Episode 912: How to Get the Last Laugh Against SJW Totalitarians: Colin Moriarty Edition

Guest: Colin Moriarty

WOODS: I just love your story, and I know we're a little bit late getting to you, but it's partly that after the you-know-what hit the fan, you got busy and then we sort of couldn't make it work and we were both running around. But now we finally made it work. And you've launched something great, and your story, to me anyway, my version of your story is a "this great guy had the last laugh against puritanical jerks with no sense of humor." And those are the people in this world we most want to have the last laugh at, if you ask me. So I'm sorry to have to take you back a bit, a couple of months I suppose, in your life to that moment that you inadvertently — well, no, you quite on purpose said an amusing thing that everyone knew what you meant, 99% of the women in the world laughed at because they're not humorless automatons. But it was — you had such an economy of words. There were so few words in this tweet and it turned out to be so momentous for your life.

MORIARTY: Yeah, it was, "Ah, peace and quiet #daywithoutawoman."

WOODS: Yeah, come on, right? Because this was the Day Without Women. We're supposed to realize how valuable women are. Another one of these idiotic stunts for people with an IQ below 70.

MORIARTY: Yeah, I think — yes, exactly. I knew that it was just a farce. It's the same thing I always used to talk about with the pay gap and all these other things that are just not true that made women seem like victims when they're really not victims, and I don't think most women look at themselves that way. So I was sitting in bed with my girlfriend, who's an ER nurse who works nights, so she was getting into bed as I was getting up. And I just kind of showed her, like, do you think this is funny? And she kind of laughed and went to bed and kind of laughed me off as she usually does, and I got up and went about my day. Got in the shower, went to work. And what I realized when I went back on Twitter was I had started quite the calamitous situation for myself, or what I thought would be, over this very innocuous joke.

And as you know, everything is politically driven and politically charged, and no one's really offended by anything. They just look for political opportunities and openings to kind of get you. And I guess that's kind of the important component of it that a lot of your audience probably doesn't understand that a lot of my audience explicitly understands, which is that, you know, I worked in the video game industry for ten years as a writer and a podcast host and a video production guy after college. And I

was one of the very few conservatives — and not just like a secret conservative; I was very openly conservative. I used to wear Mitt Romney shirts. I voted for Ron Paul in the primary and I had a huge Ron Paul sign at my desk and all sorts of things. So I think that this was just an opportunity for everyone to kind gang up on me and take me down, to be honest.

WOODS: And it was just — the responses were so terrible. So I made this into one of my daily emails — and in case people are wondering, how come Woods hasn't sent any so-called daily emails and it's already halfway through the week, it's because I'm preparing a free eBook for you people, you jerks, so just sit there and wait for it. It's coming.

But anyway, I wrote — [laughing] I shouldn't call my own listeners jerks, but anyway, I wrote something about this and I referred to it as the "holy rite of shaming and expiation," which we all know happens after you say something that's insensitive. I don't really want to mention names, except Greg Miller, who should know better, who solemnly informed the world that you had done something forbidden and unacceptable with a capital F and a capital U. And he says, "What Colin's tweet a joke? Sure, but that doesn't make it okay." And what really burns me up about that is exactly what you said before, that there is no way, unless this is the biggest ninny in the history of the world, that this guy is actually viscerally offended by your funny remark. He's playing a role that we're all expected to play in the holy rite of shaming and expiation.

MORIARTY: Yeah, and the sad thing is that Greg and I go way back and had been partners and very good friends and actually roommates for a really long time. And you know, I wish him well on his endeavors and his life or whatever, but this certainly was at the nexus of our own kind of unraveling, I guess, personally, which is something I'm sad about, but you know, at the same time, it's to your point: I didn't want to play that game anymore. And I respect that they wanted to respond that way and I respect that he wanted to respond that way, and I actually read the letter before he posted it and even edited some of it because I didn't think he was making his point clearly enough and I felt that it was actually going to put us all in a middle space as opposed to saying something authoritative or not saying something at all. And I begged them not to say something and to kind of stand behind me. But what's done is done and I just didn't want to play that game anymore.

