



Episode 1,472: How We Flourish Without a Central Planner

Guest: Julie Borowski

WOODS: What a wonderful occasion for having you back. I am just delighted with this book. And of course, as the father of, at least at this point, still a couple young girls, I'm always happy to see something more for my girls to feast their brains on, let's say. And this book is beautifully illustrated, and it's, of course, written very well, and it makes points that if people could just understand them when they're younger, it would help them see the world much, much more clearly when they're older. So first of all, congratulations to you on this project. How long have you been working on it, or when did it occur to you to be a children's book author?

BOROWSKI: I've been working on it for a few months now. So over the years, a lot of people have talked to me that their kids actually like watching me on YouTube, libertarian parents. Some of them said, you know, I don't really get your YouTube channel, but I have kids, 8- to 10-year-olds that love to watch you. And that was never my intention, but when I think about it, yeah, I kind of do have a communication style that appeals to kids. I can do fun, silly stuff. I can simplify complicated subjects for kids. And I saw that Connor — you know, Connor does *The Tuttle Twins*, and I've advertised for him before. He does great books, and so many parents contacted me, saying I love these books; could you do something like this? And I was like, wow, there's a huge demand for these books to teach kids about liberty, so hey, I'm going to give it a try.

So I know "I, Pencil," this is based on "I, Pencil," and it's one of my favorite essays, because it just simplifies just the thing about pencils — I know Leonard Read did it, and Milton Friedman did it, how a pencil is so ordinary, but it takes millions and millions of people just to come up with it. And I said, well, kids, they don't really care that much about pencils, but pizza, kids love pizza. So I came up with this idea, and I got it illustrated, and yeah, it's been in the works for a few months now. I'm really excited to have it out now.

WOODS: Well, I was mentioning the illustrations, and just before we went on you were telling me about how you had that done. So this wasn't a longtime friend of yours or something. This was somebody from far away. How did that come about?

BOROWSKI: No, so I just posted online that I was looking for an illustrator, and a bunch of people got back to me, and I looked at their artwork, and this lady Tatiana Kovatova, she did an amazing job, so I looked at her portfolio, and it was exactly what I wanted. I wanted a very traditional children's book, that kind of style. And she did an amazing job for me. She actually lives in Ukraine, so it's kind of amazing, I guess, when we talk about economics, how you can hire people around the world to do stuff for you. So it was really awesome.

WOODS: That is really tremendous. So I mean, that kind of goes to show, again, the opportunities we have living today, that you could find somebody — I remember the very first time I — all I needed was — I have a digital product, and I wanted to be able to sell gift subscriptions to it, and so what I wanted to have was just a little icon of a present with a bow on it. And I don't know how to draw that. I mean, forget it. So I went on one of these freelancer sites, and somebody from India did it for me within an hour. I just thought, now, that's a world I want to live in. That's an amazing thing.

So the idea then of "I, Pencil," of course — as you say, this is a classic essay — is that it's not just a matter of what goes on in the pencil factory itself. The pencil factory in a way is kind of the least interesting part of the pencil. So how would you then describe to a child that the process of — and by the way, I like also that you moved away from the pencil, because maybe children are more interested in pizza than they are in pencils, right? So you know, think about your audience. How do you make clear to them that how you make a pizza is not just the guy in the pizza shop throws some dough in the air and puts it in the oven and there's a pizza?

BOROWSKI: Yeah, so the book is called *Nobody Knows How to Make a Pizza*, and when you say that you kind of think, what do you mean, nobody knows how to make a pizza? Like a baker just puts the pizza together in the oven, puts on tomato sauce and cheese. But you actually look at what goes on before that, so I talk about how there's the farmer, there's a delivery guy, there's a woman working in the factory, all the things that go on behind the scenes that kids may not think about. Then you start thinking about everything around you, how many people went into making very, very simple things. So it's really an amazing thing. And yeah, I started with pizza, because pencils, I feel like kids don't even use pencils anymore, so I wanted to make something kind of like a silly topic that kids like, and I think adults like the book too.

WOODS: So once a child has read this, what exactly do you want that child to walk away with, other than I guess a pizza is more complicated than I thought?

