off work, and health costs. So it's just costing a truckload of money. That's not the court costs or the moving house cost or the security costs or all these other things that people were telling me. So, actually, this is costing economies a fortune. I found that amazing because I was like, "Why is everybody ignoring this if it's actually just..." Not only is it having these huge mental health impacts like you were talking about, that you wanted to have a breakdown. You felt like you were going to have a breakdown. It's actually a money thing.

Peter McCormack: 00:13:55

So, one of the things I said to you earlier, I'm conscious that even making this show, this show itself will get trolled, and I will get trolled for making the show. One of the things I've always been, Ginger is quite transparent. I've shared in my shows my mistakes. I've talked about the breakup of my marriage. I've talked about being a cocaine addict. I've talked about all those things, and I'm fine doing that because I think it's helpful sometimes to talk about these situations. They also get thrown back at me. I get the, this is why your wife left you.

Ginger Gorman: 00:14:24

Oh, you're a junkie kind of thing.

Peter McCormack: 00:14:27

Yeah. When are you going to take some more cocaine or when are you going to do some crack? That all gets thrown back at me. And again, that's still not the worst in itself. But I've obviously listened to your book. I read a lot of articles. Actually, your article was the first one I actually read as well, because when I was going through it, I really wanted to understand more about this, because one of the things I was saying to myself is, do I deserve this? Have I brought it on myself? And I've definitely split people. There are people who don't like my work. There's people who don't like me, and I accept that. I do not behave perfectly. I definitely wind people up. I can be a bit of a shit, right? But what was the real cost to me was, I was basically in this hotel in Uruguay.

Peter McCormack: 00:15:09

I had an interview booked. I had to cancel the interview. I just physically wasn't in the state to do it. And all these messages coming through that were trying to counsel a sponsor, which were based on a misrepresentation, I believe, that was a lot of stress on top of the previous stress of people going, you fat slob, go and fucking kill yourself. All these messages, and one of the things I think might be useful to get this show is that the cryptocurrency circles I'm mixing can be quite toxic. And like I said, I don't think some people appreciate the full weight of everything when it comes at somebody because it's like a truck. People can say I'm a snowflake, and I can be sensitive, right? But the full weight of hundreds of messages on YouTube, in email, in DM, it's very hard to just switch off from it.

Ginger Gorman: 00:15:57

Well, there's this thing that people say, just get off line. Stop looking at the messages. And the more I learned about trolling, the more that enrages me. That is just first of all bullshit victim blaming. Because the thing is, okay, number one, who the fuck can get off the internet? Nobody. The internet has been recognised by the United Nations repertoire as a human right so we need it. We need it for social reasons. We need it for economic reasons. So expecting somebody to get offline because they are being attacked is peak victim blaming. And it also is a matter misunderstanding about what is actually happening.

Ginger Gorman: 00:16:59

So, there's a brain expert in my book. He's an internet addiction expert. And I

actually asked him, why when you're receiving all these messages and all this hatred, can you not stop checking it? Because every cyber hate target I've ever spoken to, including myself, I have been the victim of extreme predator trolling. And I remember this, having my phone in my hand, and you can see it's a train wreck. I can see people calling me a shit journalist and a pedophile enabler and threatening my family and death threats. And I still can't stop looking. There is not a victim in my book that could say to me, they could stop looking. So, it's a thing. And what it is, is that this is a normal human behaviour.

Ginger Gorman: 00:17:51

It's like if you're at a party, and you realise that 60 people in the corner are saying bad stuff about you. And you get this dread in your stomach because it affects your social standing, and possibly your job and your family and your position in the community. But you still have to know what they are saying. You have to. It's a human condition. We have to. And also he said, there's a feedback loop in your brain, and your brain doesn't care whether it's a positive feedback loop or a negative feedback loop it still stay on that loop. So, because your brain is telling you to do it, to keep checking, and your social conditioning is telling you to do that, because you don't want to lose your job. You don't want to lose your position in the community.

Ginger Gorman: 00:18:40

I don't think we should be putting the onus of cyber hate onto the victim. It's actually the perpetrators that needs to be brought to account, and the platforms, and please we can talk about that all later. But it is belittling and undermining the impact of something like that. The people I've interviewed, I mean, apart from, losing hundreds of thousands of dollars and being unemployable and trying to suicide and all these other things. A lot of them have really ongoing PTSD symptoms. They wake up at night covered in sweat. They might have wet the bed. They have nightmares. I've had PTSD, and I've seen all this stuff. This is what happens from cyber hate events like the one that you're talking about. If this went on for a few years, that's what what happened to you. You'd become really mentally unwell because it is a trauma actually, like if you're being threatened. Your life is being threatened, your kid's is being threatened, your security, your house, all of that.

Peter McCormack: 00:19:46

Well, this is one of the... Again, one of the reasons I want to do the show. A couple of reasons. Firstly, just to really self reflect on my own behaviour. It's definitely impacted it a bit. Although I'm still trolling myself, and I still consider

the trolling I do, I don't know, not to be at the predatory personal end. When I write a tweet these days, these last few days, I've thought about it a little bit more, which is good. But also, I hope some people are listening to it, and maybe it will help them consider or reflect on what the impact is to people. But perhaps that's too much to ask.

Ginger Gorman: 00:20:18

No, I mean, look, since my book came out in February, my book came out six weeks before the Christchurch massacre. And it's really interesting because I never knew even though when I started writing the book I had been talking to trolls for years. I never understood predator trolling was connected to terrorism, and incitement to suicide, and domestic violence, and all these other kinds of hate crimes. But by the time I finished the book or finished the manuscript, I knew there's a lot of terrorist trolls in my book, and we had Senate hearings here in Australia into cyber bullying in 2018. I gave evidence at these Senate hearings. I said, this stuff is linked to terrorism. And I just remember this one particular Australian Senator looking at me like I had lost my mind. Like this chick is bonkers. And I said, these are the crimes that's linked to in my book. They reported... They wrote into their final report a lot of the recommendations, which myself and other colleagues suggested, but they left that part out.

Ginger Gorman: 00:21:27

And then my book came out, and it was describing in detail basically, not the actual Christchurch killer, but very, very similar people. Very similar criminals, similar kind of terrorist attacks, and all the context in which someone like him would be radicalised. So the book came out, the massacre happened, and then it just went bam! And I literally was getting messages all over the world. People going, "Oh my God, have you read this? Have you read this, if you watching this, this is exactly what's in your book." And I actually went to New Zealand right after the massacre. I was invited over there to speak and I got mobbed by the media there. I just did so many interviews because it was like, I was the first person in the world that could actually explain it.

