

Miles Molerio
2020-07-27

LIZ BRADBURY: Let me turn this on. Okay. And I pinned you?

Yeah. That's good. I'm going to turn this (inaudible).

Okay. I'm good. So, here's the stuff. I'm sorry that's a waste of that time. So, with this project,

Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center and Trexler Library at the Muhlenberg College will collect forty years of public health experience in the Lehigh Valley LGBT community, collecting and curating local LGBT health experiences from HIV AIDS to COIVD-19. My name is Liz Bradbury, and I'm here with Miles Molerio -- is that right?

MILES MOLERIO: There you go.

LB: To talk to him about his experiences in the Lehigh Valley LGBT community during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, as part of the [00:01:00] Lehigh Valley LGBT community archive. We're meeting on Zoom on July 27 -- Monday, July 27. And thank you so much for your willingness to speak with us today. To start, can you please state your full name and spell it for me?

MM: Okay. My name is Miles Elliot Molerio, so M-I-L-E-S, E-L-L-I-O-T, M-O-L-E-R-I-O.

LB: And please share your birthdate.

MM: My birthdate is April 15, 1998.

LB: And what town are you in? You said you were in Massachusetts right now?

MM: I'm currently in Hampton, Massachusetts.

LB: Oh, in Hampton, where Smith is, right? Oh, no. That's Northampton. That's different. [00:02:00] Okay, this is the consent portion. Do you consent to this interview today?

MM: Yes.

LB: Oops. That's the wrong page. Do you consent to having this interview being transcribed, digitized, and made publicly available online in searchable formats?

MM: Yes.

LB: Do you consent to the LGBT archive using your interview for educational purposes in other formats, including films, archives, articles, websites, presentations, and other things we may not even know about today?

MM: Yes.

LB: Do you understand that you'll have thirty days after your electronic -- after the electronic delivery of the transcript to review your interview and identify parts you would like to delete and, or withdraw from your interview from the project?

MM: Yes.

LB: So, let me see. All right. So, [00:03:00] this is some identity stuff. What is your zip code of the place where you live? Because you live in Bethlehem, right?

MM: Yes. Oh, God. It just changed: 18018.

LB: That's close enough. What's your age?

MM: I am twenty-two.

LB: Oh, okay. How do you identify within the LGBT community, i.e., trans, gay, lesbian, bi, trans, pan, (inaudible), that kind of stuff?

MM: I identify as trans and queer.

LB: You don't have to talk about these if you don't want to, but here are some general things for us to consider. Let's talk about this now. So, right now, during COVID pandemic, you are in some -- you are someplace. And are you with somebody? Who's in the house with you?

MM: So, I've been quarantining with my friend, Sarah, and her family, after [00:04:00] my college forced us all to leave.

LB: I see. Oh, so you've been there a long time then?

MM: I've been here since March.

LB: Holy moly. How terrific that these people let you do this. You're indebted to them for the rest of your life.

MM: Oh, it even goes further. (laughs)

LB: They'll be talking about this for the rest of your life, that they had to put up with this. Well, how great that

they're doing that. Isn't that wonderful? So, you just graduated from Moravian at the end of this -- the year, so to speak, and you're all done there?

MM: Yes. I am officially done with them.

LB: And now, you're getting ready to go to graduate school. But have you been working or --

MM: Kind of. Well, I was still in school, technically, online, for Moravian. I've been doing some promotional work for them as the mascot, making videos and whatever the media department needed [00:05:00] because I --

LB: So, tell me what the mascot is.

MM: (laughs) Our mascot is Amos the Greyhound. So, I have a big Greyhound costume in the house.

LB: So, you brought it with you?

MM: I was asked to bring it with me.

LB: Oh, how funny.

MM: So, I've been doing that. Because before the college shut down, we made a COVID about what not to do, what to do, how to wash your hands, all that kind of stuff. So, I had it with me, and they're like, "Take it home. Make some videos. We'll pay you."

LB: Oh, good. And did you have to do schoolwork from -- your college work from where you were?

MM: Yeah, I had to do everything from here on the computer.

LB: Did that work out okay for you? Or what do you think?

