



Episode 13: Vincent Shin

Transcript

00:00:00,100 --> 00:00:21,900 [Vincent Shin]

[instrumental music plays] I think if we better support children and young people who are victim-survivors of family violence to prevent that cycle, that intergenerational trauma, I think that that's what's gonna actually prevent family violence from occurring in the first place.

00:00:21,980 --> 00:00:50,600 [Female Voiceover]

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00:00:55,640 --> 00:01:10,120 [Micaela Cronin]

Today, I'm really grateful to be joined by Vincent, a powerful advocate, lawyer, and survivor, whose lived experience and professional work make him a vital voice in the national conversation about family violence. Hello, Vinny.

00:01:10,120 --> 00:01:11,340 [Vincent Shin]

Hi, Micaela.

00:01:11,340 --> 00:02:32,320 [Micaela Cronin]

First of all, I wanna start by making an acknowledgement that today I'm on the lands of the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, where I live - am very fortunate to live, and to pay my deep respects to their elders, past and present, for their care of these lands and for their wisdom and ongoing generosity in the face of institutional, systemic, and individual racism. My deep personal commitment is to work and live as an ally in this role and always. Vinny, I'm just gonna take a moment to introduce you. So, Vinny is a program manager at West Justice, a community legal centre here in Melbourne's western suburbs, where he works alongside children and young people facing disadvantage and marginalization. As a survivor himself of childhood family violence, Vinny shares his story to ensure that the voices of children and young people are heard and never forgotten in efforts to end family and domestic violence. Vinny is also one of the Commission's Lived Experience Advisory Council members and brings a deep commitment to creating a world where all Australians feel safe and loved in their homes, free from violence and harm. Born in South Korea and raised in Melbourne, Vinny's work and advocacy reflect his unwavering dedication to justice, healing, and change. Vinny, welcome to the podcast. I'm really glad you're here today.

00:02:32,320 --> 00:02:34,200 [Vincent Shin]

Thank you so much for having me, Micaela.

00:02:34,200 --> 00:02:42,180 [Micaela Cronin]

So, Vinny, let's start by telling me a bit about what motivates you to strive to change the future.

00:02:42,180 --> 00:04:11,400 [Vincent Shin]

Sure. So, what motivates me, I think it's important to know a little bit about my background, to know why I am so motivated by certain things, and that's just because of my journey to where we are today. As you said, I was born in South Korea, both parents being also South Korean heritage. But I came to Melbourne when I was one, so I've - I've lived in Melbourne since, uh, 1987, and always in Melbourne. But one of the challenges was that I did move quite a lot as a child, and I'd moved homes 10 times by the time I turned 18 and went to five different schools. So, from, you know, a very early age, I was kind of used to, uh, things



being quite unstable. To add to that, unfortunately, I had experienced family violence, uh, as a child, my whole childhood, until my father finally left when I was 17, and, uh, midway through Year 12, and hadn't seen him since 2003. And things were not great, um, and that led me to not be so committed to school and really struggling at school. I ultimately, uh, essentially failed. I got a very, very bad end of year- end of Year 12 score, back then, enter score, in Melbourne. I got 24.5 out of 99, which I- I share sometimes. Um, [laughs] but, uh-

00:04:11,400 --> 00:04:11,740 [Micaela Cronin]

Good on you

00:04:11,780 --> 00:04:12,750 [Vincent Shin]

... after [laughs]-

00:04:12,750 --> 00:04:12,990 [Female Voiceover]

[laughs]

00:04:12,990 --> 00:05:29,770 [Vincent Shin]

... uh, which- which still leads to what motivates me as well, to- to sort of show from my own lived experience, that whatever's happened to you, especially the stuff that's similar to- to what I've had to go through, doesn't sort of s- stop you from- from living your dream. But yeah, so- Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm ... after a little while, my dad ended up in prison, was sentenced to nine years in prison for grievous bodily harm with intention to murder. So, as you can imagine, things were pretty challenging for me for quite a while, even after he left, as an adult, a young adult. I just really, really struggled with, uh, everything, my mental health, just life, and just really, really lost myself. Um, and don't think I ever found it, but I definitely lost my sense of purpose. Um, and after Year 12, I sort of worked a few jobs here and there, went to TAFE, uh, dropped out of my first TAFE course, but then wanted to become a lawyer. [laughs] And I- I- I guess I feel like I- I gravitated towards that as a young person and as a child because, as a child, as a young person, I- I really felt helpless, and I just-