Ginger Gorman: 00:22:15

I remember just, I didn't sleep at all. I remember running down to the local clothes store to buy a new jacket because I was like, "I can't wear this fricking spotty jacket on TV again." It stinks. Finally, people started connecting the dots. They started taking experiences like the one you're talking about and terrorism, and domestic violence where there's predator trolling around and

they started clicking all the pieces together. And I'm like, "Thank God, I've only been talking about it for five years." I mean, actually, Peter, I cried when the massacre happened because I was like, "This is what I was trying stop." I was trying to write the book because I could see this was going to happen, and no one believed me that it was so linked to terrorism. Now they do.

Peter McCormack: 00:23:04

Wow. Do you know what might be useful because a lot of people won't know your backstory, why you got into this. But it's actually, it's fucking mental, that story is utterly crazy.

Ginger Gorman: 00:23:18

Peter, I do just want to say one thing about you being scared of being trolled speaking out about trolling.

Peter McCormack: 00:23:25

No, no, no, I'm not scared. I'm not scared.

Ginger Gorman: 00:23:27

Or worried.

Peter McCormack: 00:23:28

No, I'm not even worried. I'm aware. I'm not worried because if I was worried I wouldn't do it.

Ginger Gorman: 00:23:32

No, I mean, I was worried writing the book because I know the police don't help you. And I was interviewing Weev from the Daily Stormer that has a troll army that hunts people and stuff. I knew that I could get killed writing it. But the thing is, I didn't think there was a choice because of all those people that wrote to me and they were saying, nobody is helping. And I was like, I actually wrote to the publisher saying, "I'm sorry, this is too dangerous. My family's been threatened so much already. I can't write this book." And then I read all those emails, and I was like, "Someone has to do something because nobody's doing anything."

Ginger Gorman: 00:24:06

But what I was going to say to you about that concern, whatever you want to call it, that thought bubble, is trolls often don't attack you when you're on the front foot talking about trolling, because they want each of the week and alone. It's like domestic violence or domestic abuse. If they can see the target

is weak and alone and does not have a backup crew. That's when they go in for the juggler. When you're like me, and you're on the front foot and you're speaking out about it and exploring it, you get a totally different response. I have almost not been trolled about the book at all, except for D-level trolling. And when I get trolled about the book, it's hilarious because I you It to sell the book. So, I'll get like Clayton says I'm a lying whore, am I buy? My book and find out. And they hate that because I'm trolling them. Anyway, I've got off track now.

Peter McCormack: 00:25:07

Let me add into that because it's not that I'm worried. I'm just aware, it's going to happen. But I look at these things like, is it net positive or net negative? And I think by doing this and just having the conversation, I think it's a net positive. Even if there will be some morons coming out and saying, "Oh, look at you, you're a pussy." Or like, "Looking at you Pete, you're a snowflake," whatever, I accept that. But I do think it will be net positive and one of the reasons I do is that one of the interesting things and you'll probably be aware of this is that despite those messages I got, the trolling messages. I did get a whole bunch of really positive stuff that came to me, but it came in emails or private Dms. It was private support. My best guess is, there's a couple of reasons for that. One of them is people don't expose themselves to the trolls.

Ginger Gorman: 00:25:56

That's right. But also, I mean, I've just written a really big article for the ABC, which is the Australian Broadcasting Corporation. It's got nothing to do with the American ABC. It's very similar to the BBC in the UK. I wrote a big article for them about bystander behaviour. And that is one of the most important things you can do is give private support to the target, especially if you're a public servant, and you might lose your job by speaking out publicly or something. Private support to the target is incredible. Because really, if you're in that situation, you just need to know that people are behind you. They see what's happening. They support you, they support your work. But listen, my prediction, Peter, you can call me in six months and tell me.

Ginger Gorman: 00:26:37

My prediction is the trolling will not be very bad after you post this because you're actually out there talking about it. You're on the front foot, and you're talking to a trolling expert and you're picking it apart. You're owning your place in it. I mean, also trolls are narcissist. For a while there I was like, "Why do all these guys want to talk to me?" I'm their hate match. And part of why they

wanted to talk to me, there's two reasons. One was they feel marginalised and they feel like no one's listening, especially the kind of white supremacy outright trolls. They're your classic kind of Trump supporters or Brexit voters. A lot of these people, they just feel on the outer and marginalised economically, socially, the whole thing.

Ginger Gorman: 00:27:25

And so, the fact that someone like me spends five years talking to them, they feel really heard. So, once I put Signal and other encrypted apps on my phone, and I connected with these guys, they never shut up. They were like ding, ding, ding, ding. Sometimes I have to delete the apps because they just wouldn't be quiet. The other reason that trolls love it when you talk about what they're doing is because it's a culture to them. They are part of... If we go back to the motorcycle gangs that we have all over the world, it's an identity. And their presidents and vice presidents, they work together sometimes. They all know each other, and they have historical things that are happening in their communities. They have lore L-O-R-E, and they wanted them written down. And this is the same with a podcast like this. They want this to be recognised in society as part of the culture. So they're proud of it in a way. I would be amazed if you get really bad predator trolling after this. Tell me if you do, because I'm sure you won't.

Peter McCormack: 00:28:31

Yeah, but also, even if it does, I'm not too fussed about it, because I think one of the things is I'm coming out of it a bit more self aware. So, one of the other things I did after I read your article and listened to your book, and self reflected, I actually went and apologised to a few people as well. Some people I think I'd taken things too far or I've been a bit of a dick about because you've got to go through that process. I mean, they might even listen to this and they'll be aware, but there's at least five people I've just reached out to and said, "Look, I did this. I think that was a bit too much, and I'm sorry," blah blah blah.

Peter McCormack: 00:29:03

And now I think by researching it, understanding it, you come with the ammo for better behaviour yourself, but also like a better armory for dealing with the trolls. So one of the things now like when it comes in, rather than replying to each one or trying to rationalise with them, or even getting upset by it, I just go, "Well, you're probably a sadist, narcissistic psychopath." And I just go, "Right, you're a sadist, narcissist psychopath."

Ginger Gorman: 00:29:30

It's very useful. One of the things I say to people is psychological armor is a huge thing. When it happened to me, I was so sideswiped... Trolling had been around on really extreme levels, the predator trolling I'm talking about since about 2009. Particularly in the states it was well publicised, but in Australia in 2013, when it happened to me, I was completely sideswiped. I didn't even know it was a thing. I'm not really a techie person. I've never heard of it. So I think what you're saying is hugely valuable. Now, I've got like a buffalo hide on my ass. People will be like, "I'm going to kill your kids and cut your uterus out." I'm like, "Oh, yeah, you might, you probably won't." Because I know so much about it now. I know what to look for if someone is genuinely threatening.

Ginger Gorman: 00:30:26

I wish women in particular and marginalised people didn't get this kind of abuse. There are lots of cohorts of trolls, right? But the main dudes in my book are white supremacist outright guys. And they want... they're young. They're like 18 to 35, and they want to maintain this place at the top of the food chain. And so, they were attacking anyone other so a lot of times people who are being predator trolled in these groups, they're women, the ethnic minorities, people of colour, LGBTI, people with disabilities, they're not your average Joe. Trolls say we're not... Anyone can say anything on the internet. Words can't hurt anyone, and that's just not true. It's just not true.

