

# When it Mattered

## Episode 15: James Carville

Chitra: Hello, and welcome to When It Mattered, a podcast on how leaders are forged in critical moments and how they deal with and learn from adversity. This episode is brought to you by Goodstory, an advisory firm helping technology start-ups find their narrative. My guest is the legendary James Carville. He's an internationally recognized political strategist and media commentator. He's a best-selling author, public speaker, sports commentator, lawyer, and a prominent advisor in the Democratic Party. Nicknamed the Ragin' Cajun because of his spirited discourse and his Louisiana roots, Carville gained global recognition as the campaign manager who helped elect Bill Clinton President in 1992. He served as a long time CNN co-host and commentator. He currently teaches in the School of Mass Communications at his alma mater, Louisiana State University, home of his beloved LSU Tigers. James, welcome to the podcast.

James Carville: Thank you, this is a big honor to be on. It's great.

Chitra: Is it fair to say that you are a bit of a late bloomer? You burst on the national political scene when you were almost 50 as the campaign manager who helped Bill Clinton win the Presidency. What were you up to before you found politics or before politics found you?

James Carville: A lot of stuff that's not suitable for your podcast. Yeah, I got married when I was 49, and I've only been married once, and I've been married for almost 26 years now. I was 48 when President Clinton got elected, so I guess it's safe to say I was a late bloomer, but bloom I did.

Chitra: You did. What was your first political campaign like? I guess you were a lawyer before you discovered politics and your natural affinity for it.

James Carville: I think I discovered politics before I was a lawyer. First campaign I ever worked on was at like 13-14 years old. A guy running for state representative in Louisiana, my job was to go tear the other guy's signs off the telephone poles. Maybe I was 15, because I had to

drive. So, when I was 15, I would go around every little place in Louisiana and tear the signs up of the political partner off the telephone poles.

Chitra: That's great. A lot of our listeners may not know that your last name Carville is actually the name of the town where you were born and raised. Carville, Louisiana, named after your paternal great-grandfather and postmaster Louis Arthur Carville. So, you have deep multi-generational roots in Louisiana. Can you talk a little about that?

James Carville: By way of interest, my great-grandfather was actually a soldier in the Union army and was a Republican member of the Louisiana legislature doing reconstruction. He died and his wife, my great-grandmother became the postmaster and then my grandfather took over and then my father took over. So, we are a family of postmasters.

Chitra: That's wonderful, and you're the oldest of eight children, right?

James Carville: Yes, correct.

Chitra: And your mother was a school teacher and then she sold encyclopedias, and your dad came from that long line of postmasters and he also owned a general store.

James Carville: Yeah, he was a postmaster and ran a general store. My mother, she taught school for a little while and when she had a lot of kids to educate, she sold World Book Encyclopedias to supplement the family's income.

Chitra: So, how did you go from your Louisiana roots to a national and global thinker? What was the most important factor in that evolution as a leader?

James Carville: You know, Chitra, t's very interesting. I was working in Baton Rouge and without the necessity of detail, I decided one day that I was about to go crazy or go out of town, and I kind of thought the second was the best option, and a couple of friends of mine that I worked with in national politics said, "Well, maybe you should try this." I got a job running a campaign in Virginia in 1982, which we lost. Then, I ran a campaign in Texas in 1984, which we lost. So, I was kind of off to a bad start. I started getting hot in a winning streak and life turned out different and better for me.

Chitra: Helping Clinton win the presidency must have then been an extraordinary moment in your family when the Carville name suddenly was globally known.

James Carville: Yeah, it was. It's quite extraordinary. Not very many people would have a chance to, as we say in our profession, the night when a presidential election is, you breathe the rarest air on Earth. I got a chance to do that, and I'm forever grateful for it.

Chitra: Being one of eight kids, what lessons did you learn from that and how did that help you in life?