And I knew in my heart — and this was kind of the thing that I think you could relate to. I knew in my gut that I had to take a stand of some sort; that I couldn't apologize because I wasn't sorry; that I had to kind of play my own role, as it were, as someone who was going to stand up for free speech and stand up I think for what's most important, Tom, which is intent. And I'm not a sexist and I'm not a bigot and I'm not a misogynist and all of these things. I know who I am.

And that was the thing that really got me the most, was no one's standing behind me, no one's saying anything to come to my defense that I'd known for years, that I've aided in some way. It was, and still is in a way, a very lonely experience, because I realized that lots of people will turn on you at the drop of a hat if it looks like they can score some sort of points or they can look better than you. And watching so many people in the industry, not at my company but in the industry that I worked in for so many years, just celebrate my downfall and look at — they wanted me to work at

McDonald's for the rest of my life. They wanted to destroy me. And that was the thing that really hurt me the most.

WOODS: Yeah, that's right. This was vicious. And it's not just you, of course. There are a lot of people who've found themselves in this situation. And it's not a matter of, Oh, maybe you shouldn't have said that, and okay, Yeah, maybe I shouldn't. Like, who cares? Whatever. It's, "We are going to be merciless and we are not going to let up until some serious repercussions have occurred." But what I loved about this episode was precisely that you took your copy of the Holy Rite of Shaming and Expiation and you just burned it. And instead, you said, Well, no, I'm absolutely not doing this. I mean, this would be like Martin Luther suddenly getting up and giving a speech at a papal Mass. No. This is not going to happen, because I haven't done anything wrong. And the thing is, in your heart of hearts, you all know it. This is the most bizarre — this is like something out of the Soviet Union. This is out of Orwell's *1984*. Nobody even thinks I've done anything wrong. This is so stupid and idiotic. And any woman who's offended by this is way too delicate a flower to be anywhere near the workforce in the first place. I mean, the whole thing's ridiculous.

All right, what I love about this story, though, is that this was not — if this had been 1977 and there's three television networks and two newspapers that everybody reads, then yeah, you might have been finished, for all we know. You might have been finished. But we have the Internet now, and you built up a following, and they wanted to support you through this. And that's the story that I want to hear now.

MORIARTY: Sure. Just to comment on something that you said just before I forget, the women in my life, none of them were offended by it.

WOODS: Of course not.

MORIARTY: And so my girlfriend, my mom, my sisters, my cousins, my friends, none of them — and what was so funny and so cute, frankly, to me was that these random people that thought that I would be offended about people I've never met before being offended by something. I'm like, if the people I love are not offended by it, you can go take a hike.

But nonetheless, yeah, I looked at the situation. It was a difficult situation, because I had cofounded a very profitable and successful company and I just didn't want to really have anything to do with it anymore because I felt like the vision of how I felt and what I wanted to be about was not aligned with them, the other three people that founded the company, and I wanted to respect that. And I wanted to respect what the audience wanted and I wanted to respect the intentions of the reasons we founded the company, which was to be a little more gregarious and little bit funnier and a little less serious.

So I actually sold me shares back to the company to totally divorce myself from it, and I wanted — I had a week — I resigned I think March 13th, and on March 20th I launched a Patreon, which is a San Francisco-based website that is based on Renaissance patronage, the idea that you would pay artists or creators to create whatever, it could be a painting, a full movie or a video, or whatever. And I wanted to do something with what my true passion always was, which was politics and history. When I got my job in

the video game industry in 2007, I had just graduated from Northeastern with an American history degree, and I was about to start grad school. And I even had a TA position lined up and stuff. And I left and went to San Francisco to work in the gaming industry instead, so this was a way for me to return to my roots.

So I started a Patreon called Colin's Last Stand, which was based on the Moultrie Flag and Sullivan Island during the Revolution, this idea that I'm going to make a stand for reason and for knowledge and for education. And I just wanted to make some modest videos on politics and history, and I expected to make — my wildest dream was to make $10,000 a month on Patreon, and after about a week, I was at $42,000 a month because people I think were speaking very loudly and very clearly about what they wanted out of me. And they also wanted to make a stand against this political correctness and this public shaming, witch hunting that's going on that I think is so destructive and so miserable. So yeah, that's where I ended up.