Peter McCormack: 00:31:14

Well, you meant to be a tough guy. You must be able to handle this stuff, anyway.

Ginger Gorman: 00:31:19

Yeah, but I don't think once you've lost your job and your reputation's ruined, and you've been driven to suicide, or... I mean, this stuff that happens on the internet is far beyond what most people imagine. One of the things I talk about is the Daily Stormer's troll army basically inciting the riots in Charlottesville where Heather Hoyer died and a whole lot of other people were really badly injured to the point where they will never recover. I mean, block and delete is not going to solve that. So, we need to stop thinking that the internet is some kind of virtual world and real life is a different world. That's just garbage. Because if I order my groceries online, they come in real life. That is the same as trolling, or can be.

Peter McCormack: 00:32:14

Did you find yourself feeling sorry for the trolls, because that's, again, going

through the research. I've watched 10 videos on YouTube, read articles on your book. I also kind of came out feeling a little bit sorry for some of the trolls because you start to get into the psychology of them, and the behaviour, and you start to think, "Well, actually, it's kind of sad, actually."

Ginger Gorman: 00:32:35

Yeah. So look, Peter, I did something that most journalists wouldn't. I'm going back quite a long way to explain to you how I got here. I'm not a journalism evangelist. Over a decade I've had huge problems with the way that modern journalism is conducted. And it's conducted in this way where you have a false equivalence and you've got to be a goodie, or a baddie, and everybody's got to be held to account in a certain way. And there's a lot of evidence like there's evidence, there's a really interesting paper that came out of Cardiff University that found that this kind of false equivalence that the BBC does is actually really damaging to public trust. And it's kind of bullshit pretending that you're objective because nobody's objective, and what happens is we say something like climate change. You get every scientist in the world saying it's a thing and then you get Lord Monckton saying it's not. And then because we've got to have balance we put Lord Monckton in a story with eminent scientists saying the world is getting warmer.

Ginger Gorman: 00:33:44

I don't agree with a lot of the rules of traditional journalism, although I have been a journalist for 20 years. And what I came to because I... Most of my work is social justice. So I want to make society fairer, and I'm asking these questions. And the main one is how do we treat each other? How can society be fairer? And so, I often interview victims of trauma, and I do not follow any of the journalistic rules, really. I collaborate with them. My main thing is I want to hear them. If they want to change their quotes later, they can hear all their quotes. I don't want them to have any surprises. I want them to be able to talk about the difficult hard things and get into those dark places of humanity that no one wants to touch. So, I've been doing that for a long time before I came to this.

Ginger Gorman: 00:34:36

I'm a trolling victim, which we'll talk about in a minute. And that really damaged me and my family. But what I came to you with the trolls was just like, do we want to know who they are and what motivates them, and how to stop this? Or do we want to just be angry and pissed off and say that they're assholes, and this will keep going. And when I started writing the book and researching the

book, a couple of really prominent feminists wrote to me and they were so angry. Like, "How can you engage with the perpetrators in this way? Why are you giving them a platform? They're narcissists, you're giving them what they want." And I was just like, "Look, if you want to pull the weight out, you have to pull it out from the roots." One of them was so mad she's like, "They just want power." And I was like, "How do you know that? Have you asked them?"

Ginger Gorman: 00:35:31

And so, I went in with what I now know is called radical empathy. I didn't know it had a name. But basically, I wanted to really understand why would you send a death threat to someone that you don't know? Why would you try to get somebody killed? Who actually are you? And so, I connected with a bunch of these guys. I never in a million years thought they would want to talk to me, but they all wanted to talk to me because they feel like no one's listening. And I mean, look, to be honest, some of it was narcissism. Like Mark who's in my book, he's a really dangerous troll, and does get people killed. He told me it was for attention that he was a narcissist, and I know that. But I also did a bargain with the devil in a sense. I decided, okay, I understand this is giving you a platform. It's feeding into all your narcissism. But the harm that is being done to society is so much greater. I knew at that point, stuff like the Christchurch killings were going to happen.

Ginger Gorman: 00:36:39

I knew people were getting killed and shot and it was related to terrorism and stuff. And I was just like, "I'm going to pay the price of giving someone like Mark a platform, and go in with radical empathy because I have to." I don't feel like there's a choice. We're not going to solve hatred with hatred. My feeling from deep inside my gut was just like, we have to bring our greatest humanity to this. And it's not whatever we have been doing. So, I went in to talk to them in a way that I have never done with someone who I sensibly believe is at fault.

Ginger Gorman: 00:37:19

I've interviewed murderers and things like that before, but I've never had brought my whole heart to it. And I paid a price for it. I paid a really big price, but I also got information, and got an understanding that I don't think would have any other way. And so, for example, you're talking about feeling sorry for them. And you mainly talking about that chapter called The Internet Was My Parent. Is that what you were talking about? That chapter?

Peter McCormack: 00:37:47

Not specifically. It was more broadly. It was more just... because I've read so

much stuff. And on top of listening to your audio book that when I was going through the process, and learning about what drives a troll, it just kind of felt quite sad.

Ginger Gorman: 00:38:04

Yeah. It is. There's a chapter in my book Troll Hunting called The Internet Was My Parent. And that chapter was so profound to me. It was like being hit by a truck a bit. I was away on school holidays with my children visiting my mom at the coast, and she used to have this beautiful property here at the south coast in Australia. We were in drought, so there was no rain. And mom had the kids because I was trying to finish the final manuscript. And it just started to bucket rain, and I was staring out the window and was it was like each drop was kind of a thought. It's hard to explain. It was a surreal moment. And I realized that these guys, all of them had at one point told me the same story about their childhoods.

Ginger Gorman: 00:39:02

They were not brought up by people. They were brought up by the internet. And so, they were describing somewhere between the ages of 10 to 16 being in really neglectful homes, violent homes, lots of drugs, domestic violence, neglect. One kid talked about being completely starved. 10 years old, his dad went away on a work job for a week in the state, left him alone with no food in the house and he was going to school every day starving, and they were alone online. And so, what those kids were doing completely in-parented, so no one around to talk to, hug, kiss, explain anything. On the cesspits of the internet.

Ginger Gorman: 00:39:48

So, like 4chan, Reddit, Tumblr, 8chan, Endchan, imbibing all these ideologies, white supremacy, misogyny, lots and lots of racist ideologies. Just lots of different kinds of hatred. And I was like, "Oh my God." This is a kind of radicalisation, actually. And I don't think you can be amazed that you have these kids that are so alone, so isolated, they become so angry, and then they get spit out a few years later as the Christchurch killer.