James Carville: You know, you just kind of learn, but the thing with big families is people are marveled by them, but the truth of the matter is parents stop raising children after about the third one and the fourth child, particularly if it's a female, raises the first child. I think we also were more cramped, I don't know, I had a happy childhood. I can't deny it. I don't have a tale of woe; I didn't have to overcome any emotional scars from my parents or anything like that. I was a well-adjusted child, and I'm grateful for that.

Chitra: You were of the university age, and a young student when the country was in turmoil in the 60's, all of that social upheaval and the Vietnam War and the peace movement and the student movement. Did that touch Louisiana and how did that affect you?

James Carville: Well, of course it touched Louisiana profoundly because I was in the United States Marine Corps. It was a kind of odd thing to be in a two year enlistment time. From June of 1960, June the 6th, the date of the devil, I'll never forget. June 6th or 5th of 1968. I was profoundly touched by the Vietnam War. I continued to be haunted by it. My brother was a Vietnam veteran who was led to an early death because of what happened to young people over there when at war, got involved with substances that, you know, were not good for him. The rest is what happens to people. It's just a disaster, and I went back to Vietnam. I would've never went, first time I went was last year. And it's just a terrific place, the people are just as nice and industrious and hard working as you can imagine. I had this overwhelming thought "What in the hell were we doing over there napalming these people?" I mean it was so manifestly stupid that the more I think about it, the more I shudder.

Chitra: Now you have tremendous discipline in your personal and professional life, your punctuality, you have a daily routine, you go to bed early, you run every day. Did some of that come from your

time in the Marines, and how did that contribute to your enormous success?

James Carville: I got out of the Marine Corps and I was kind of lethargic, and kind of overweight and everything, and one day, I don't know what motivated me, I started to work out, and some older guy kind of pushed me along. And basically since August the 1st, 1981, I've worked out probably 350 days a year. And I've probably lost 45 pounds, and I've kept them off. If you get a routine, and then I just came to appreciate. I do like a routine, I like to get up early. If I'm tired sometimes I find myself going to bed a little later and getting up a little later than I used to, but I was notorious for being the first person into headquarters. I didn't like meetings; I never had an office. I tried to discourage people, I tried to encourage action and discourage over-deliberation.

Chitra: Now the Clinton campaign was such a turning point for you, you know, fame and money, speaking engagements, books, documentaries, and as you said you were in the most rarefied air of all, but then you decided not to work in any more domestic campaigns, although you've advised many candidates. Why did you make that decision to walk away from domestic campaigns?

James Carville: Well at the time, first of all, I would have been an issue to myself. The truth of the matter is in the United States, once you become a famous person, all you can do is be famous. It does not allow you so much to be productive, and I loved politics, and I still had a sense of adventure, and I've worked in 22 different countries and I'm kind of winding that part of my life down, but it was quite an experience.

Chitra: You started working on these foreign campaigns, what was that like to work on foreign campaigns? It must have been a difficult proposition.

James Carville: You know, it's not as hard as you'd think, cause basically I was a communications advisor and most people receive information the same way. It's not up to me to learn the nuances of a political system, but help candidates and political parties develop a way to communicate, to use emotion, you know. I never had a whole lot of trouble with it. You know, Some people worship on Friday, and some on Saturday, and some on Sunday. You know, people have different cultures and that kind of stuff, but most people around the world are not to be different from one another.

Chitra: Now what was your most favorite foreign campaign?

James Carville: It's a good question, I've thought about it. Probably Colombia, and the reason is my client won a Nobel Prize, stopped the longest ongoing conflict that they've had since probably . . . the fight between FARK and the government of Columbia, rather, I don't know how many years that went on. He won a Nobel Prize, we had a very tough reelection that we won. Of course as everything happens in this world, it looks like even that deal is going South, it's not something to be proud of and it's something to be concerned about. I worked in Afghanistan, and I liked it. Seychelles you know to get paid cause you know, get a first class ticket to the Seychellse. Pretty good duty, that's kind of the long haul. I've worked in Indonesia, you know, Israel, Brazil, Argentina I've worked in a lot. You know, Bahamas. Met some interesting people and done some pretty good things.