00:05:29,770 --> 00:05:29,770 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm

00:05:29,770 --> 00:05:56,640 [Vincent Shin]

... felt that I- that there was nothing that I could do. I'm a child. What- what can I do about this situation that I'm in, that I'm facing, that me, my mum, my sister were facing, um, as victim-survivors of family violence? And knowing, uh, that lawyers are, uh, I guess in a very privileged position where we can advocate for people and to create change, I- I- I sort of thought,

00:05:56,640 --> 00:06:16,804 [Vincent Shin]

for many years, like, that- that's something that I- I wanted to do. And I- I wanted to do lawyering a-... differently, and I wanted to be a lawyer for change. Uh, and that's when I stepped into, um, the community legal sector. But before that, when I first graduated, I actually practiced in family law and family rights in a, in a small suburban law firm.

00:06:16,804 --> 00:06:17,324 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm.

00:06:17,324 --> 00:06:43,444 [Vincent Shin]

S- when I moved into the community sector, I became a school lawyer, and did that for quite a number of years. And for those listeners that aren't familiar with it, it is a program where we go out to schools and represent and advise the, the children, the students of the school. It was, it was truly a dream job, and then I stayed in it for, for a number of years. And, and



00:06:43,444 --> 00:07:00,984 [Vincent Shin]

going back to that question about what motivated me and then strive for a better future, I think doing the school lawyer work really galvanized the things that I wanted to do, the motivations that I had. Because what I saw was young people like me, young people that had-

00:07:00,984 --> 00:07:01,164 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm

00:07:01,164 --> 00:08:07,844 [Vincent Shin]

... experienced some horrible situations at no fault of their own, feeling helpless, feeling just completely disenfranchised. And, and so, yeah, if, I g- I guess fast-forward to today, been a lawyer for 11 years, and at West Justice for 10, and predominantly working with 10 to 25-year-olds that, that whole time. And yeah, and, and that journey to where we are today is, is what motivates me. Because I went through some things that a lot of young people ... well, I, I believe no child should ever have to go through, but I did. And I, I guess, quote unquote, "got out of it" in the end, or made, made a success of myself. And being able to help people in my situation or something similar, young people, that is really what motivates me. Because I, I know that things can change. I know that you're not destined for failure if you f- fail at year 12. You're not forever labelled by what your father may or may not have done. Um, so yeah, that, that's definitely what motivates me.

00:08:07,844 --> 00:08:22,074 [Micaela Cronin]

That's a pretty powerful story, Vini, and there's so many things I'd love to take more time to unpack with you. But the passion to drive change that you talk about, and I hear it when we talk all the time about your deep-

00:08:22,074 --> 00:08:22,074 [Vincent Shin]

Mm-hmm

00:08:22,074 --> 00:08:39,664 [Micaela Cronin]

... deep, deep commitment to children and young people. And I think that the way you weave together both your personal experience and, and knowledge, and the compassion that you bring from that, but also what you've seen directly working in schools and with children and young people-

00:08:39,664 --> 00:08:39,724 [Vincent Shin]

Mm-hmm

00:08:39,724 --> 00:08:55,944 [Micaela Cronin]

... means that you bring a real wisdom to this conversation, Vini, and you are very generous about sharing that. And I think the transformation from, from failing school to becoming a lawyer is one that's very generous to share and can be a real inspiration to people.

00:08:55,944 --> 00:09:03,274 [Vincent Shin]

[laughs] Yeah. Look, I, I, I do share to some young people not to, not to say, "Hey, you don't need to do anything at school."

00:09:03,274 --> 00:09:03,284 [Micaela Cronin]

Yes.

00:09:03,284 --> 00:09:10,104 [Vincent Shin]

But [laughs] just more if you really put your head down and sacrifice, you can achieve anything and everything.