Ginger Gorman: 00:40:30

The Christchurch killer is fascinating. Right after he did that massacre at the mosque in New Zealand I was just waiting and waiting, and then his grandmother came out in the press and she was talking about him. I think he spent a lot of time with his grandmother, but she at some point said he was a really weird kid. He was always alone on the internet. I was like, of course he was, he was radicalised into this stuff. I actually went to this radicalisation

expert, Dr. Clark Jones in my book, and he's an expert in ISIS and ISIS recruitment and all that and gang behaviour. And this is before all this happens, before Christchurch happened. And I was like, "Clark, I think this is kind of a radicalisation. Is this the same as how ISIS kids get recruited? They have these terrible upbringings. They feel lost, they feel isolated. And then they find these cohorts online." And he was like, "Yeah, Ginger, this is the same. This is exactly the same story." God, that struck terror into my heart. But yeah, think about that, how old are your kids? How old are your kids right now?

Peter McCormack: 00:41:45

15 and nine, and again that's another reason I want to do this as well because I'm fully aware that they are growing up in a time-

Ginger Gorman: 00:41:54

Absolutely.

Peter McCormack: 00:41:54

They don't know a time of no internet. We lived at a time without internet, they don't. And I'm fully aware of that.

Ginger Gorman: 00:42:00

Yeah. So when I think about my daughter, she's nine. And I think about these little boys, these are our children in our community that are going through this. And what I keep saying when I speak about these in public is, this is a crucial intervention point. Somebody needs to do a big scale study on this, and then work out this intervention point, because nobody should be parented by the internet. MeepSheep who I've become really good friends with. He still messages me every second, day, and we talk on Skype, and he's the right wing president of the GNAA. And people think I'm nuts, but we became really good friends through the course of writing the book, because a lot of things happened to him and he was so honest with me. He said to me, "Look Ginger, you're so alone. You're so isolated. You're so angry. And then you find this cohort of people who are like you, and you think that you can get back at the world with them together in this way." It makes sense to me, it really makes sense.

Peter McCormack: 00:43:12

Well, so what there is then, there's essentially victims on both sides of this.

Ginger Gorman: 00:43:16

There is-

Peter McCormack: 00:43:16

Is what you're saying just in different ways. And the other thing that really stood out to me, so another reason I really wanted to do this is when I was doing all the research, I read a couple of stories. You'll probably know both names, Charlotte Dawson and Leah Morrison. Two people who both took their lives because of online trolling. Mine wasn't as extreme as anything like that, and in the grand scheme of things wasn't particularly that big. And I will repeat, I'm guilty myself of doing some trolling, but at the same time, I recognise the early mental health effects, and just say it carried on. Just say I'd lost my sponsors, and I'd been stuck in Uruguay and I didn't know I was going to have my money. I saw the potential serious consequences to myself.

Ginger Gorman: 00:44:03

Absolutely. I mean we need to be careful with suicide, and I do talk about this in Troll Hunting as well. Suicide is usually not caused by one factor. It's like tributaries going into a river. And so, it's usually more than one thing. But I do really say that predator trolling at that extreme level like what you're talking about. What Charlotte went through, there's a lot, there's a whole chapter on Charlotte in my book. It is an extreme stressor, and if you already have other stressors in your life, financial, relationship, mental health, if you already have a number of stuff, a number of things going on, it's very dangerous.

Ginger Gorman: 00:44:47

We know this, and the thing that really pisses me off is plenty of kids in... there's a British kid who dies by suicide and it's related to online hatred in my book, and there's lots of Australian kids that have done the same like Dolly Everett, but we always go on and on and on about, oh, the children, the children, the children, they're so vulnerable in the internet. Yes they are, and I'm not saying that, but so with the adults. Almost every dead person in my book is an adult. So, it I mean the good thing about the book, the book nearly destroyed me, and I never ever want to write another book. Maybe I will one day, but it is changing the conversation.

Ginger Gorman: 00:45:33

I never I never thought it would be read by anybody outside of Australia, really. I wrote it in my pajamas, crying in Canberra. I was drinking all night. I was so alcoholic by the end of it because I didn't understand it was going to be so violent and so damaging. I'd turn up at school pick up looking homeless, basically. Not that there's anything wrong with being homeless, but I did look very disheveled and in very, very poor form. And the parents at the school I

think thought I didn't have a job and didn't, I don't know, there was shocked when the book came out that I'd actually been doing something.

Peter McCormack: 00:46:09

You should probably tell the backstory though, again, because I mentioned it earlier. It's an incredible story.

Ginger Gorman: 00:46:15

It is. And I mean, I was, before the interview with you I've been listening in the car to the audio book of my book just to keep it on the top of my head because I wanted to be fresh and I was listening to that part again going, "Oh, my God, I can't believe this is..." Like, if this was made into a movie, you'd get the script writers being told this is too complicated and convoluted. This would never happen in real life. It's just too complicated. It's so unlikely.

Peter McCormack: 00:46:48

Do you know what I just watched on my flight on the way here I watched the.... It's not the same story. I don't know, you might have a different view. But have you watched the new Netflix, Don't Fuck With the Cats?

Ginger Gorman: 00:46:59

No, but everyone's been tweeting me about it. So, I've got it, go on that. And everyone's been pinging me and saying, "If you like this movie, you've got to read Ginger's book." So I've got to get a... Yeah, and people were saying I couldn't look away. I don't know how Ginger wrote her book after watching that movie. So, I will, but so what happened was I'll just tell you in a nutshell. So I worked for Australia's public broadcaster the ABC for a long time. We have radio and TV very much like the BBC. So, I was the drive presenter in Cannes, which is in Far North Queensland for a stint of a year. And because I've always been really worried about human rights, that is quite a conservative part of Australia and I wanted to tell the stories of people who are LGBTIQ+, and look, these were not current affair Fox News kind of stories. These were feature stories about these people's lives and the way that they get treated. I did nine stories that were broadcast on the radio and posted on the internet.

Ginger Gorman: 00:48:07

One of the stories was about this gay couple Mark Newton and Peter Turong, who told me that they had had this child via surrogacy in Russia, and that he was Mark's biological child. And so, I spent a lot of time with that family. In 2010, I went to their home. They had this beautiful home. He was a gorgeous little boy, absolutely delightful, chatted to me, we played with his baby

chickens, and we just told this story about their lives and they had talked about how hard surrogacy was and how hard it was to get the child back into Australia and blah, blah, blah.

Ginger Gorman: 00:48:45

And so, I at that stage was pregnant with my first child and I'm from Canberra, so eventually, my husband and I came back to Canberra to have the baby towards the end of that year. And then I had the baby. I had a second baby. I was really pregnant with my second baby. And then I got the news, so we're talking probably around the end of 2012, beginning of 2013 that they were being investigated. Mark Newton and Peter Turong were being investigated as members of a pedophile ring, an international pedophile ring. And so, by the middle of 2013, I was at home with my new baby. My second baby, it was boiling hot, and they were charged and arrested in the United States and convicted of the most horrendous crimes against this child.