Chitra: Now you've seen democracy in all shapes and sizes and colors. Has that given you a different perspective on political campaigns and politics in the U.S., particularly where we are here today?

James Carville: The thing that you learn in other places that I thought we could and I've now learned we can't is when you work in Argentina, you can't take democracy for granted, they don't have a great democratic small beaked tradition if you will. That's true in a lot of places, and I was always to the point of I hate to say this, almost arrogant that, I wouldn't say it, our democracy, what's happening to it., I mean look what's happening in the United Kingdom, I mean who would've thought you would have this and you would have it in a relatively prosperous time? I think the entire thing is very troubling. I have no idea what the reaction in this country is going to be, but the economy inevitably always does go south. I mean if we're acting like this when our economy is running at near capacity, I'm sickened to think about what it's going to be in the future.

Chitra: Now looking back on your life for a minute before we look at the election landscape here, what would you say was the moment of greatest adversity in your life? Some lesson you learned or something that happened in your life or your family's life?

James Carville: I guess we all kind of look back, and we want that one story that explains everything, that one great bubonical teaching moment, if you will. I don't know if I can point to one thing that happened like that. What I do know is I was practicing law one day, and I sat at my desk and I literally remember saying this, "If I had to hire a

lawyer, I wouldn't hire me. So I'm going to quit." Cause I just wasn't very good at it, and I was older. Frankly I could ride a horse really good, I was a really good horseman, and I was a way better than average marksman. I was a high school athlete, I was a middleing law student, and then I started in politics.

James Carville: And I remember in 1988 in New Jersey and I sat at my desk one morning and said "If I had to hire a campaign manager, I would hire me," which was just one of the greatest moments in my life, just a private moment I had with myself at 6:15 in the morning with a cup of coffee, but it was an exhilarating feeling to at least think of yourself as the best there.

Chitra: And once you find that kind of superpower, literally there's nothing to stop you. And that's hard to find sometimes.

James Carville: Yeah, sometimes you need to know you're smart. I was cocky and had confidence, I had about my abilities. You know, confidence never hurt anybody. Hubris is one thing, but confidence is quite another.

Chitra: And you say that a lot of your confidence came from your mother's love for you and confidence in you.

James Carville: Yes, it did. My mother knew how to sell. I could tell you this story because it shows how she could sell. So she'd sell these encyclopedias and I was 12, 13, and we would ride around South Louisiana and she'd always say "We're going to look for a fast boat, a fishing boat, and a bicycle." And she knew how to economically target people because that meant that household had some disposable income and had children. So that was the only people that would buy education materials, and we would knock on the door and this is late 1950's south of Louisiana, and people were kind of gracious and they'd let you in their house. By the way, it was kind of revolutionary because we would go door to door in African American houses too, but I digress for the moment.

James Carville: And it inevitably happened that a lady would come and we'd sit around and she'd look at me, and she'd say "Son, what's the capital of Vermont and I'd say Montpelier, What's the capital of Washington State, Olympia, oh my God he's a genius! Well, yeah, he's got the World Book Encyclopedias." And then a lady would come in and bring the man of the house in and he'd say "Well, this looks great, but it's October and we've got the holidays coming up, and we're a little strapped. And maybe after the first of the

year, you can come back and we'll talk about it." And she'd look up and she said "You know sir, I find it interesting that you can buy a fast boat for yourself but you can't buy educational material for your children." And the guy was crushed. He'd sign anything. You'd just watch him almost obliterated in front of his wife, he almost started crying.

Chitra: Nothing like the good guilt trip, right, once in a while.

James Carville: Right, and I mean they didn't know where it was coming. And she was a woman that had presence. And the guy, he just melted. He was stuned.

Chitra: And what did that teach you?