MM: Not really. I have some issues with light sensitivity, so being on the computer for hours and hours -- migraines, [00:06:00] headaches. I had a couple accommodations with the college, but it wasn't really working, since everything was online. So, I just kind of suffered, and pulled through it, and got my grades, and left.

LB: Really? So, you finished though, so that's good. That's really good. Because I just want to say, for prosperity, because I hope that somebody in the future, people will see this, that you were an intern at the Bradbury-Sullivan Center, and you worked in the department that I am in charge of. So, I've known you for a long time, relatively. And that was a long time ago, actually. But I haven't really seen you to talk to since then. So, I'm so happy that I get to talk to you now.

MM: Yeah, it's awesome.

LB: So, you were just talking about being away from people, and I really would like you to talk about that. I think it's a significant thing to say that you're away from folks now and you've [00:07:00] been communicating with your family, which I guess is on -- I just want everybody to know that Miles has the greatest demonstrative face in the United States. So, you can always know what Miles is thinking by

looking at it, and it's brilliant, I think. I think you could see it through the Greyhound costume. But I really would love you to talk about what it's like communicating with others on the phone, or online, or on video. You're probably talking to friends that you graduated -- talk about that a little bit.

MM: Yeah, so, especially being a graduating student -- and I work a lot for my college. There's a lot of things that didn't get to happen. I was an RA as well, a resident advisor, so I had a lot of students I oversaw. They were really sad that we weren't together anymore. So, we get together just about every week and do a little face call and speak to each other, [00:08:00] just check in how everyone's doing. Just a lot of FaceTiming and calling people. Lots of friends. A lot of my family, like my aunts and uncles, who I still talk to. They check in a lot to see how I'm doing. A lot of letter writing. It's back into style.

LB: Wow.

MM: Postcards, and letter writing, and all that kind of stuff, just to have some kind of form of contact. It's been really good, for the most part. There's been a couple of the times where - I don't know if you've heard of it, but we've experienced the Zoom bombing.

LB: Yeah, sure.

MM: We've had couple times where --

LB: So, groups? Talk about that.

MM: It was a large group when school was still in session. A lot of my residents are music majors, so they had an online composers concert, where they were able to play music [00:09:00] files of what the kids were composing to at least get them some kind of concert. I was there watching, supporting my friends and my former residents, and some guy hacked into the Zoom call and started saying the N word and writing the N word all over the place on the screen. We had to schedule it, and redo it, and put passwords, and all sorts of stuff. It was really horrific. I actually didn't go to my Zoom classes for the rest of the week because I didn't want that to happen again. I was kind of scared. It was awful.

LB: And I'm about to do a big training next week that -- for The Children's Home of Easton, which is a -- and it's not that big. It's about forty people all together. It's two trainings, actually. But do you think if there had been a waiting room for that, that would've kept that from happening? [00:10:00] Was the Zoom link published somewhere? Thirty years from now, people are going to go, "Why didn't they just use the franistan [*sic*] and keep this

from happening?" Because we're just not used to that now, and this kind of stuff is happening. Or the iris recognition or something that you would do.

MM: I can't really blame the faculty member who tried to put the concert together. He was just trying to get something for his students. He's a ninety-year-old professor, who somehow was able to learn Zoom.

LB: Don't be ageist.

MM: (laughs) His name is Dr. Lipkis. Very nice guy. Just not very tech savvy.

LB: Okay, you can say that.

MM: But he was just trying to put together something for the students. And we all had to rush to learn Zoom and this kind of stuff. [00:11:00] I wouldn't blame any one of them.

LB: So, this was just at the beginning then?

MM: Yeah, this was just in the beginning, around end of March, beginning of April.

LB: So, as people are much more careful, and I have actually set up a waiting room for this, and they have to check through every person so that -- and then also that they'll be identified, so that if somebody does something naughty, it will show who it is. And these are employees. But yeah, who would know that that kind of horrible thing would happen? Terrible thing. I'm sorry that that happened to

you. It must've been very devastating for the ones who did this music. Did they do it again?

MM: Yeah, we stopped it, and then we did a different day with a password-set Zoom link, and it was restricted. A lot more restricted.