BOROWSKI: Well, I just kind of want to open up kids' minds, and I want them to have discussions with their parents. I want them to look around. Like I kind of said, it really opens kids minds to how things are created. And one of the points that I make in the book, of course, and in "I, Pencil" as well, is that there's no central planners. There's no one organizing this process and how it comes together through spontaneous order and the invisible hand. Of course, I don't say that in the book, but I think kids kind of get the point that there doesn't need to be a central planner. Let people be free to create, and they can create amazing things like cheese pizza that everyone loves. So I want kids just to kind of open their minds and have discussions with their parents and realize that freedom is possible.

WOODS: What's the age range you're aiming this at?

BOROWSKI: So I wrote ages three to eight. Of course, eight-year-olds are going to be able to understand it more, but if you look at the illustrations — I know you've seen this book — I think kids that are three, four years old, they may not exactly get the concepts, but I think they'll like the pictures. I think it's just a beautifully illustrated book. It's about pizza. I think three- and four-year-olds love pizza, and you know, maybe they'll grow and are realize what the book's about. But yeah, I think three to eight is a good range.

WOODS: Now, I know that as of this recording — now, we're speaking in the middle of August 2019 — we're still in a pre-order state with this book. But I'm curious about, even though it's not in general circulation just yet, although people should go to Amazon and order it — and I'll have it up on the show notes page. But I want to know if you've had an opportunity to, let's say, try it out on children so far?

BOROWSKI: Yeah, I have had a few children read it who really loved it. I've reached out to teachers. I wanted this book that libertarian parents will love, but I also wanted just a book that any kind of parents will love, that you can give to your nieces, nephews, grandchildren, and their parents won't get mad at you, that you're not trying to indoctrinate their kids. So I kind of wanted just a book that anyone could read. So I enlisted kids, I enlisted teachers of all kinds of political backgrounds to read the book, and they all loved it. It's really just about educating kids about economics. It's not political indoctrination. I wanted to make that very clear, that this isn't like me trying to brainwash your kids, but just to educate them about economics.

WOODS: I do want to point out the actual show notes page. I didn't mention it before. It's TomWoods.com/1472, and that's where we'll have a link to the book. You should definitely get it if you have a child or if you know somebody with a child, or you know somebody who has a child who you want to get a gift for, well, look no further. TomWoods.com/1472 is where you want to go. I'm curious about whether the process of doing it was pleasant, or a big pain in the neck, or what, and whether you would consider doing more, and if you have any ideas, or is it too soon to think about that?

BOROWSKI: Yes, I'm actually writing the second one now, so hopefully this one sells well so I can afford to hire an illustrator again. It took me a few months. Writing was a bit difficult, because I know there's a lot of stuff in "I, Pencil" and I needed to get it down to 32 pages, which is the standard children's book, picture book length. So I was throwing things around. I hired an editor. She was a really, really good editor. She worked for Disney, so this is not like a libertarian person; this is someone that I just kind of wanted to — basically someone who knew children's books. And so basically, she tossed ideas back to me, how can we get this book to be more broad. So yeah, it was a couple months. I would definitely do it again. This book is self-published. I really wanted to be self-published, because I wanted to have creative control over the process. I didn't want a publisher telling me to change something. I wanted to have the final say in everything. So this is my own project, and yeah, I would definitely do it again. I have a really cool idea of the next book, which hopefully will be released. It's going to have to do with cats. Kids like cats and pizza, so hopefully I'll get a chance to do that.

WOODS: Some of my listeners know that I am distinctly a cat person myself, and not a dog person, and this has created some dissension among the ranks here, among *The Tom Woods Show* listeners. And I don't know if Rothbard ever really said this, but it's attributed to Murray Rothbard, that everybody is allowed one deviation in libertarianism and in life. One major deviation. And I've got a lot of people telling me that my being a cat person is — I'd better be pretty good other than that, because I've already used up my one deviation. I mean, by the way, are you a cat person?