James Carville: Well it teaches you that first of all you got to know who you're going for, i.e. Let's separate them out. Let's get the target voters, let's get the people we can get. Let's get the people with the fast boat and the bicycle, and then you've got to get in and sell. It's exactly what politics is. So you know who are the people who live in these states that can make a difference: what demographic group, anything that you see can make a difference. You learn that driving around in a car selling encyclopedias. A lot of people think there's something unseemly about selling, and unless they're really, really talented, they're genuinely terribly unsuccessful and unhappy in their lives. Now I know they're coders and artists and reclusive novelists, and you know we used to laugh.

James Carville: The expression is that if you're going to try to succeed in life, you'd better learn how to bend over and kiss ass. And we always tell a story about Faulkner who said that he quit working in the post office because he wasn't at the beck and call of every S.O.B. who had three cents to spend on a stamp. And if you're Faulkner, that's fine. You can do that. If you're Faulkner, you can tell the world to shove off. However, if you're remotely like me and not Faulkner, decidedly not Faulkner, then you have to engage the world.

Chitra: And that's a good thing to know about yourself.

James Carville: Yeah. I'm not William Faulkner, I can't go and sit along the Mississippi and not talk to anybody and hang out epsilon epsilon. I don't have the skills to do that. And I accept it so, "I've got to be at the beck and call of every son of a bitch who's got three cents to spend per stamp."

Chitra: Going back to the theme of big decisions, you got married and became a father well into adulthood. What was that experience like? And subsequently you also made a big decision with your wife Mary to move to New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.

James Carville: Right. Well, being an older parent, I was very aware of the biological risk involved in this and mercifully and thankfully it turned out fine. My children are well, they've done quite well, very well. In terms of moving back to Louisiana, the best way I can put it is I was like an old Jew, and I had just been in Brooklyn too long. I just wanted to go back to Jerusalem or whatever. I don't know how to explain it, but after the storm, I just couldn't take anything else, missing everything. My wife agreed, so we went back. I did not want to grow old among strangers. It was very far for me.

Chitra: Yeah, I mean a lot of us who are transplants never have that sense of roots that you've experienced, being from Louisiana.

James Carville: Right, one of the great glories of my life is I did have a place to go back to, where I would be appreciated and accepted, and where I completely understood the culture. If you're not from there, it's kind of hard, but our culture's different, and it's kind of not for everybody, but once it's ingrained in you, it never leaves you. I mean, you can leave South Louisiana. South Louisiana is never going to leave you. Right, you can't wash it off, you can't forget about it, you can't do anything.

James Carville: It was who we are, and given my life's mission is the horrific environmental problems that we have, which we in South Louisiana are Ground Zero, and everything that we see, we are aware of what is happening. To the extent that I can, I'm trying to rally the troops to be even as aggressive as they possibly could be. This thing in the Bahamas was sickening, people don't even realize how bad it was. Not that it was a category five storm, this was the fifth category five storm we've had in four years. These storms are starting to be stationary, and so if you think about it, they stay still like 40 hours. That's the same thing that happened in Houston, and the same thing that happened in North Carolina. We had a category four, a high four in Late October in the Florida Panhandle.

James Carville: What's happening is there was a guy actually, a scientist, who studied rainfall tables in Louisiana and found out that the duration of rain is constant over the years, but the intensity has gone up manifold. We aren't getting more hurricanes than we used to, we're just getting worse, and I mean much worse, than we used to.



And this is the first time since recorded hurricanes that we've had four years of category fives in a row. I don't want to get started on this, but I can't help it. The idiot in IC, the Idiot in Charge, tweeted out that nobody had even heard of a category five. He said four was unprecedented. I mean the river was against the levy in Baton Rouge for 211 days. It was fifteen inches from the top of the levy, and we had a gubernatorial candidate in Louisiana run an ad saying he wanted to build a wall on the Rio Grande.