00:09:10,104 --> 00:09:19,044 [Micaela Cronin]

Yep, yep. Really, really good message. Really important to, to hear that and for people to share it, I think. So, Vini, the future. If we think about-



00:09:19,044 --> 00:09:19,054 [Vincent Shin]

Mm-hmm

00:09:19,054 --> 00:09:47,884 [Micaela Cronin]

... you put up your hand and you've been on the Commission's Lived Experience Advisory Council, helping us to inform government around the national plan. So, with that, we have now a national commitment to ending gender-based violence in one generation from every government in this country. If that's successful, if that plan is successful, if all of the work that all of us, you know, are, are driving to see that change, what would your vision for 2050 be? What would it look like?

00:09:47,884 --> 00:09:55,544 [Vincent Shin]

I guess, to state the obvious, uh, from the outset, you know, a society, a community where no one has to experience family violence.

00:09:55,544 --> 00:09:55,984 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm.

00:09:55,984 --> 00:10:03,724 [Vincent Shin]

Uh, but at the, at the very least or the bare minimum that the harm caused by family violence is significantly minimized.

00:10:03,724 --> 00:10:04,104 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm.

00:10:04,104 --> 00:10:19,264 [Vincent Shin]

And so, yeah, [sighs] 2050, it's a, it's a grim statistic that seems like everyone seems to know about this, you know, one murd- woman murdered every, on average every week by their current form of partner.

00:10:19,264 --> 00:10:19,484 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm.

00:10:19,484 --> 00:10:47,894 [Vincent Shin]

Th- that, that is just so commonly known, even people outside the sector. And so, what I would love is for us as a community not to have that, that right at the, you know, centre of our, our minds that, that that statistic is, is no longer. Another thing, [sighs] i- it's, it's a, it's a dream that I, I just, I don't wanna say insurmountable, but just knowing how the systems work, it's a challenge, but here it is anyway, um, [laughs]-

00:10:47,894 --> 00:10:48,164 [Micaela Cronin]

[laughs]

00:10:48,164 --> 00:11:09,424 [Vincent Shin]

... different states and fe- state and federal government departments, agencies, everyone that's involved in assisting people that are, uh, experiencing family violence work together and not in silos, a- and truly working together and collaboratively. But also, this is obviously

00:11:09,424 --> 00:11:31,004 [Vincent Shin]

s- you know, something that a lot of people keep saying, a nationally consistent service response to this, this issue. And I guess, [sighs] to, for pe- listeners to really sort of see how tricky it could be navigating this system, I'll, I'll explain a typical f- victim survivor's journey in Victoria, um, very quickly.

00:11:31,004 --> 00:11:31,364 [Micaela Cronin]

Hm.



00:11:31,364 --> 00:11:52,114 [Vincent Shin]

A child discloses family violence to a reporter. Child Protection's involved. Child reports the police. They take out an IVO, uh, a Family Violence Intervention Order. Then that's the Magistrate's Court or the Children's Court. The perpetrator of violence damages property, and the family's now facing eviction. That's VCAT, Victorian Civil Administration Tribunal.

00:11:52,114 --> 00:11:52,584 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm.

00:11:52,584 --> 00:12:08,644 [Vincent Shin]

Perpetrator- perpetrator of violence incurs fines in the victim survivor's name. Victim survivor's too afraid to nominate. They're dealing with Fines Victoria. The family's dealing with homelessness. They g- Department of Fa- Families, Fairness, and Housing.

00:12:08,644 --> 00:12:08,764 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm.

00:12:08,764 --> 00:12:27,314 [Vincent Shin]

Perpetrator takes out a loan in the victim survivor's name, and the bank refuses to waive, waive a debt, Australian Financial Complaints Authority. P- Parent, one parent m- maybe the mother wants to make an application at the Family Court around parenting, so then it's Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia.

00:12:27,314 --> 00:12:27,344 [Micaela Cronin]

Hmm.