LB: I see.

MM: So, we got it working eventually.

LB: Creepy though. Do you have brothers and sisters?

MM: I have a [00:12:00] brother. I have an older brother. But yeah.

LB: But you have aunts and uncles that you're having good -- I remember that, actually, that you had some -- a particularly cool aunt. Is that true?

MM: My Aunt Debbie, yeah.

LB: So, you've been having communication with her? And do you have Zoom with her, or do you just chat on text or over the phone?

MM: We just talk over the phone. That's what we've been doing ever since she's kind of stepped in as my mom. So, we just call on the phone and check in, just see how everything's doing, how everyone's doing.

LB: Do you want to say why that is, that you had to have somebody step in as your mom? You don't have to if you don't want to talk about it.

MM: I'm fine with it. My mom was just -- didn't really understand the whole trans thing. We tried talking with therapists and counselors, so it was a mediated conversation. She didn't really care how I felt. [00:13:00] She was more, "This is hurting me. You're making me feel bad." All this. Trying to blame me for it, and about her feelings. I just refused to talk to her, really, for the rest of my college career. She would try to reach out. I would answer with a one-word answer. And my aunt was kind of like -- she's the baby child of her -- of my mom, her sister, and her other sister. And she works in the health field, so she has a bit more of an understanding. Her boss is actually a surgeon, who does transgender-related surgeries, who is trans.

LB: Wow.

MM: So, she was -- had a lot easier connection of trying to understand, and learning. So, she's kind of the one who stepped in to help me. Just basic things that you would call your mom for, like I don't feel too well. What should I do? [00:14:00] Or how do I do taxes? Those kind of conversations and things. And some place to go for Christmas and spend Christmas with family.

LB: So, you go to her house? Or is that the deal?

MM: Yeah, I've gone to her house every year for Christmas.

LB: I see. And since the virus has happened, have you talked to family members about how they've been coping with that too? I mean, in some ways, since it's so much more the norm to talk to people on FaceTime, you're getting more FaceTime with some people. That happen?

MM: Yeah. I have a lot of aunts, so definitely, I check in with them a lot, especially my aunts on my dad's side, who -- we didn't really have a good connection. So, we get to talk a lot more now. We do a lot of letter writing between each other, and FaceTiming, and calling. They're doing okay. A lot of them like it because a couple of them [00:15:00] are very antisocial to begin with. So, they're like, "I love this. This is great. I can stay in my house all day, and I don't have to explain it to anyone." (laughs) My one aunt, Debbie, hates it, because she works in the health field. She works in a hospital, so it's a little bit scary for her because her hospital had the first COVID case for her region in New York.

LB: Oh, she's in New York? Oh, golly.

MM: Yeah, she's in Mahopac, New York. So, it's not the center of the city, but it's still New York.

LB: Yeah, it's different. It's different there. So, what's your biggest concern during the pandemic? What do you think is a biggest concern for you, and then also for the LGBT

community, and sort of in general, the whole queer community?

MM: I think those two, for me, go in together. Because my biggest concern for myself was my mental health, and I think that also transcribes over to the whole community, as a whole. [00:16:00] It's so, so rough. I'm very energetic -- as you know -- person. I'm a very personable person. I like to be around people, my friends, hang out. I don't get to anymore. FaceTiming and talking on the phone is one thing. But I miss just sitting and hanging out with my friends, and I don't know, playing video games or just talking. Just being around people that are different than the ones I'm living with.

LB: I gotta tell you, and this is your interview, but I have to interject something here. I have to say that when I left college and I went to graduate school, and I did what you did -- I went right to graduate school -- I had really dear friends and -- that I really -- that are -- I'm still friends with and that I still communicate with. And one of them was a wonderful, wonderful person, who I spent every day with the entire time I was in college. We were really pals. And we're still friends, and we still talk. But when you leave college, [00:17:00] your whole life changes. Because otherwise, you're with those people. You're living

with them every day. So, leaving college, I mean, the fact that you have -- because I didn't see that person again for 10 years. I didn't see her. I mean, I talked to her and I wrote a lot of letters, but I didn't see her again for 10 years. So, at least when you have Zoom, you can -- you've already seen your people a whole bunch of times since college was over. And it is kind of wonderful. She ended up living in Indiana for a while, and then in New Orleans. Really, I can count on my hand the number of times that I've seen her since 1979. And it's sad because I could never talk to her. And she doesn't like Zoom, which sucks, because I would actually love to talk to her on Zoom.