Ginger Gorman: 00:49:41

It turned out that the child wasn't a biological relative of either of the men. He had been purchased from his Russian mother for 8000 US dollars. And he had been sexually abused by them from the time of being two weeks old. And they had shopped him around all over the globe to all these other pedophiles, and he was so indoctrinated this kid, he was taught from a tiny age never to say anything to anyone about it. So, no one in the community knew anything about it. His teachers knew anything about it, the neighbours, nobody knew anything. The police, New Zealand police actually stumbled upon this by accident. It became a big international investigation.

Ginger Gorman: 00:50:27

I think I knew Peter, once I heard 2012, 2013, that they were being internationally investigated I knew, I was like, God. I know with a sting like that there's got to be a lot of evidence. And by the time they were charged, it's so hard to think about because I spent so much time with that kid, and I have a lot of grief for that child. I think about him all the time still. So, once-

Peter McCormack: 00:51:02

Just a quick question before you go on from that because one of the things I did want to ask you is do you know how he's doing now?

Ginger Gorman: 00:51:08

I know, and I've always wanted to start a trust fund for him actually. And I think I'm going to. I'm talking with another journalist about going back and doing

some more work on this. Look, I know that he is safe, and I know that he has ongoing access to psychological care. And he is with the family. I can't give you too much detail because the United States Postal Inspection Service who basically were in charge of this, the Indianapolis prosecutors asked me not to, but he's safe, he has ongoing access to specialist psychological help, and he is with the family of one of those guys. He is being brought up by them. It was difficult because the thing is, he had no family, really. His two "fathers" were horrendous pedophiles. His Russian mother had sold him. Where would he go? I always wish I could speak to him and talk to him and have a connection with him. I always think these stupid things. Like, if only I knew I just would have done anything. But anyway-

Peter McCormack: 00:52:23

Yeah, but you can't beat yourself up about that.

Ginger Gorman: 00:52:23

You can't, there's no way back. And I mean, the thing is, those guys had no criminal record at that time. There was no way. The police caught them accidentally. It wasn't like, they'd been chasing them for years and they knew what they were doing. They really didn't know. So look what happened once they were arrested, charged, and convicted is like I just became a target to these international hate campaign online. And so, this quite prominent journalist in the United States, conservative guy, used to work at the Washington Times, and not the Washington Post, The Washington Times which is a conservative newspaper there. So, quite a high stature, had loads like thousands and thousands of Twitter followers. He writes a blog, thousands of blog followers.

Ginger Gorman: 00:53:15

So, Robert Stacy McCain is this guy's name. And he wrote a couple of blog posts about me and he was really inciting people to shame me. And so, there's a lot of research about this too. If a conversation starts with incitement and hatred and trolling it continues that way. So, he included my Twitter handle in his posts and things like that and was really saying, shame her. And that's what his followers did. I was on maternity leave with my second baby like I said, and then just torrents of hate started pouring in. Then there was so much hate. It's like what you described, and your brain is almost overheating and exploding and you can't think straight, your heart's racing, you're full of adrenaline. People are saying these things. You're a pedophile enabler. You have to pay

for what you've done. You're morally culpable for this. They were telling the ABC that I should lose my job and things like that.

Ginger Gorman: 00:54:17

And so, then I got a death threat. And we were lying in bed late one night and I got this tweet saying your life is over. And I mean, you never know with threats like that. I know now that sometimes they do come true. They are real. I didn't know at that time. My tweets were geo located because I really wasn't techie. So you could actually pinpoint our house on Google Maps. And then at the same time, we found this, my husband, my then husband. I've separated from him recently, probably in no small part due to a lot of this actually, but yeah he found this photo of our family on a fascist website, and it was this beautiful photo where I was pregnant with my second baby. My two year old daughter was on his shoulders. And there was all this vile commentary. It was on Iron March, this fascist, this defunct fascist website.

Ginger Gorman: 00:55:09

My mom's family fled the Holocaust and quite a few of them were guests in the Holocaust. So the kind of two things together was just like pure terror. The thought that I remember, which I've written about in the book is we've got this tiny little house and my two little babies was sleeping in the next room. I could hear them breathing in that slow kind of nighttime breathing. And I just thought, "Did I just put their lives in danger because of my job as a journalist?" So yeah, that's where it started. I never... Listen, I can't even scroll on my Mac. I can't really use my iPhone. I'm not a techie person, and I was never interested in the internet, particularly, but I was interested in the humans. That's the thing. And I think that this is a human story in the end not an internet story.

Peter McCormack: 00:56:00

Yeah, I mean, it was a strange one because when I was first hearing it, I wasn't even thinking about you at the time. I was actually just thinking about the poor lad, and feeling very sorry for him. I hadn't fully come to the realisation of what you'd been through just because of hearing about that moment. Then I started to hear the story about people coming at you. And then that was one of the things that drove me to self reflect, to want to apologise to a few people. Because I know even with some of my own behaviour, whilst it might not have been personal shaming people. I think I'd manipulated certain situations in a way and used them against people. Yeah, that's definitely wrong.

Ginger Gorman: 00:56:47

I mean, it's hard because I don't... I think we've lost the ability to disagree.

Society is so polarised at the moment what a few generations ago would have been face to face interaction. It would have been someone going, "Hey, Peter, I read what you wrote about blah, blah, have you thought about this or that?" It's now like, "Fuck you Peter. You're a cunt. You're full of shit, and I'm going to kill your kids." That's something that's really interesting to me. Why have we lost the ability to disagree? And what is it about the particular tool that is the internet that makes us behave in this way? And I've actually thought about this a lot, about the idea of a tool, and whether a tool can insist on being used in particular ways, and I think it can.

Ginger Gorman: 00:57:36

So, there's a thing that I think it's really important that we talk about where you're talking about being quite aggressive online. I actually think there's a troll in all of us. I think no one is able to be absolved of that. Anyone that's-

Peter McCormack: 00:57:52

Let me throw something in there. Because the funny thing is, once you said that, and I've read that, I actually realise trolling isn't actually just tied to online. Trolling can be the front page of a newspaper or it could be a magazine, which shows some actress who's on a beach and it'll have a photograph of her cellulite. That itself is also trolling.

Ginger Gorman: 00:58:13

It is.

Peter McCormack: 00:58:14

I kind of became aware it's everywhere. And sorry, just to throw one other thing in there. One of the interesting balances that I have is I get to see both sides based on what you just said. I get to live and experience the Twitter stuff where it's just wars and fuck you and you're wrong, and he's wrong. And I also get to do... I've done over 200 interviews, and not a single interview I ever had has it ever resulted into an argument because it's face to face.