00:12:27,344 --> 00:12:29,264 [Vincent Shin]

So you'd see just in those five-

00:12:29,264 --> 00:12:29,484 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah

00:12:29,484 --> 00:12:31,004 [Vincent Shin]

... examples, five, six examples-

00:12:31,004 --> 00:12:31,164 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah

00:12:31,164 --> 00:12:46,173 [Vincent Shin]

... the complex web of, web of support that, that victim-survivors, survivors have to navigate, and all the different government departments, agencies. But i- in my mind, that, that is essentially a single issue, which is family violence.

00:12:46,173 --> 00:12:46,173 [Micaela Cronin]

Yeah.

00:12:46,173 --> 00:13:42,304 [Vincent Shin]

And so, it's having all these supports much more integrated and, and working collaboratively for, for the victim survivor. And finally, the- there w- is one thing, the public to trust in the family violence response system. I know I didn't. I know that as a child I, I didn't. And in my work, I also see that there's very little trust in the current family violence response system, and that looks like, uh, people telling us that they're having very negative interactions reporting to police, n- negative interactions with the child protection system, negative interactions with the Family Courts, and then huge, huge wait times if they do get through with all the different family violence support services. So yeah, the public trust and a more consistent collaborative, uh, approach from government departments and agencies.



00:13:42,304 --> 00:13:48,223 [Micaela Cronin]

They're pretty concrete and s- sound like pretty important f- foundational things, Vinny. Um-

00:13:48,223 --> 00:13:48,624 [Vincent Shin]

Yeah

00:13:48,624 --> 00:13:55,754 [Micaela Cronin]

... and I, I agree with you. For those involved in the system, we know how complex it is to get there, but just how crucial they are.

00:13:55,754 --> 00:13:55,804 [Vincent Shin]

Yeah.

00:13:55,804 --> 00:14:03,124 [Micaela Cronin]

So, let's build on that. If you were able to travel to this future in which those things had been made real, we had-

00:14:03,124 --> 00:14:03,154 [Vincent Shin]

Mm-hmm

00:14:03,154 --> 00:14:17,384 [Micaela Cronin]

... actually, managed to achieve that better improved coordination and that trust in the system, what ... if you were there for a few days in 2050, what would you wanna know? What would you be looking for? What would you ... What would questions ... Where would you visit? What would you wanna know to bring back?

00:14:17,384 --> 00:14:26,104 [Vincent Shin]

Yeah. It's ... I guess the, the, the short answer is, what actually worked to prevent it happening from the first place?

00:14:26,104 --> 00:14:26,664 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm.

00:14:26,664 --> 00:14:46,804 [Vincent Shin]

So, we all know that family violence is not inevitable. It's 100% preventable. I say this so often. It's actually 100% preventable. But what I don't know and what we don't know is, is, I guess, what levers to pull to prevent the family violence from happening in the first place.

00:14:46,804 --> 00:14:47,204 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm.

00:14:47,204 --> 00:14:55,704 [Vincent Shin]

And it's complex, and I get that, and there's so many reasons and, and factors and drivers of family violence. It's not always just the one thing-

00:14:55,704 --> 00:14:55,864 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm

00:14:55,864 --> 00:14:58,004 [Vincent Shin]

... that's happening in the, the family's life-

00:14:58,004 --> 00:14:58,024 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm

00:14:58,024 --> 00:15:15,404 [Vincent Shin]



... that, that leads to it. So, I'd like to just know about what worked to, to prevent. And I guess this is sort of, like, maybe a solution, but I think children and young people hold the solution, and that's because family violence happens in cycles.

00:15:15,404 --> 00:15:16,404 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm.

00:15:16,404 --> 00:15:36,304 [Vincent Shin]

Family violence trauma is intergenerational, and I think if we better support children and young people who are victim survivors of, of family violence to prevent that cycle, that intergenerational trauma, I think that that's what's gonna actually prevent

00:15:36,304 --> 00:15:58,484 [Vincent Shin]

family violence from occurring in the first place. So, I think we need to really understand what they need, and what I think they need is a better understanding, as a child growing up, better understanding of what, what gender inequality is and what gender equality is and why that's one of the main drivers of family violence.