WOODS: So that to me — I just love that. So you're doing great. You're not working at McDonald's. You're doing great.

MORIARTY: No. Yeah, maybe I will one day. And that's an honest day's pay, by the way. I'm not disrespecting that job. But yeah, I made all of this capital that I was able to get out of San Francisco and start investing in some modest equipment. I'm trying to learn what I'm doing as I go. My audience is super patient and super engaged. I don't know if you've gone to the YouTube channel, but they like the videos with a ratio of 50 to 1. They're in the comments talking to each other. They're on Reddit by the thousands, on my subreddit sharing articles, sharing history videos, sharing documentaries and book ideas. It's just — I've stumbled into this thing that is so rewarding. And it's modest in its size. My videos do 30-, 40-, 50,000 views.

But I'm in turn trying to be modest with my intentions. My videos aren't monetized on YouTube at all. I don't have ads placed in them because I just feel like Patreon's doing so well that, you know — it's like a PBS model, if that makes sense. We all enjoy *Frontline* or *Nova*; they're great shows. But only a fraction of the people that watch them actually pay for them. So I've been trying to use that model myself. I don't want to be greedy about anything. And I just want to — I want to ride this and enjoy it for as long as I can for as long as the audience is there for me.

And I'm so blessed and thankful, frankly, that I was given a second chance to do something and that — I was talking to my father about it, who was a real huge inspiration in my life politically and philosophically. He's a retired now New York City firefighter who really got me into politics when I was a kid and really got me engaged in reading about history and philosophy. And I told him not every lifetime gets to stumble into their dream job once, and I did with video games. It was such a great honor to be able to do that. But I stumbled into it twice, and that's not lost on me, and I'm so blessed in that sense.

WOODS: That's funny; I feel exactly the same way. All right, I want to ask you some ideological questions, because your Twitter handle is quite interesting and perhaps revealing, so we'll get back to that after we thank our sponsor.

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All right, I want to talk about the content of some of these videos, but I want to, as our anchor, start with — tell me what your — I guess it's a Twitter handle. What is your Twitter handle?

MORIARTY: It's @notaxation.

WOODS: @notaxation, which is an unusual Twitter handle.

MORIARTY: Yeah, and that was my Twitter handle since 2009, yeah. It's supposed to be a, you know, "no taxation without representation," because I'm a huge American Revolution fan. I have my America —

WOODS: Right, but I'm glad you couldn't fit the rest of that in, because it's a lot edgier the way you have it [laughing].

MORIARTY: Yeah, and it leaves for some ambiguity, and you know, I am a small government person. I hate the IRS. They're probably going to audit me now that I said that. But yeah, so I believe in low taxation, so it seemed like a kind of melding of my love of history along with my love of hopefully one day eliminating the IRS.

WOODS: Wow, okay, well, you are among friends here, who, if anything, the only criticism my people would have of you is that you're not going far enough. So that's what we have here. All right, so let's talk about what kind of topics do you cover. Give me an example.

MORIARTY: Sure. So it was funny; I don't know if it was the right move or the wrong move, but I wanted to open the series with something that was super obscure and weird and kind of set the tenor for some of the more obscure or strange topics that I wanted to bring up. So the first video that I ever did was 15 minutes on the Third Amendment, which is you don't have to quarter soldiers in your house during times of war, and went into kind of the history of that in 17th century England and their mistrust of standing armies and then into the experience of the revolutionaries after the French and Indian War and kind of billeting soldiers and their fear of an overwhelming government.

So I go into some historical kind of things like that, but then I'll also go into something that is more contemporary, so I did a video on Neil Gorsuch and on Syria and what I call political expediency and how I feel like no one has a moral or ideological anchor anymore. It's always to just win or score points. No one wants to compromise. And I'm a huge believer in compromise. And so I do videos like that, and I just did a video on Watergate and Richard Nixon. Thursday's video — so I guess this will air — or this will already be up by the time we're recording this — is going to be about the Confederate statues and how I feel like the Confederates were traitors and that we're often lost in the weeds on the slavery issue, which I think obviously is an important and focal issue of the Civil War, obviously, but that we are celebrating traitors and a traitorous cause and that should be a good enough reason for us to take these statues down.