[00:18:00] You're lucky that -- in a lot of ways, that in a way, people intentionally trying to stay hooked up in this visual way. They might not even be doing that if it weren't for COVID. So, good for you that you're keeping up with that. That's been a good thing. So, let me ask you about being able to see Dr. Rachel Levine on -- you know who she is. It's our wonderful secretary of health, of course. Well, do you want to talk about seeing her and how that's made you feel, and in general, how you felt about her being the voice of Governor Wolf's offices?

MM: I very much appreciate her. I love seeing the updates that she puts up. I follow all that on Facebook, so I get the

updates on COVID in Pennsylvania, so I know what's going on when I go back soon. Especially in the day of social media, I think it's [00:19:00] a little -- you know what's going on with her, and people are being so horrific toward her for just being trans. But she's doing a phenomenal job reporting the health data and keeping everyone updated. I think it's just ridiculous. Even if she wasn't a trans woman, I think that people would still find a way to pick on whoever it was because they're not happy about being told what to do. I think it's awful what people are saying about her. I know there was that incident at that fair, where they had her -- someone dressed like her in a dunk tank. She's putting her neck out there, doing all this research, and making sure we're all safe and healthy, so we can open everything again and go back to "normal life." [00:20:00] People are just being babies, and picking on her, and being awful.

LB: And really, for the most part, it's really anti-minority, picking on her. Here's a person, who's a brilliant scientist and capable of giving us -- and they're not picking on the information. And truthfully, if they disagree with her policies, that's one thing. Everybody has the right to that. This is just how she looks. It's ridiculous. And it's all based in transphobia, and

misogyny, and stuff like that. It's terrible. Let's see. I already said that. Oh, here's a good one. Are you spending any time on queer dating or hookup apps? (laughs)

MM: Oh, God. I can't lie. Yeah. (laughter)

LB: You don't have to lie. And you won't be the only one that said yes.

MM: I think it's so funny because I've had these apps. I know people have [00:21:00] the very queer-centric ones, like the really gay-centric and the queer-centric ones. I've tried those; I don't like them. Not enough people. Maybe I should try them now. I don't know. But I have the standard Tinder and Bumble, and that's it. I hate Tinder, so I haven't touched it, and I think I got rid of it recently. And then Bumble -- I think it's nicer. There's a lot more people on all of them now.

LB: I bet. So, is that giving you enough ability to hook up with other queer people? Or does that not matter as much to you, as long as they're queer friendly? Or what do you think?

MM: It doesn't really matter to me, long as they're queer friendly. I don't really get to see people. I wouldn't do a date or whatever because of social distancing. No. [00:22:00] I'm fine with just talking with people and communicating with people on the phone. I'm not trying to

be going out there, doing a date or a hookup. No. That's totally out of the question. That's defying all of the science that we've all been seeing. Come on. No.

LB: So, you're in Hampton, Massachusetts. And where is that, say, in relation to the state? Is it near Boston? Or is it right in the middle of the state? Is it near Northampton?

MM: It's right in the middle of the state. It's very woodsy. A lot of back roads; not a lot of main roads. I think the most city I've seen is a little area with a Wendy's and a McDonald's. That's about it.

LB: So, are you going out, or are you pretty much staying in? Or what about the other people in the -- where you are, in the house? Are they pretty much staying in? Are people at risk? Or what do you think about that? [00:23:00]

MM: We have all pretty much stayed here ever since March. The only person who's really been out of the house has been my friend's mom and dad because her dad owns his own health business. He actually owns a company that sells the technology for telehealth. So, he's in charge of a lot of that. And he has to go to the office because everyone's relying on telehealth now for doctor visits and such. But he's done it in a way where he goes one day, someone else goes the next day, so there's only one person in the

office. So, just kind of staging it out nicely. And my friend's mom's a school nurse.