Ginger Gorman: 00:58:37

Yeah, well, that's right. I was about to say, I'm sitting here across from you. You seem like a lovely guy. We might not agree on everything, but we can have a civilized complex discussion. I think the point about the internet, there's this is academic term called the online disinhibition effect. And it is a really useful concept. So don't let your eyes glaze over because it's got this long boring title. Basically what the online disinhibition effect is, it means that we don't have a social contract on the internet. I can't see you, I can't look at your body

language. I can't meet your eyes. I can't smile at you or nod or look bored, or any of the things that we would do in real life to make that social contract happen.

Ginger Gorman: 00:59:23

And so, without those social cues that we have been conditioned to for millions of years, we have no social norms, and there is no social contract. And it's kind of gamified, right? So if I tell you to get fucked, I'm going to kill your kids. It doesn't matter. I can't see you. I'm not going to meet you at the local supermarket. It has no consequence seemingly to me. This is a really important idea, and to recognise it in yourself. Because I would never... I've trolled people. Sometimes I've done it on purpose. But I never have predator trolled anyone. So, I've never wanted to hurt anyone in real life. But I have definitely wound people up on purpose. And I think if most people are truthful, they would have as well. But knowing I deeply have imbibed the idea of the online disinhibition effect.

Ginger Gorman: 01:00:23

Now I sit around thinking, would you actually like, "Oh, my God, why is she saying that? I'm going to bite back and say this." I actually have a moment, a voice in my head going, "Would you actually say that in the supermarket to her? You probably wouldn't say don't say it now."

Peter McCormack: 01:00:37

You'd probably walk away.

Ginger Gorman: 01:00:38

Yeah. Or you'd say in a much different way. So, one of the things, like I said, I just wrote that big article about bystanders, and how bystanders can intervene in cyber hate. One of the things that I do online now is I actually enforce social norms the same as if I was at a party. So you know, when someone's drunk at a party and they're being rude and obnoxious, you probably get a couple of their mates going, "Hey, listen, Peter, you're just being a bit foul to Sally. So, do you want to just step outside for a minute and have a glass of water, and think about going home?" So, I actually... I'll give you an example. There's a friend of mine who's a journalist. Her name is Lisa Miller. We have a big national TV program on in the mornings on the ABC, it's like news breakfast. Lisa was filling in on New Breakfast, and she was great, she was really good but she'd get these tweets going, "Shut up, you bitch talking shit on the TV for hours," and just random old white men saying this stuff to her.

Ginger Gorman: 01:01:43

I was looking at this stuff just going, I'm just going to get in there and enforce social norms. So I was experimenting really, but also trying to protect Lisa. So just get in there and go, "Hi, Peter, just letting you know that in real life Lisa is a really lovely and hardworking person. And I wonder if you met her in the supermarket would you say that?" And then a few other people did the same, and it stopped. He stopped it. Because basically, we just enforced the social norm, which you would have offline. So, there's a massive thing we can do to help, which is actually be a great bystander. One of the tips is exactly what people do to you, which is writing to you privately and saying, "Hey, mate."

Peter McCormack: 01:02:27

So, that actually also happened for me. Two people in that week also got in touch with me. One specifically who I consider a friend now, and he'll know, if he's listening to this, he'll know who it. He just got in touch with me and he was like, "Pete, look, I think the wheels are kind of coming off for you online." And he was really good about it. He said, "Look, here's four examples of where I think you're losing it and losing context and blah, blah, blah, what's going on?" And we had a conversation and we talked about the fact that, look, I've been traveling a lot. I've done like 100 flights this year. I've been jet lagged, I've been stressed, I've not been self caring. It came to that realisation, but I actually had somebody step in and help me with that.

Ginger Gorman: 01:03:04

Yeah, I think it's really crucial to have bystanders watching out for each other and all of us saying, "We want the kind of civil society that exists offline to exist online," because the thing is, the internet is this incredibly powerful tool that should be being used for the good of humanity. I'm not saying all should agree. But what I am asking is, are we really willing to let the great potential of the internet to connect us all and have a voice and share knowledge and build community. Are we really willing to let that go to the likes of the cesspit on 4chan and Reddit. I mean, I sat for hours on Incel chat rooms, these are involuntary celibates that believe women have abandoned them. That you can use violence to get sex from women. You can punch them, you can rape them blah, blah, blah. These chat rooms would turn your stomach. I mean, is that what we really want?

Ginger Gorman: 01:04:05

The things that are rising in prominence and rising in power of these kinds of forums and they're having huge global impacts. Facebook has just been

implicated in a genocide in Myanmar. Not to mention the internet research agency skewing a democratic election. I mean, these are really big things that we are standing by at the moment and letting happen. And I think we need to talk about, Peter, where are these platforms, and the social media companies in all of this? Because-

Peter McCormack: 01:04:41

Yeah. I think this is the area we might start to disagree. Because you know the two words I'm now going to say to you, which is often the defense is free speech.

Ginger Gorman: 01:04:51

Yeah, but do you have free speech offline? You don't. If you couldn't sexually harass me or bully me at work or defame me, we have laws that limit your free speech for the good of individuals, but also for the good of society. I think it's hysteria the kind of way that people carry on about free speech absolutism online. Society does not actually have free speech anywhere offline, but for some reason we're hysterical about it online in a way that is not-

Peter McCormack: 01:05:30

I need to throw some context in here. So, the Bitcoin world I'm in. I don't know how much you know about that, but Bitcoin is about monetary freedom. It's about separating money state, you own your money. You can't censor transactions. You can't steal my money from me as a government. And that idea comes with some consequences that terrorists can use Bitcoin and pedophiles can use Bitcoin online to buy child porn and bad state actors such as North Korea can use Bitcoin. But ultimately, that's the price of freedom. There are a number of narratives that go alongside that. So, the right to self defense. We have different gun laws in where we live, but I spent a lot of time in the States. It's part of the constitution, the right to bear arms and defend yourself.

Ginger Gorman: 01:06:18

Yeah, and free speech is part of the constitution too. But, in actual fact, they have a lot of laws limiting free speech. So-

Peter McCormack: 01:06:26

Yeah, but a lot of the people listening to this show are going to be the types of people who believe in complete financial freedom. The complete freedom to own any weapon of their choice. They want no government. They want complete freedom of speech. So just that's the context of what the audience

is. So when we go down this route, there will be people listening and when at any point we talk about restricting speech, there are going to be people are going to say no, all speech should be free.

Ginger Gorman: 01:06:52

Yeah, no, I know that, but the thing is all speech isn't actually free. You get defamation cases every day of the week in the United States. And that's because we understand that words can hurt your reputation and have an impact on you as a person and economically. So there is not a person in a democracy who has free speech. They bang on about it as if they do, but it's not true. If I was sexually harassed at work in Britain, in the United States, in Australia, I could take that to court. And if I proved it, I would win. And so, the thing is, you can't actually ever say exactly what you want. You can claim that you want to and you can bang on about free speech absolutism, but nobody actually has that because you live in society. I mean, it's nonsense. It's an absolute nonsense.