WOODS: Oh, oh boy, you were doing so well up to then, Colin. You were doing so well. All right —

MORIARTY: Yeah, so those are just some of the examples, Tom, of the things that I cover.

WOODS: All right, well, look, I don't want to hijack the whole episode, but I gave a talk at the Yale Political Union — in fact, I have the audio up in yesterday's episode, 911 — and you'd think on 911 I'd do foreign policy, but I'm too inept to think of these things in advance. So I did my audio of my debate at the Yale Political Union on secession.

And secession is a sort of historical topic that's totally toxified because Americans I think are trained to think that their country is great because it's one great big country. But actually, the Constitution refers to the United States in the plural. It's always "the United States are." It's thought of as a collection of societies. And it seems to me that, given that the states created the federal government as their agent, they preexisted the federal government. The Constitution was ratified one state at a time because the sovereign peoples were in the states. The federal government has no sovereignty; it's the peoples of the states who are the sovereigns. So if you are going to object to the right of a state to withdraw, given that it has the right to accede in the first place comes from its sovereignty, then its right to withdraw comes from its sovereignty, then I would say the traitor against the American cause is the U.S. government — which it, by the way, has proven itself to be for 200 years. It's always up to no good.

So I've got to, for the sake of my — I have to push back on that. And we don't have to have a debate on that, but there is no way these people are guilty of treason. They are arguing for the right of self-government, which is exactly the same thing that the American revolutionaries fought for. They fought for self-government. Now, you may say the Southern states wanted to have slavery. Well, maybe they did, but guilty people are also entitled to certain rights. Guilty people also get a lawyer. Guilty people also get a day in court. It doesn't matter what they want to use the lawyer for. They get that lawyer. Well, likewise, you have the right to self-government. That's part of what the U.S. is all about — that's why we're not France. We have independent societies in our country.

MORIARTY: Sure, so I guess the more nuanced angle of the argument is that I don't believe that secession would never be the answer, I guess is what I'm saying. My example, although I don't go into it in the video, is with the Hartford Convention, for instance, during the War of 1812, which was really, as you know, the first talk of really seceding, but that was with the New England states. The reason just has to be good enough. And you know, plunging Jefferson Davis and Alexander Stephens and Judah Benjamin and all these kinds of characters in the Confederate cabinet and obviously all of the generals that represented — that fought in the Mexican-American War and were once part of the U.S., their reason in my estimation is just simply not good enough. In fact, it's the opposite. It's actually a really disastrous reason to split the Union up and to kill 620,000 people in four years. So that's more my argument.

WOODS: No, I get that; I get that. But of course there's no reason secession has to lead to violence. I mean, Sweden and Norway parted ways without any violence. I mean, there's no reason that withdrawal — I mean, the Czechs and the Slovaks — there's been no reason that it has to be followed by violence. If you just say, well, if two people don't get along, we let them go their separate ways. The problem with the argument

that their case is not strong enough is that if we let the federal government — which is basically what you'd be doing — decide whether or not you've made a good enough case to secede — or for example, in the Declaration of Independence, we hear that a long train of abuses can justify throwing off one form of government and replacing it with another. The problem is they'll never concede that. The central government is never going to look at your list of grievances and say, "Well, you got me. That's a pretty long list." They're never going to concede that. So that's why I would much rather say, let the seceding parties decide — If we think it's a dumb reason, well, big deal. We shouldn't fetishize or sacrilize what is just a utilitarian thing, the American Union.

Anyway, feel free to respond to me, but we don't have to get sidetracked on this. It's just this has been such a cause I've been identified with for so long that I just couldn't — you've got to understand, I couldn't let that go.

MORIARTY: Well, no, I totally understand. And I love history and talking about history and debating history. It's like one of my favorite things in the world. So I have no problem with that. I don't want to get lost in the weeds either with you if you don't want to. All I'll say is that the Confederates precipitated the violence at Fort Sumter and they had no prayer of winning anyways, so I really don't know what the intention was. But you're right in the sense that there are underlying realities that precipitated the war, including King Cotton, the United States was not going — the federal government was not going to let all those plantations in those Southern cotton-growing states out of their wheelhouse. And there was obviously underlying tensions going back to the Northwest Ordinance and the Missouri Compromise and the Kansas-Nebraska Act and Bleeding Kansas.