LB: Oh, golly. Oh. Oh, could there be a worse job?

MM: Yeah, during all this. She's a school nurse for a Catholic school. And they haven't really been giving her much guidance or money [00:24:00] for buying PPE and supplies for the start of the school year. So, she's having to do her own research, and has to go out and buy her own PPE and things.

LB: Is it open?

MM: Hmm?

LB: The school's going to open?

MM: The schools here are going to open. That's what she's been told. She doubts that it's going to actually open. She thinks they're going to close them beforehand.

LB: I think that's true. Trish was going to her regular doctor that's the specialist because Trish has lupus. And she went to the doctor, and the doctor just said, "Don't worry about schools opening. They're not going to open."

MM: No way.

LB: Because if we have a spike, how can you already have a spike? You can't say, "Well, it's okay."

MM: Yeah, I don't know. I leave the science up to Dr. Levine, and I listen to what she says. (laughs)

LB: So, it's certainly affecting your life. So, have you been doing [00:25:00] any new queer activities online? It sounds like you try to avoid being online too much but -- because of too much flashback. Have you said, "Oh, look at this site," or something, or, "Hey, the Bradbury-Sullivan Center has all these cool things"?

MM: Not really. I share a lot of stuff. When I see that there's events going on for queer folks, I share it on my social media because I have a lot of friends and queer friends, and kind of share that with them. Especially being the former president of Moravian's LGBT club, I share a lot of that stuff with the new leadership, and they've been getting stuff together with the community, and sharing all that information with them, and having some type of -- they get together monthly, just to check in on everyone and see how everyone's doing. But I haven't really been doing anything new. Just kind of sticking to my usual [00:26:00] kind of stuff.

LB: Do you go out for walks and stuff there or --

MM: Not really. A lot of the neighbors around here have a lot of dogs, and they don't keep them leashed.

LB: Oh.

MM: Also, there's a bear running around here. So, I don't really go outside much, because that bear keeps showing up in the backyard.

LB: Wow (inaudible).

MM: Very, very woodsy. There's also a neighbor -- we live up a hill, and one of the neighbors has a Jeep, and he drives eighty miles per hour up the hill. So, I'm not about to get hit by a car.

LB: Golly. So, do you go to the store? So, the mom goes to the store and just brings food in, and you're just there like, "Thank you very much?"

MM: Yeah. She goes to the grocery store--

LB: Have you gone to McDonald's?

MM: Huh?

LB: Have you gone to McDonald's, since they happen to have one in the town?

MM: No. [00:27:00] I have not gone to really anything, except for when I had to -- so, they're actually gone on vacation right now. To be honest, I'm not too happy about that. They're adults. I can't stop them.

LB: Where did they go?

MM: They went to North Carolina. They have a beachfront down there. So, they're doing their best to socially distance as much as possible. It's their home. So, they brought their

own groceries, their own cleaning supplies, everything, just to not have to go out. But still, the more southern you go, the more spikes there are.

LB: I know.

MM: So, I'm a little worried. I hope they don't come back and get me sick. Hopefully, they don't get sick.

LB: Did your friend, Sarah, go too?

MM: Hmm?

LB: Did your friend, Sarah, go too?

MM: No. She actually moved out recently. [00:28:00] She wanted to move back to Bethlehem. They're back already. She has her own apartment and is settled there, which is --

LB: You're there with her parents?

MM: Hmm?

LB: Are you by yourself there?

MM: I have the house by myself right now.

LB: You've got the cat and the bear.

MM: I've got the cats and the bear in the backyard.

LB: Do you have a car?

MM: No.

LB: Oh, shit. (laughs) So, this is like a slasher movie.

MM: Yeah. The doors are locked every night. There's a hammer under my pillow. (laughs)

LB: Oh my gosh.

MM: It's okay. The neighbors know I'm here. They know the neighbors; the neighbors know I'm here. So, it is what it is.

LB: Is it hot? It looks like there's an air conditioner in your window.

MM: Yeah, we got a couple air conditioners. It's hot. It's not as hot as Bethlehem, but it's still hot up here.