Peter McCormack: 01:07:45

This is something I'm really wrestling with. So, by the way, I've also been sued in the High Court of the moment for defamation by an Australian actually.

Ginger Gorman: 01:07:53

Okay, so that person. Somebody feels that you've infringed their rights. So our rights as individuals are not absolute. Unless you want to go live on a desert island by yourself, you can do what you like. But if you're in society, you don't actually have the right to absolute freedom in any way. And where you're... I mean, the thing is, I think it's actually pretty basic. It's where your free speech hurts me. That's where it ends.

Peter McCormack: 01:08:25

Well, so this is where I really wrestle with this. I am struggling with it because when I speak to somebody as a free speech advocate, I understand and appreciate every point of view. I kind of agree with it. It's a really well rationalised argument every single time. Most of the time because once you start to restrict speech, and then it becomes subjective, it can become a slippery slope. Like for example, people who've been banned from... I just read about a guy who's just been sentenced to 16 years in prison for burning an LGBT flag. That's like an extreme example. But also you've got people who have been say banned from Twitter for stating biological fact. Joe Rogan talks about this. I can't remember the lady but she said, a man and a man, and a woman is a woman biologically. Wear what you want, dress what you want,

and she got banned. So, I understand and support free speech. Where I really struggle with it is people who want to go online, they want to tell people to kill themselves. Send the most abusive messages and go, "Oh, yeah, but free speech."

Ginger Gorman: 01:09:28

That's right though.

Peter McCormack: 01:09:29

I really wrestle with that.

Ginger Gorman: 01:09:30

Yeah, so the thing is, okay, well, there's so many things in what you've just said. First of all, why are these huge companies, private companies that are making billions of dollars from our data who are not accountable to the public, why are they the abusers of free speech? Facebook for example, will take a photo down of a breastfeeding mother, but not take down videos or allow the Christchurch massacre to be broadcast live on Facebook Live. Why does that happen?

Peter McCormack: 01:10:06

Well, I think on the Christchurch when it happened, but I don't think they would have wanted that. And I think if they could have instantly stopped it, they would have.

Ginger Gorman: 01:10:13

No, wait a minute. I went to them and I told them that product wasn't safe. They knew how unsafe it was. They wanted that product on the market. So, the thing is that those companies are far more interested in profit than they are in keeping anybody safe or mirroring the social norms of society. That's not what they're interested in. They've been bleeding about stopping cyber hate since 2006. If they wanted to, they would. They've got the best engineers in the world working for them. They don't want to because it makes them money when there's huge cyber hate events on their platforms.

Ginger Gorman: 01:10:47

There's a huge report from the Peace Center where they canvas like 1500 internet experts, more than that from around the world, and they're all saying. They're all saying the same thing. The thing that is baffling to me is why are all these people who are banging on about free speech absolutism happy to put up with limits to their free speech in their real lives, but for some reason on the internet they're not. To me those things are not different. I think-

Peter McCormack: 01:11:19

I think some of the people I talk to actually don't see a difference. The kind of communities I've been mixing within in the Bitcoin. They don't see a difference. And again, that's why I regulate it... Sorry, that's why I struggle with it because any sort of regulation speech scares me. But at same time, I also hate the fact there are people out there who can drive people to misery, sadness.

Ginger Gorman: 01:11:42

Yeah, but the thing is, no one would say to me, like we said in the supermarket, I'm going to cut your uterus out and kill your children. They wouldn't because the police would come and arrest them, but they do want the internet and to me there's no difference.

Peter McCormack: 01:11:56

No, I agree with you.

Ginger Gorman: 01:11:57

I think that speech can harm you, and the thing is there is decades of evidence. Decades and decades of academic research to show that dehumanising speech causes violence like the Holocaust, like the Rwandan genocide. So, it's absolute garbage when free speech absolutists say words on the internet never harmed anyone. Yes, they did. They incited the Charlottesville riots and Heather Heyer is dead. Yes, they did.

Peter McCormack: 01:12:26

Oh yeah. And Rwanda was a great example.

Ginger Gorman: 01:12:27

Yeah.

Peter McCormack: 01:12:30

Because that was brought to me by a friend of mine. He said, because it was radio, television, Libres des Mille Collines, basically RTLM was the Rwandan radio station, which highly contributed to that massacre.

Ginger Gorman: 01:12:43

That's right. And so, with the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, the United Nations just implicated Facebook in that genocide. So, there's a direct link between online hatred and offline hatred. Hatred that is whipped up and propagated and proliferates, and real life violence. So, I mean, if we can all agree that we

don't want something like the Christchurch massacre to happen again, then we have to also agree that at some point, speech can be harmful, and it should be limited in some ways. I mean, we're not talking about stopping freedom of expression. Every democracy, democracies are of better quality and lesser quality. They're not all the same, and they're complex and different in every society. But basically, in most democratic countries, you can more or less say what you want, unless you harm somebody else.

Ginger Gorman: 01:13:48

I just don't want a society where young white men can force other... I mean, this is the irony as well. I had a huge argument with Weev about this. Weev is probably the world's most notorious troll. And I was saying the things that you do terrorise other groups and other people. Victims that you choose who are usually marginalised to the point where their liberties are taken away. They don't have freedom of expression. They don't even want to leave the house some of the people who... They're so scared some of the victims of the Daily Stormer troll army and they should be. Aren't you taking away their freedoms? He was absolutely livid. He told me to get off the internet. And I'm like, so okay, so I can't use the tool. I don't have the right to use the tool? I don't think those arguments are genuine. I think they're a type of trolling actually.

Peter McCormack: 01:14:53

Well, they are, but you're dealing with a person who is a sadist, so they get pleasure from upsetting someone. They're a narcissist so they love the attention, and they're psychopathic. So they can't empathise with what's happened to somebody else. So that's one of the things I've learned is you can talk to some people, but there are some trolls, you can't rationalise with them. You can give them truth and facts, they don't care. You can explain the consequence to you as a human, they don't care, so it's almost pointless exercise.

Ginger Gorman: 01:15:20

But isn't it interesting that with my interview with Weev who's one of the world's most outspoken free speech absolutist, that when I really put these hard questions to him and was really asking him about taking away other people's liberties, he ended up just shouting abuse that I was a fucking kike and essentially shouting so loudly and so angrily that I wasn't able to speak. So, that's actually right there in a nutshell, the way that I see free speech absolutism operating. It's actually not about giving everybody a voice and making sure everybody has freedom of expression. It's about people who

have particular bigotries and particular worldviews wanting to dominate and spread that hatred in a way that suits them, and shut other marginalised voices down and it's not a kind of society that I want to live in.

Peter McCormack: 01:16:21

What do you think the answer is, then?