James Carville: The level of stupidity that we're dealing with here at an existential moment, and for sure in my hometown and my area but I think it's for the rest of the world too, is remarkable. It's remarkable. And not in a good way.

Chitra: So looking ahead at the Democratic campaign here for 2020, when you ran the Clinton campaign, you had a list posted in the campaign War Room to help yourself and your team focus, and the three important campaign themes were "Change versus the same, the economy is stupid, and don't forget healthcare." If you were to do something similar in the 2020 race, what would you advise the current slate of candidates they should focus on to win the race?

James Carville: Look, there's not great policy difference among democratic candidates. Everybody wants to expand healthcare, everybody wants to do something about climate, everybody wants to stop the inhumane treatment of families on our border, right? Everybody is concerned with income inequality, everybody thinks that taxation needs to be more progressive and we all agree with that. What the country is looking for is somebody that can just take the temperature down. But understand that the policy differences that we're dealing with here are not great. And if the Democrats don't win the Senate, which I'm sorry, we've got to pick up four, probably five seats, we've got to be nice and we've got to fight for votes everywhere. You know, Chitra, 18 percent of the United States elects 52 senators. You're not going to change the country. You can have all of them. Elizabeth Warren can be President, and Nancy Pelosi can be Speaker. If Mitch McConnell is the majority leader, and John Roberts and Brett Kavanaugh are running the Supreme Court, you know what's going to happen? Nothing! And people are going to go in with high hopes and it's just going to be the same cycle. And it's like I can see this coming and I'm trying to scream at people, guys, we've got to come up with a different way to do this.

James Carville: I'll watch the debate, I watched the climate debate. You can't have a climate debate unless you talk about exhaustive engineering, and I mean you're not going to get this thing right enough without higher levies, you're not going to get it right without better drainage, without more spillways, you need more green spaces, you need more sinks, you need more outlets, and you're going to need to engineer things like high speed rails, efficient engines, alternative energy. Solar, all these things .

James Carville: Next thing is, I'm sorry, you have to put nuclear on the table. People are not going to without a great deal of angst have a decline in their standard of living. They're going to have air conditioning, they're going to have lights at night, alright? And not just us, but around the world. I mean, you can't tell me that people in the United States, China, or India, Indonesia, or Brazil can't come up with a safe sound design for nuclear energy. And then we're going to have to have diplomacy, because we're not just reengaging Paris, but we're going to have to really reengage Paris.

James Carville: And then we're going to need to tax carbon. I mean, it doesn't take an economic genius, you don't have to be John Maynard Keynes to know that if you deem something not that is good and you tax it and you have less of it, and you give tax rights to things that are good. So higher taxes on carbon, subsidies for renewables, you've got to do all of that. You've got to have engineering. There's no one size fits all.

James Carville: I mean, time is not on our side. Time is really working against us, and it's really working against climate sensitive places, like the people who live in river deltas, like us. I think 20 percent of the world's population lives in river deltas. So many people live in Mumbai, so many people live in Lagos, or Bangkok, you know?

Chitra: Are you saying that those are the kinds of topics that candidates need to talk about or put on the front burner?

James Carville: They don't need to talk about world cities in river deltas, but they need to say, "We've got to have a comprehensive and realistic plan. This is the greatest problem we have, it should be treated with seriousness. And these are four serious proposals that I'm going to work on." And it's got to be treated in a different way, you can't just sit there and say "I'm not taking donations from fossil fuels companies. Okay, no. You've got to talk about everything and we have to demand that we have a real conversation about this, not some graduate student asking Joe Biden about

somebody hosting a fundraiser for him in Houston. And then that becomes the signature moment of the Democratic party, where we have insufficient conversation about the things that really matter and could really change things.

Chitra: Now you were a very big reader and you are a student of history, but that kind of reading is a lost art for a lot of people these days, and a lot of this rhetoric comes from social media, and this kind of loss of deep thought like the kind you're saying we should be engaged in, the kind of deep reading and thinking. The loss of that seems to be a part of (and of course the whole Twitterverse that we're all engaged in now), that seems to be a big part of what you're trying to talk about. The loss of civility and civilized discourse.