00:15:58,484 --> 00:16:06,644 [Vincent Shin]

Break down gender stereotypes and norms in the home and just completely reframe what it is to be a man of the house, the quote-unquote-

00:16:06,644 --> 00:16:06,884 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm

00:16:06,884 --> 00:16:26,664 [Vincent Shin]

... man of the house, which I cringe at, and better strategies for young people when they're dealing with anger and frustration. And finally, for the young people to, to have confidence and resilience not to continue bad behaviour if they've witnessed this from-

00:16:26,664 --> 00:16:27,024 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm

00:16:27,024 --> 00:16:27,784 [Vincent Shin]

... a father.

00:16:27,784 --> 00:16:34,844 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm. All incredibly important and powerful, you're right, parts of the solution, what you're describing, Vinny.

00:16:34,844 --> 00:16:35,444 [Vincent Shin]

Mm-hmm.

00:16:35,444 --> 00:16:52,764 [Micaela Cronin]

So I'm gonna say now, if, if you had the ability to make any necessary change, right, you've got that authority, from your perspective, from all of the work that you've done and what you've seen, what's the one thing that you would do right now to work towards achieving a violence-free 2050?

00:16:52,764 --> 00:16:58,074 [Vincent Shin]

Yeah. So, for obvious reasons, my focus is all around children and young people-

00:16:58,074 --> 00:16:58,094 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm

00:16:58,094 --> 00:18:04,164 [Vincent Shin]



... and I'm just constantly frustrated with the, the systems that the children and young people face in, in this space, family violence space. So, I would create a completely different system, or not different system, a system separate for children so that the child victim survivor gets to retain as much autonomy and agency as, as possible when they're dealing with the family violence support system, I guess. And it's, it's just so frustrating. Even as a lawyer representing children, I still see this time and time again where they're in the system and their voice is ... They're, they're voiceless. They're, they're spoken to and spoken for, and decisions are, are made about them, about their life. They're, they're made for them, not with them. A- and I think that's because of a very paternalistic approach that systems and adults in the system have about the child.

00:18:04,164 --> 00:18:04,604 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm.

00:18:04,604 --> 00:18:13,483 [Vincent Shin]

They assume that-... this child lacks capacity to know what's in their best interest, and there's this big concept of, you know, best interest of the child.

00:18:13,484 --> 00:18:14,084 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm.

00:18:14,084 --> 00:18:42,124 [Vincent Shin]

And that is that same thing that I mentioned around this paternalistic approach. It's like we, the system, will tell you what's in the best in- interest of the child, not- not necessarily the child, and- and what's i- in their best interest for their safety and- and I guess recovery as well, and healing. And so, I'd fix and change all of the stuff that is involved when a child is reporting family violence-

00:18:42,124 --> 00:18:42,364 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm

00:18:42,364 --> 00:18:54,964 [Vincent Shin]

... and seeking assistance. Um, and one particular focus, as I mentioned previously, it's, uh, it's about that healing and recovery for children because I'm, uh, as I mentioned, around that cycle of family violence-

00:18:54,964 --> 00:18:55,284 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm

00:18:55,284 --> 00:19:30,123 [Vincent Shin]

... we don't want them to continue the violence, but also they, we don't want them to normalize bad behaviour in relationship and think that that's okay, um, in a relationship. And- and sadly, we, in my work, we see some people in tricky relationships that are very similar to what they've experienced as children. And it's really, really sad to see them really struggle in that relationship, and sadly, is what I said about this cycle continuing.

00:19:30,124 --> 00:19:54,574 [Micaela Cronin]

Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Vinny, I want to give you the power to drive that change, I really do. I think what you talk about, about with- with such genuine commitment to hearing the voices of children and young people is so important. And if we are going to achieve a violence-free 2050, it's going to be because we have done that well. I think that's an absolutely foundational piece of the change that needs to happen.

00:19:54,574 --> 00:19:56,484 [Vincent Shin]

I agree. [laughs]



00:19:56,484 --> 00:20:07,324 [Micaela Cronin]

Well, let's keep working on it. And- and I look forward to many more conversations with you, Vinny, and some, and working together on getting some really practical change. Thank you so much for the conversation today.

00:20:07,324 --> 00:20:13,964 [Vincent Shin]

Thanks for the chat, Micaela.

00:20:13,964 --> 00:21:07,124 [Female Voiceover]

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