BOROWSKI: I'm both a cat and a dog person. I have two cats, and honestly, the reason why I have cats is because they're easier to take care of. I grew up with dogs. You have to wake up very early in the morning to take dogs out to go to the bathroom. Cats, they have litter boxes

in your house. They're just so much easier. But I'm not sure why people say that's unlibertarian, because I think that cats and libertarianism kind of go together.

WOODS: Yeah, no, it's not really a libertarian thing. They're just giving me a hard time [laughing]. You know, because the cat is very much the, "I'm not gonna bother you. You don't bother me," kind of animal.

BOROWSKI: Exactly.

WOODS: Yeah, so I'm perfectly happy with my cats, and I think there may be a smidge of libertarianism in there. All right, as I have you, I did about — I don't know, maybe a month, a month and a half ago, I had a week called Ladies of Liberty, and I knew that you were finishing up this project, so I didn't prematurely have you on there. But you were very much missed, because everybody assumed you would be on that. *Well, how are you not going to have Julie Borowski on Ladies of Liberty Week?* So well, Julie, got her own week, right? She's got her own episode in her own week.

BOROWSKI: Nice.

WOODS: And in the old days, we used to see each other — like "we" being all us people in the speaking circuit — and we would run into each other, and I remember you and I being on some God-awful, first-thing-in-the-morning flight sometime, like out of Idaho or something, right? But I don't see people anymore, quite as much. I don't keep up with them on how things are going. So first of all, I'm curious, are you still out there on the speaking circuit as much as you used to be?

BOROWSKI: No, not so much anymore. I've kind of slowed down. I've had different priorities, and I kind of just wanted to do something else, so I decided to do children's books. You know, I've been kind of been putting my YouTube channel on hold for a lot of different reasons, but one reason is, I just feel like there's such — people say this all the time, but there's such a toxic political culture out there, where I just feel like everything I say, people would just attack me. Like there's no sense of nuance or middle ground anymore. It's just kind of driving me crazy, the sensationalists, and you have to talk about what everyone's talking about in the news to be a relevant political commentator. And so much is just outrage and stupid stuff, and it's becoming about pro- or anti-Trump. And it's just kind of, like, I wanted to put that down and do something positive, and I felt that children's books is a more positive thing. I'm making more of a difference, hopefully, in people's lives, so I'm trying something new out, and we'll see how it goes.

WOODS: I totally sympathize with that. Now, I've been able to keep the podcast going because I built up a listenership that just seems to stay with me, which I appreciate. But that's despite the fact that a lot of times, there'll be some issue that's in the news, and there is no *Tom Woods Show* episode on it. And that's partly because everybody else is talking about it. What do I have to add? If I really feel like I have something unique to add, then I'll jump in. Like that Covington Catholic High School thing, I could not restrain myself from jumping in. I could not believe that episode. But generally, I don't want people going through my list of episodes to say, "Well, this is old. Like this is not even relevant anymore." I want them to be as evergreen as possible. But you're right that if you're doing that, it's not as eye-catching as if you're hitting the day's headlines, and that's what everybody wants, it's what everybody comments on.

And of course, you're also right about the abuse you take. Oh my gosh, I mean, all I'm doing is making some podcast episodes, people, really. There are a lot worse people out there for you to be angry at than a podcast or like me. But my solution to that is I just ignore everybody. I pay no attention. If people want to make nasty comments, I don't even look at them. I don't see them. They don't bother me. It doesn't penetrate. So, you know, there is that approach. But on the other hand, I know on your Facebook page, you're very active, or you have been very active, and I think you are pretty skilled at knowing exactly how to drive engagement through different tactics and stuff. So I guess in that sense, it would be hard for you to avoid the bad people. But on the other hand on Facebook, you can just ban them.

BOROWSKI: I actually don't ban people on Facebook, and maybe I should —

WOODS: What? Oh, yes, you should. No, that's your one deviation: not banning people, all right?

BOROWSKI: What happens, though, is they create fake profiles and come back at you. Like, whatever —

WOODS: [laughing] Oh, no. Oh, geez, so you can't keep them away. Geez, I guess your critics are much more persistent than mine. My get banned; they don't bother. They say, all right, I'm not going to leave — Maybe they come bother you. I don't know what happens, but they don't bother me again.