James Carville: My point is everybody is in the shout-down age. The way that we deal with things that we don't agree with is we shoot them down. We don't use them to show that they're wrong. And I don't buy that, and I also don't buy that there is some place that says that you have to do this and you have to do that. I just think it's silly. Can you imagine someone sitting there saying, "Well you have a guy in Houston who has stock in a fossil fuel company," and so they have a ten-minute discussion as to say whether he has any line authority in the company. We do things that are not going to happen, we say we're going to ban fracking immediately, you're not going to do that. Alright? You know, you can do a lot of different things and I think that the urban extreme left wing, and they're not Democrats, are driving so much of the debate in the Democratic Party. And I think Democrats have to take the debate back.

Chitra: How do they do that, and who do you think has a chance to go up against Donald Trump and win?

James Carville: I wish I knew. I would love nothing better than to tell you and the people listening to this program that James Carville has the magic candidate, this is who I endorse. I'm watching the process and I'm hoping for the best.

Chitra: Now you've had a life so rich in experience and it's kind of come to me from everything you have written and everything that your wife Mary Matalin has written that faith is really important to you and both of you. And given this political division in our society today, how does your faith shape how you think about the future of the country and how this is all going to turn out in the years ahead?

James Carville: Well, let me talk about that a little bit. So I have been very interested in why aren't we moving people and I am particularly interested in the coastal climate today. And so I had this thought that I wanted, what was a time in history where people acted against what they perceived to be their short or medium immediate term interest. And a friend of mine, I'll be a name-dropper here, a friend of mine named Sean Wilentz is chancellor of the history department at Princeton. And I said, "Sean, when in history has something like this happened?" And he said "You know, probably the best example is the British anti-slave trade movement." And he said "There's this great book called Bury the Chains by an academic by the name of Adam Hochschild and the book is utterly compelling."

James Carville: If you were living in Britain or London or Liverpool or anyplace like that, the slave trade was pretty cool for you. Slave trade was as old as the world, that's how sugar was put out. It was nothing unique. You had cheap sugar, and flour, and coffee, and you know, other things. The slave docks were probably prosperous, for all you know you had somebody working there. And what they had was they used emotion. The most famous psalm in the English language, a minor tune called Amazing Grace, which was written by a former slave-ship captain. They had Wedgwood China, they had designs and they did research.

James Carville: Right now, all we're doing in the climate movement is giving people tidal tables and statistics and two point three degrees centigrade. We need a goddamn song. We need a piece of art. There's no way that I, as a person who is unbelievably concerned about what is happening to the future of the world, that I can communicate with you in shorthand. My daughter pointed out, Harvey Milk designed the rainbow flag. Every university, every college has an alma mater, every country has an anthem.

James Carville: Climate has nothing. It has no soul. And until you put emotion in it, until we can get together and sing a song, until we can have a bumper sticker, or have a lapel pin to show politicians and business leaders and opinion makers. Then they say, "What the hell is this? I see this damn thing everywhere!" And that's when I say "Well that's the people who think the earth is going to catch fire." Yeah, that's us. We want you to see us, but we don't allow ourselves to be seen. We have to have a common way for people to see us, and you only do that by art and emotion. That's my belief about this whole thing. I am a proud liberal, I'm not a leftist, I'll be very clear about that. Reason is great, I think it's wonderful,

but not by bread alone does man live. You've got to give people emotion, you got to give them connectivity, you got to give them shared values. They got to feel good. I was in the Marine Corps, you know, Marine Corps hymn, why? They want to make you feel good before you get your ass shot off. That's why they have it.

