

## Episode Summary

On this episode of *The Tight Rope*, Dr. Cornel West and Professor Tricia Rose welcome former police officer and FBI agent Dr. Erroll Souther, Director of Homegrown Violent Extremism Studies at USC, for discussion about his motivations to join law enforcement, successful change he and others have effected, and the “ticking clock” to 2045. In Office Hours, our hosts explore the structural limits and spiritual thresholds of America and if the country is even capable of treating the masses of Black people with decency and dignity. That question, along with “Can the police actually be transformed into a fair, anti-racist, safety presence?”, is answered and more on this episode of *The Tight Rope*.

## Cornel West

[Dr. Cornel West](#) is Professor of the Practice of Public Philosophy at Harvard University. A prominent democratic intellectual, social critic, and political activist, West also serves as Professor Emeritus at Princeton University. He graduated Magna Cum Laude from Harvard in three years and obtained his M.A. and Ph.D. in Philosophy at Princeton. West has authored 20 books and edited 13. Most known for [Race Matters](#) and [Democracy Matters](#), and his memoir, [Brother West: Living and Loving Out Loud](#), West appears frequently on the *Bill Maher Show*, CNN, C-Span, and Democracy Now. West has appeared in over 25 documentaries and films, including [Examined Life](#), and is the creator of three spoken word albums including [Never Forget](#). West brings his focus on the role of race, gender, and class in American society to *The Tight Rope* podcast.

## Tricia Rose

[Professor Tricia Rose](#) is Director of the Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America at Brown University. She also holds the Chancellor’s Professorship of Africana Studies and serves as the Associate Dean of the Faculty for Special Initiatives. A graduate of Yale (B.A.) and Brown University (Ph.D), Rose authored [Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America](#) (1994), [Longing to Tell: Black Women Talk about Sexuality and Intimacy](#) (2003), and [The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop and Why It Matters](#) (2008). She also sits on the Boards of the Nathan Cummings Foundation, Color of Change, and Black Girls Rock, Inc. Focusing on issues relating to race in America, mass media, structural inequality, popular culture, gender and sexuality and art and social justice, Rose engages widely in scholarly and popular audience settings, and now also on *The Tight Rope* podcast.

## Errol Southers

[Dr. Erroll Southers](#) is an internationally recognized expert on counterterrorism, public safety, infrastructure protection, and homeland security. He serves as Director of the [Safe Communities Institute](#) and of Homegrown Violent Extremism Studies at the University of Southern California and Professor of [the Practice in National & Homeland Security](#). As a former FBI Special Agent, who worked seven years as a police officer with the Santa Monica Police Department, Dr. Southers was President Barack Obama's first nominee for Transportation Security Administration Assistant Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

### Insight from this episode:

- Explorations of the possibilities of the 2020 election in the context of the apparent helplessness of the current moment.
- Surprising statistics about America and its homegrown violent extremism.
- Strategies for activists looking to change law enforcement policy and create systems of accountability.
- Information on the power of police unions and other barriers to true accountability in law enforcement.
- Insights into the hope and patriotism that music and its boundarylessness produces.

### Quotes from the show:

- "Spirit [and] solidarity pushes back despair and despondency, so we have some sense of possibility." –**Dr. Cornel West *The Tight Rope Episode #13***
- Quoting his father on why he joined law enforcement: "You can't change the castle from outside the moat." –**Erroll Southers *The Tight Rope Episode #13***
- "When you train people and dress people for war, they go into a neighborhood to do battle... They're in a warrior culture, when they need to be in a guardian culture." –**Erroll Southers *The Tight Rope Episode #13***
- "Police unions and police officers are afforded more protections than the people they arrest. And I can tell you, having been an assistant chief, it almost takes an act of Congress to fire a police officer. And when you do, about a third of them come back with retroactive backpay." –**Erroll Southers *The Tight Rope Episode #13***
- On community review boards: "Why is that such a horrible thing to say to a police department? Why can't it be that the very people that you're policing have some say in their reception of your services?" –**Tricia Rose *The Tight Rope Episode #13***

- “In the last ten years, we’ve had more domestic attacks here in this country by white supremacists and white nationalists than any other group. White nationalist groups, last year, increased for the second straight year 55% since 2017. The FBI finally had to label that threat a national threat priority. They were in denial.” **–Erroll Southers *The Tight Rope Episode #13***
- “COVID has been the perfect environment for these extremist organizations to recruit and radicalize and share their message. They’re doing it under the guise of pushing back against the government overreach to make you wear a mask, make you stay at home.” **–Erroll Southers *The Tight Rope Episode #13***
- “Start talking to the mayor. Start talking to the council. What’s the money being spent on? Are there any metrics that are being looked at with regards to how successful they are?” **–Erroll Southers *The Tight Rope Episode #13***
- “What do you do when everywhere you look up you run into a different pharaoh? Well, at that point, you just say to yourself, I refuse to be a spectator. I’m going to be a participant. Therefore, I’m going to learn how to love, fight, laugh more adequately, effectively to pass on a tradition to a younger generation.” **–Dr. Cornel West *The Tight Rope Episode #13***
- “There’s potential for transforming what it means to treat Black people with dignity and decency if we can cultivate and somehow separate whiteness from the national consciousness.” **–Tricia Rose *The Tight Rope Episode #13***
- “The problem is in order to reach that kind of policy we got to have multiracial coalitions, and if those racial coalitions are weak because of white supremacy and they associate dealing with poverty with dealing with Black people, then the racism makes it difficult to ever deal with their own poverty too. And that’s the catch-22 that we see over and over again in our society. And that’s the definition of insanity as well as a certain spiritual sickness.” **–Dr. Cornel West *The Tight Rope Episode #13***
- “I don’t mind being profoundly patriotic about Aretha Franklin.” **–Dr. Cornel West *The Tight Rope Episode #13***

## Resources Mentioned

[ProsecuteKillerCops.org](http://ProsecuteKillerCops.org)

## Stay Connected:

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