So all right, so then other than this book project — well, you know what? Let's ask another thing, because what I was driving at when I was talking about not really being in as frequent contact as I used to be with a lot of the regular names on the speaking circuit, you did kind of hinted this in the reference to the toxic political culture, but how do you feel about the state of our movement? I mean, the term "liberty movement," it's just — I don't know, it's kind of a weird term. But it's somewhat broader than "libertarian movement," because, you know, you and I did interact with some people who would not call themselves libertarians, but were pretty much fellow travelers. How do you feel about the state of things?

BOROWSKI: Hmm —

WOODS: You can be negative on *The Tom Woods Show*.

BOROWSKI: I know I'm supposed to say this is the strongest we've ever been and look at the future and all these positive things, but I just feel like, it's — well, it's been divided for a few years now, and I just feel like, people — of course, we have the alt-right. There's a lot of libertarians who've gone to the alt-right. And then there's the left-libertarians who are still there. And it's just — it's not looking good, to be honest with you guys. Um, no, it's not looking good. I'm sorry.

WOODS: Well, there is a lot of infighting. Now, I would say the alt-righters are not really in the movement anymore, so they're not really hitting us. And then, yeah, there are left-libertarians, but the really, really hardcore ones, there aren't that many. But in terms of institutional libertarianism — we won't mention any names — there are a couple of big institutions I can think of where there's some rivalry among them and bad blood and all that. And so there's been a lot of us eating each other. Definitely that's been going on. And that I

really think was minimized during the Ron Paul years. There really wasn't a whole lot of that. Isn't that how you remember it?

BOROWSKI: Yeah, I mean, I think libertarian infighting has been going on for decades now, even before I was involved in libertarian politics. Yeah, but with the Ron Paul movement, we actually had some common grounds. You have libertarians, you had more conservative, you have anarchist, all for Ron Paul, so we were able to kind of unite and fight for one thing. And then kind of after the Ron Paul presidential campaign, everyone kind of went their own ways. And there's been a lot of infighting, and I think you're always going to have infighting where people are passionate about the issues, as libertarians are. But I feel like there's a lot of people who have left libertarianism in the past few years to go to the alt-right. I think there's a lot of reasons for that, but I just feel like the libertarian movement isn't as "hot" as it was a few years ago. And I'm trying to figure out a way to get that back, but I don't know.

WOODS: Why do you think that is?

BOROWSKI: You know, I've been thinking about it a lot. I think a lot of it has to come down to Trump, where Trump was talking about winning. We actually want to win something. A lot of libertarians are kind of just tired of losing. It feels like we're always losing it, and it's always a disappointment, where I think Trump — who is libertarian on some issues. He's also not libertarian on other issues. Yes, I know that. But some libertarians said, hey, I want to jump on this Trump train, and I actually want to win something for once. And of course, they got involved in Trump and some went to the alt-right, and it just kind of feels like libertarianism kind of got left behind.

WOODS: Yeah, I think there are people who looked at Trump and thought, well, he's got some good qualities, and he's got a much better chance of winning than we have, so we might as well jump on and get what we can. And then there were others who were horrified by that kind of approach, so I wonder if — at least for the libertarian movement, if this matters — if a Democrat wound up getting elected, would the libertarian movement be less fractious, let's say?

BOROWSKI: Yes. I've thought about this. I feel like if Hillary Clinton won, the libertarian movement would be a lot stronger, because we would unite with conservatives, just as we saw in the Tea Party movement under Obama. There was so much united against one person, Obama. Now, I think they would be united against Hillary Clinton, but now of course, we have Trump, where libertarians are divided on him. Some like him, some don't like him, so it's just kind of like we're fighting back and forth. We don't have that common ground anymore that we used to have.

WOODS: Now, you know a lot about social media. You've been very successful at it. I mean, you've really been a one-woman show. You make your videos completely by yourself. Am I right about that?

BOROWSKI: Yes.

WOODS: Like you don't have any video engineer or anything?

BOROWSKI: [laughing] No.

WOODS: Yeah, it's just you. I mean, you've just been doing that. And you manage your own social media pages, right?

BOROWSKI: Yes.