This was leading up for many decades, so there's way more that I think even you and I that understand the issue far better than most, I think, cannot possibly identify because we weren't there, we weren't in the trenches and therefore can't understand that this seemed almost inevitable and probably should have and would have happened sooner if not for, you know, these various compromises and these people that just didn't want to plunge us into war — which is a good thing in my estimation, just in the sense that, whether we agree that the Confederacy had some sort of cause or not that was worth fighting for — and I don't think that they do — there was still a lot of restraint shown on both sides at the end of the day. A lot of people thought in the 1820s and 1830s that the country would break up. But anyway, we don't have to get lost in the weeds. Probably boring for some of your audience, anyway.

WOODS: Well, no, no, this is actually what they love, but —

MORIARTY: Oh, perfect.

WOODS: What I actually want to ask you about, because this is what you were known for, is you were in the gaming industry for a long time, and I can't have you on and not talk about that. What can you tell us about that, those of us who are on the outside of that, that we might not know that we would find interesting?

MORIARTY: Sure. It's highly politicized. I think that — so I started writing about video games when I was 14 on what I call fan sites and doing it for free and kind of just

having a passion for writing, and love video games. I think they're really fun. They've always been an important component of my life, and I think that they're a beautiful, ill-respected art form. Video games make more money in the United States every year than movies. So there's a huge audience there, and it's just growing and growing every day.

And so when I was 18 years old, I went to Northeastern in Boston, like I said earlier, and someone reached out to me from a website called IGN, which is the biggest video game website in the world still to this day. And I became a freelancer, and I was an intern for them one summer. And when I graduated five years later — or four years later, I guess I should say, four years later. I went to Northeaster, which is a five-year school, but I did it in four years, so I'm a little confused sometimes. I went ahead and took a job with them.

And what I quickly realized, which I was kind of inoculated against when I had some distance — I was in Boston; they were in San Francisco — was just how politicized and political the industry is and how it is completely homogenous. There are no conservatives that are very vocal. There are no libertarians that are very vocal. It is a very liberal, hyper-liberal industry. And I actually made my name by differentiating myself. I became popular and one of the most well known people in the media in gaming by differentiating myself, by speaking to a massive swath of the audience that wasn't being spoken to that would read an article saying, Why aren't there more women in games or why is there a white guy on this game cover?, and me saying, Guys with guns sell more copies of games than a woman reading a book on the cover of a video game, you know what I mean?

WOODS: [laughing]

MORIARTY: That's the reason why that is. These guys are not in it for charity. There is no altruism. Activision makes *Call of Duty* to make money. They don't care. If they thought that they would sell more games by putting all Koreans in it, then that's what they would do. And so I was trying to speak to the audience in a very curt way and a very honest way, and so I kind of tried to bridge that gap. Because if you read only the mainstream games media — and I'm not talking about YouTube and Twitch, where a lot of it's moving to — the old school games media, the websites are dying. But if you were to read their content, you would think that only liberals with cultural studies degrees play video games and everything's racist and everything's sexist and everything's bigoted. And I'm like, no, there are actually millions and millions of people that play games that don't want to be preached to like this, that don't want to be called a racist or a bigot because they support a white protagonist or a male protagonist. And so that's what I learned about the gaming industry over time and tried to actively change, or at least put some diversity of thought out there. And I think it worked, because a lot of people latched onto my message.

WOODS: So you were saying before that you've had this unusual situation of twice being able to go into a career that you love, but do you look back wistfully on your time in video games? That's a pretty big door to close in your life.

MORIARTY: Honestly, I don't. To be able to close it on my own terms was pretty awesome, and the way I put it was it was an awesome way to spend my 20s. I'm 32

now. I got to work at the biggest video game website in the world, uncontested biggest video game website in the world, read by 10s of millions of people a month. Things I would write sometimes would get 500,000, 1 million, 1.5 million not views, but uniques. And so it was amazing to have that kind of audience. And I was a freelancer and an intern and then an associate editor and then an editor and then a senior editor. I really rose up through the ranks there. And I'm super proud of that story and I'm always going to look back fondly on the experience and to the people that gave me those opportunities. There's a lot of really fantastic people at that website.