Chitra: Yeah, President Trump has fundamentally also changed the nature of political campaigns and the presidency and how he communicates and his use of Twitter to conduct policy, to respond to his critics. What do you think that kind of emotion and his lasting legacy will be in the U.S. and the global political discourse?

James Carville: I think he's one of the most wretched human beings that I can imagine. My one thing is let's be as unlike him as we possibly can be. As we possibly can be. People come up to me all the time, in airports, "Oh, Mr. Carville, I'm so scared." You know what I tell them? You're not scared enough.

James Carville: I was having breakfast in uptown New Orleans at a kind of yuppy café and a kind lady in her 50's comes up and she's very polite and says "Mr. Caville, my mother loves you but she's very shy." Oh, I'll be glad to tell your mother hello, she sounds like she's a very nice lady, and she said, "You know, when I look at Trump I think about committing suicide." I said, "That's not an irrational thought, but let's hit the pause button on that." We've got some other options here. This is horrible. And he's running the United States, I hope we're a big enough country. People assure me if the country survived civil war, then the depression, then world wars and all that, and I understand that. But the Democratic owes it to this country to get back in power and give people another alternative, I really mean that.

Chitra: What do you say to your students at LSU to help them understand this moment in time?

James Carville: Well, I don't know that I can, and I've got to be careful about just being some old man screaming at a bunch of twenty year olds. I'm trying to motivate them on this particularly difficult issue we're having in Louisiana with coastal land loss, and I'm trying to get them to think more creatively and regurgitate less. But you got to know the physics, you've got to have the basics, and if you don't have that, then you need that to start. I think it's insane the way we silo STEM kids and we silo communications people and we silo this, I think we've got to have a lot of interdisciplinary programs in our educational system, where people have scientific literacy but

are also able to construct sentences and thoughts. So I'm trying to work on maybe changing our curriculum a little bit if I can, trying to come up with different ideas.

James Carville: The piece of art that actually reflects the way I feel is the most expensive painting ever sold, they got like \$130 million. The Scream, that Norwegian painter. That's how I feel. What is going on here? These climate scientists have to have special mental health. They're subject to depression and suicide, because they go out and they take these readings and they know what they mean, and they know no one is going to do anything about it. They need emotional support out there.

Chitra: It sounds like you spend a lot of time thinking about the weather and the implications that it is having. Would you say that that is really uppermost on your mind?

James Carville: Well, you know what, if I lived in 1942, I'd spend a lot of time thinking about Germany and Japan. It would be part of the conversation. In my view, that's where we are now. We are Ground Zero; we are Flanders in World War 1. We are Stalingrad in World War 2. We're right at the front. We're the first place to go.

Chitra: So where do we go from here, do you think?

James Carville: There's a line in a movie, "I ask you to do one simple thing and they ask you to kill superman, and you can't even do that." I mean, honestly, we just have to have a Democratic president and a Democratic house and a Democratic senate. I know that politics is not the be all, end all in everything and I know we have two parties. I know this, but this is task number one for the country. What we have is not working, is profoundly not working, and is not going to work unless we interject a significantly direction in this country, we're in big trouble.

Chitra: James, it's been such a pleasure talking to you. Do you have any closing thoughts?

James Carville: No, I mean, I love you so much. It's so thoughtful that you do this and that you bring in a thoughtful conversation to your listeners. I think this is a good thing. You know I'll tell you what I tell my children, if there's one expression, I tell my students this, that I cannot stand, that I think the worst expression we have is that calls somebody "a real American." It annoys me to no end. Everybody is. As you can imagine, I am not a huge fan of the Squad, but once

you tell someone to go back to where they came from, I'm sorry, but no one needs to go back to anywhere. America is not blood and soil, we're not a place, America is an idea. And I want America to stay an idea.

Chitra: Thank you so much, James.

James Carville: All right, Chitra. Good luck to you. Thank you!

Chitra: James Carville is an internationally recognized political strategist, media commentator, bestselling author, public speaker, and a prominent advisor and figure in the Democratic party.

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