WOODS: Okay, so that's what I mean. So you're a one-woman show. So in order to stay afloat and do this successfully and have it work for you, you do have to keep engagement up, and you've got to make sure, because there are a million possible pages and people that the people who follow you could be looking at, and so we want to drive eyeballs to your page and get your page in the feed and so on. What are the topics that seem to work, that seem to really take off? And what are the ones that seem to bore people to death, and you just can't get any traction with them no matter what you do?

BOROWSKI: I mean, the biggest one right now is immigration. It feels like that's all people want to talk about, is immigration, immigration, immigration. And I'm somebody who has kind of a more middle-ground approach on immigration, and that's why I get attacked from all different sides. That's what I'm talking about. There's no room for nuance. There's no room for middle ground anymore. It's like, no, I don't want kids to be in cages, but I feel like there's a problem with open borders, letting everyone in because of this massive welfare state. And can we have a discussion, a civil discussion about this? It just seems like it's impossible these days. That's the biggest thing right now.

What bores people to death? Gosh, I mean, it seems like any kind of economic thing is kind of gotten down, because people want to talk about cultural issues. Also on YouTube, we look at what's going popular right now. It's about, oh, feminism, and I've done that thing around, and like dating and all kinds of stuff. A lot of conservatives have moved to more social issues. It's "SJW does something crazy, so let's talk about that" type of thing, where I think economics is kind of not really a thing that gets a lot of views. And that's one of the things why I wanted to make this book, because I like economics. I want to talk about economics. It just feels like people don't really care that much about that right now. It seems it's all about SJWs and culture wars and all kinds of stuff like that.

WOODS: I wonder if that's partly because the economy has been doing okay, and that when you and I were really on the speaking circuit, we were right in the throes of the financial crisis. And I mean, you'd have to be crazy not to be interested in the economy at that time.

BOROWSKI: Yeah, that's a good point.

WOODS: Yes, so maybe the obsession — I'm not saying that these aren't important issues, but maybe the almost exclusive focus on cultural issues is kind of a luxury we have, because the economy is kind of okay. People can afford the leisure to just talk about stuff like this. Whereas if you're watching the value of your stock portfolio plunge by 50%, maybe you don't care so much about what the companies are up to anymore. So you know, we'll see what the future holds there. Have you been following the Democrats at all?

BOROWSKI: Yeah, I actually don't watch the debates anymore. They depress me [laughing]. But I look it up online, yeah.

WOODS: Okay, because I mean, I did debate analysis episodes with Lew Rockwell all last cycle for the Republicans, and now we're doing it for the Democrats, and it's just not as much fun. Because the Republicans, it was easy. They would all try to sound like they were in agreement with us, except on foreign policy, so then it was just be fun to tease out the little deviations here and there. But with the Democrats, like, oh, my gosh, I don't even know where to start. And I'd spent so many years going after the neocons that I think I temporarily forgot how horrible the left is, too. So I'm being reminded of that on a daily basis with these people. Do you have the same interest in or at least somewhat rooting interest in or somewhat of a sympathy for Tulsi Gabbard that some libertarians have?

BOROWSKI: I know she's pretty good on foreign policy, but I think she's a socialist on pretty much everything else. She's okay.

WOODS: Is there anybody you think would be the least bad?

BOROWSKI: I don't know if there's a least bad. I feel like anyone I say, people are going to say, well, Julie Borowski supports this person.

WOODS: Yeah, right, I know. It is not an endorsement.

BOROWSKI: I don't know. I feel like Joe Biden probably wouldn't be as bad as Elizabeth Warren or Bernie Sanders. He's kind of more moderate, I suppose. I feel like the left has kind of gotten really radical. The right has gone radical. I feel like Joe Biden may be a more moderate Democrat, so maybe he wouldn't be as bad as the other ones. But I mean, he's still bad on most issues, yeah.

WOODS: Yeah, and I wonder if he would feel like, to protect himself, if he got in power, he's got to throw a bone to the progressives here and there. But on the other hand, what is he, 76? I mean, would he really be seeking reelection? Maybe he won't feel like he owes anybody anything, because he's got no reelection to campaign for. Who really knows? How do you get your information? Like, what are your favorite sources?