But in 2014, me and three of my friends, Greg and these other two guys, founded our own YouTube channel called Kinda Funny, and we did it on the side. And it was so successful that we quit our jobs. They asked us not to leave, but we left anyway, collectively. And we started our own thing. So I got to kind of close that door and open a new door in what we call new media in video games, which is kind of similar to what we're doing now, a podcast. We're not on MSNBC right now, because they're ultimately going to die. This is the future of political commentary, just as YouTube and Twitch is the future of video game commentary and video game coverage. And so I got to do that for about two years, and it was a really great experience to grow the company and make some money and really give content that folks enjoyed.

And then I got to close that door on my own again and open a new door, and I just never expected that this would be so well received and so fun for people to watch. And so I guess the answer to your question from an honest perspective is maybe I'd look back on it more wistfully if this didn't work out the way it did, you know? But obviously, opportunity arose and I tried to seize it.

WOODS: All right, let's see what kind of a USP, unique selling proposition, you have, because there a lot of people who make videos. There are a lot of people who make videos that are right of center; there are people who make plain-vanilla history videos. So what's the deal with Colin Moriarty's videos that I should want to watch them?

MORIARTY: Well, I think — so I think that the major selling point for me is not only the ideological perspective, but the somewhat unique ideological perspective. People have often told me that they don't really know how to categorize me or where to put me. People often describe me as a libertarian, but I don't think that's really accurate. I often describe myself as a conservative, but I don't think that's really accurate. So I don't think you ever know what you're going to get. There are people that make videos on YouTube and make podcasts like yourself and do things, frankly, better than I do, more regularly than I'm able to do it, with more experience than I'm able to do it. But I think it comes from an honest point of reflection, and I think that that's really a huge selling point for the audience that has come along with me on this ride from my previous life, as it were.

But I think that the bigger selling point for people that are newer to the content is simply that I think it's a diverse array of things to learn about. So I don't really have an agenda, if that makes any sense. I really just want to tell you how I feel. Some people took umbrage, for instance, with the fact that they expected that I might have been on the side of the free speech protesters at Berkeley. And I certainly believe in the

message of unbridled free speech. I'm all about that. But the second it got violent, that was a huge problem for me. And the second that the free speech warriors got in on the violence, that was an even bigger problem for me. So when I uploaded a 30-minute rant about that, that took some people by surprise. They didn't expect that perspective considering all I say and all I do.

And so I just try to be honest. I try not to fit myself in any ideological boxes. I try to just be consistent with my own views, which are unbridled liberty when and where possible, which I think is everywhere. And a little bit of historical knowledge, because I really think everything that we say and do and feel now has some sort of historical basis that I think is very important, which is why, for instance, I did the Watergate video. That wasn't a coincidence. I did that Watergate video because everyone's talking about how Donald Trump and what's going on with him is very Nixonian. And so I simply said here's what Nixon did. You make a decision. Do you think this sounds like what Trump's doing?

So I think that those are various selling points, but ultimately, people should just go if they want to watch the videos and make the decision for themselves. It's certainly not going to be for everybody. And I accept that, by the way [laughing].

WOODS: Well, if people do want to follow you and find out what this is all about, where would they go?

MORIARTY: Sure, you can go to YouTube.com/ColinsLastStand. And like you said, I'm on Twitter all the time, so @notaxation, you can always just follow the links that are there as well.

WOODS: I'm glad we got this done after we tried scheduling it repeatedly. You're like trying to get the president on the show, but we made this work [laughing]. I appreciate that. I still haven't gotten the president on. That'll be my next one. But thanks so much and best of luck to you. I'm thrilled you had the last laugh, and I'm so glad you're enjoying doing it.

MORIARTY: Thank you so much, Tom. I'm sorry that we had so much difficulty with that as well, but it was a real honor to be here, and keep up the good work.