Ginger Gorman: 01:16:23

I don't think there's one answer. I think it's a really complicated situation. Each of us need to understand that we have a role to play online and a lot of the things we've been talking about today like understanding online disinhibition effect, understanding when you're being more aggressive, wanting to build stronger communities, giving other people a voice, all those things is important. Having psychological armour, being a good bystander. I've developed techniques whereby bystanders can intervene and stop cyber hate on behalf of other people kind of on mass, and it's amazing. It's like a reverse trolling. So there's a lot that we can do as individuals, but I am also really hesitant to go, it's up to the victims. It's up to individuals.

Ginger Gorman: 01:17:13

My broad brushstroke view is that the mechanisms that keep us safe offline have to exist online, and at the moment they don't. So law enforcement needs to be a lot better. Oftentimes, the laws are really good. I just read all the British laws the other day and the advice that British Parliament gives about the current laws, they're not new laws. They're laws about hatred and inciting harm and things. The police don't understand them. Police around the world are failing at this. So if you went to the police in the situation you were in the other day where someone was genuinely threatening you they would say stay off the internet love. I guarantee you they would. They don't-

Peter McCormack: 01:17:54

That's not in every scenario because people in the UK have been prosecuted for-

Ginger Gorman: 01:17:59

Yeah, I mean, listen, you might get one of the three police in Britain that know how to deal with it and investigate it and have the resources and the skills, technical skills to do it. You might, great, but most people don't. And it's the same around the world. Although UK Metropolitan Police has got an online hatred trolling Task Force. So, that's quite revolutionary. And in Colombia, they're doing an amazing job at this. They've got a whole cyber hate... I don't

know what to call it, team, but it's all different kinds of cyber hate, and they're all in the same building. I think it's called C5. So there are some countries that are doing better but it's glacial.

Ginger Gorman: 01:18:39

Police around the world need to be resourced and trained to deal with this and to understand how serious the crimes are that are linked to this stuff, but also the social media companies just are missing in action. I don't understand why we have let these monolithic companies like Facebook and Twitter are bigger... They have more users than the populations of India and China put together. They pay almost no tax. They make billions of dollars from our data. Why are we letting them create a community space where people are coming to such harm? And we believe them, we just believe them. They keep saying we're going to fix it. And they never do. Governments have to regulate this stuff. Otherwise, I'm just waiting for the next massacre.

Peter McCormack: 01:19:35

Yeah. So again, what I will say in prep for the people who will listen to this who are my audience, look, there's going to be a lot who will really disagree with this.

Ginger Gorman: 01:19:45

Yeah, I don't care.

Peter McCormack: 01:19:46

I'm just saying, it's something I'm wrestling with myself.

Ginger Gorman: 01:19:48

Listen, if you go buy a car, what's in the car? Seat belts, airbags, cars are designed to be safe and keep you from harm. I'm not saying people never get killed in cars, they do. But basically what we did around the world to reduce trauma on the roads is we made better roads. We created more public safety awareness. We put more police on the roads. We created better laws, and we made better cars. To me, Facebook, and these things are like... It's like we've got this company that's putting unsafe cars on the road, and we don't care. I find it amazing.

Peter McCormack: 01:20:28

But I think where the difference of opinion will be here is that the belief that the government are the best people to regulate this, to make the change.

Ginger Gorman: 01:20:39

Well, it's been over a decade, and what are they doing? Nothing. Fuck all. They're not doing anything, you know? And you're going to read about another suicide in a minute, you know what I mean? These stories, like that story I sent you about the American journalist who was epileptic and got sent a tweet that was designed to give him a seizure. That's ridiculous that a platform like Twitter gets away with publishing something like that. I mean, the thing is, they've been saying they're not publishers forever because it doesn't suit them. But in fact, they are publishers.

Peter McCormack: 01:21:19

So yeah, this is the area I am really wrestling with because I've gone down this rabbit hole libertarianism, wanting to take powers away from the state, but at the same time wrestling with these issues and I don't know the answer.

Ginger Gorman: 01:21:34

I mean, the thing is, there's this sort of hysteria about taking freedoms away, but most of us function in daily life with the freedoms that we have in a perfectly fine capacity. I just think it's hysteria about censorship that-

Peter McCormack: 01:21:53

Yea, it's another rabbit hole you and I could spend another hour on.

Ginger Gorman: 01:21:56

We could. No, we could. But I mean, I just am a very practical person. I want a free equal and fair society. But I also refused... I want a pluralistic society too where people that are in marginalised groups can speak and still do have rights. And at the moment, the internet is not that place. People that should be sharing their views and making society more rich and interesting are being driven off those platforms. So, whatever we're doing right now isn't working.

Peter McCormack: 01:22:29

Well, here's been a lot here. Thank you so much for doing this because I know you get a lot of requests.

Ginger Gorman: 01:22:37

I do. I never... it's a bit... Look, it shocks me more than anything. The weirdest thing is seeing yourself quoted in a different language. I've been quoted recently in Dutch, and in Norwegian and I'm like, "Cool. That's a nice picture. I wonder what this article says." I don't even know if I'm being misquoted. I went to Norway recently and it was crazy. I just got mobbed by the media there

because a lot of the white supremacists, their hero is Anders Breivik, and someone tried to copy the Christchurch killing just a few weeks ago just outside Oslo. So yeah, I wasn't expecting that when I went there. I know.

Peter McCormack: 01:23:18

Well, I know you get a lot of requests from all over the world, and I know you don't accept them all. So, somehow something I said got through and you agreed to do this. So, I really do appreciate it. And thank you again for your book. That was very helpful to me and also your writing.

Ginger Gorman: 01:23:32

Thank you.

Peter McCormack: 01:23:32

I do wish you the best of luck, continue with this. I've got a feeling this isn't going to be the last time we're going to talk.

Ginger Gorman: 01:23:39

Thank you. I'd love to talk to you again.

Peter McCormack: 01:23:39

But I wish you the best with it. But please do just for everyone listening if they want to find out more, tell them where to find you, your work, the book, everything. You deserve a little spot in the limelight here to emphasise what you're doing.

Ginger Gorman: 01:23:50

Oh, thank you. So, I'm on Twitter and I'm mad on Twitter. So, it's just @gingergorman G-I-N-G-E-R G-O-R-M-A-N, and my book is called Troll Hunting. You can find it anywhere. It's in the UK, it's in the US, it's in Australia. So yeah, you can find me.

Peter McCormack: 01:24:08

Well, I will share that all out in the show notes. And yeah, I'll let you know when this is coming out. I haven't actually decided which show to go out on. My Bitcoin show is a Bitcoin show, right? And very occasionally, I'll do something where we don't talk about Bitcoin. I did a gun show recently, and I've talked to adult performers and things like that. It's got a bigger audience. So, I'm tempted to put out that, but also my other show Defiance feels in line with that. I haven't actually decided. I might even ask people on Twitter what they think, but I appreciate your time.

Ginger Gorman: 01:24:36

No, lovely to talk to you.

Peter McCormack: 01:24:38

And anything I can do for you in the future, you let me know.

Ginger Gorman: 01:24:40

Thank you.