BOROWSKI: I go to Twitter. That's the first thing I go to and see what people are talking about.

WOODS: Are there particular Twitter accounts you think are really juicy, like I should be following?

BOROWSKI: Oh, gosh, I don't know. I just see what's trending on Twitter.

WOODS: Okay.

BOROWSKI: Yeah.

WOODS: Because I realized today, because I send out a pretty regular email newsletter, as my poor listeners have heard me badger them about all the time, and I realized that I can write a good email newsletter every day just by looking at AOC's Twitter and refuting whatever she's saying. I mean, it is a readymade supply, endless — or S.E. Cupp. S.E. Cupp makes me crazy. So there are some — or Max Boot. There was some accounts you could just

follow just for the fodder in case you ever run out of ideas. So I think, yeah, Twitter is good. So there isn't a news website or anything or aggregator that you go to in the morning?

BOROWSKI: No, I just check Twitter.

WOODS: Wow. And what's your Twitter handle?

BOROWSKI: My name, Julie Borowski.

WOODS: Oh, it's Julie Borowski? Okay, yeah, all right. And I'm sure I follow you. That'd be impossible for me not to follow you. But you know what? Doggone it, I'm going to check. Let's see. Okay, yes, of course, we follow each other. Okay. Do you do a lot of tweeting, or do you mostly use it for news?

BOROWSKI: I do do a lot of tweeting. I actually do like to tweet. Sometimes it's kind of dangerous, because I just tweet what's going on in my head, or it's kind of like thinking out loud to me. Sometimes I tweet things and then I go do something, and I come back an hour or two later, and I see a bunch of responses. I'm like, oh, crap, I forgot I tweeted that. No, I like to tweet. I like to respond to people's tweets. I actually like it more than Facebook these days. I think it's just a cool way to get your thoughts out in a quick manner.

WOODS: I've kind of drifted away from Facebook also, just because when a few years ago, they just decided that pages were going to be seriously downgraded in the feed after I spent a long time building up my page — My page got up to a certain number of people, and it's just stagnated there for a few years, because I can't be bothered to try to build it up when they're going to show what I post to 3% of my people. I mean, these are people who signed up to see what I have to say, and Facebook is assuming that they don't really want to hear what you have to say. But you know what? I disagree. I think they do.

BOROWSKI: Yeah, you kind of have to pay to play on Facebook. I don't really put money into things I say on Facebook. But yeah, Twitter, anyone who's following you, it's better at reaching people, I would say, than Facebook these days.

WOODS: All right, well, the book that we started this conversation talking about is *Nobody Knows How to Make a Pizza*. I'm linking to it at TomWoods.com/1472, and I strongly recommend you pick it up. It's not exactly as if we're buried in libertarian-friendly children's books, after all, and this one is outstanding by any measure. So Julie, as we depart, first of all, other than Twitter, where you're @JulieBorowski, is there any other place where people should follow you? That's my first question.

BOROWSKI: Sure, I'm on Facebook, Julie Borowski; on Instagram, it's @Julie_Borowski because another Julie Borowski took my name.

WOODS: Ah, doggone it. Okay.

BOROWSKI: You wouldn't think there's that many Julie Borowskis out there. On YouTube, it's Julie Borowski, you can follow me there.

WOODS: All right, we'll have this stuff at TomWoods.com/1472. So you definitely want to pick up *Nobody Knows How to Make a Pizza*. You have any final parting words before we wrap up for today?

BOROWSKI: Yeah, just please get the book. I think if you're a libertarian parent, you're going to love it. I think your kids will love it. I think it's really eye-opening. Like Tom said, it's beautifully illustrated. I put a lot of work into it. I'm really proud of what I came up with, and I hope you guys like it. So please get it, *Nobody Knows How to Make a Pizza*.

WOODS: Well, it's tremendous, and even if you are a libertarian aunt or uncle with no children of your own, you have nieces and nephews who would benefit from this book. So TomWoods.com/1472 is where to find that, as well as links to where you can follow Julie on social media. Thanks a lot, Julie.

BOROWSKI: Thank you.