LB: So, are you bored? [00:29:00] What are you doing? I mean, are you reading books and stuff or watching TV?

MM: Yeah, I bought some books recently. My boss for my job at Lehigh, my graduate assistantship, sent me some books for student leadership, student affairs kind of stuff. I've been catching up on some hobbies. The only kind of thing I actually went out to do is I went to a barn sale.

LB: Oh, yeah. Cool.

MM: I went to a barn sale, and I bought an antique saxophone.

LB: You did?

MM: So, I've been restoring that as my way to pass the time.

LB: Is it a marching saxophone?

MM: Yeah, it's a vintage saxophone, French saxophone, from the 1950s.

LB: Well, as long as it's not bent and you can put the new corks on, it should be okay. Had you played saxophone before?

MM: Nope.

LB: Oh. [00:30:00] Did you play any other reed instrument before?

MM: Nope.

LB: I tried to learn to play the clarinet, and I have a saxophone, which I never was very good at. I told [Cindy Rodriguez?] I would give it to her because she wants to learn how to play it. And I said, "It's very hard to learn reed instruments later in life." You're pretty young. You should be able to do it. Don't wait until you're 40 or 50 because it's really hard to.

MM: That's what's keeping me busy, giving me something to do.

LB: So, are you watching YouTube videos and then going, "Okay, I'll try that?" Or did you have music and --

MM: Yeah, watching YouTube stuff. Trying it. A lot of my friends, like my friend who was living here before she moved out, they're all music majors.

LB: Oh, I see.

MM: So, I call them. I'm like, "Okay, you know saxophone. You don't have anywhere to student teach right now. We can share."

LB: I was going to tell you the place where everybody gets their tool -- [00:31:00] their saxophones and stuff. It's a place in Nazareth, Pennsylvania that's --

MM: Nazareth Music Shop.

LB: You've heard of it?

MM: Yep. I've been there. I called them. As soon as I get back to Pennsylvania, I'm taking the saxophone over there.

LB: Yes. Yeah, yeah. They're really good.

MM: Oh, fantastic.

LB: They really are pros. And what they'll probably tell you is that you should get a different mouthpiece because if you have a better mouthpiece, it's easier to play it. It's really true. You think what? But it's definitely true. Well, good for you that you could be doing that. So, let me ask you this. Do you have a Bethlehem Library card? Or a library card any place in Pennsylvania?

MM: I don't.

LB: Well, too bad, because I just found out that you can access all of Philadelphia's library if you have any card from the State of Pennsylvania. [00:32:00] And there's a lot of audiobooks. So, it's really fun to have. So, next time you're in there, get a card, because it's really fun. And plus, sometimes you can get books that you need to read. I had to read a book for a book club, and it turned out that they had the audio book. And so, I didn't have to read it. It was a good book. It was a book that our group at the community center was doing. And I'm way too lazy to read

the whole book. I had other stuff I had to do. So, I'm like, if you're going to work in the garden and you can listen to the book at the same time, it's great. But I couldn't not do the garden stuff, so that was terrific. So, let's see. I asked you that. What's the biggest frustration you have, or the biggest fear you have? Maybe that's two different things or the same thing.

MM: Those are very two different things for me. I think my most frustration is when [00:33:00] I see people not abiding by any social distancing things. The few times I have gone out, like I had to go to the grocery store before my friend's parents left, and we're in the grocery store, and they have they have the signs "you must wear a mask." And there's people wearing masks, and I think the most frustrating thing is when people have the masks on --

LB: Great mask.

MM: -- but they do this.

LB: Yeah, what the --?

MM: With the nose. It totally defeats the purpose. I don't understand. You see the picture on the box when you buy the masks. It's over the nose. I think that's the most frustrating thing because you're just so close to doing the right thing, but you're not there. And you're still getting

people sick, or possibly getting someone sick. Just do that.

LB: No kidding.

MM: It's (inaudible) frustrating. [00:34:00]

LB: And so, that's a frustration. What about a fear? What's your biggest fear?

MM: I think my biggest fear is that the people -- people want to go back to this "normalcy." Normal wasn't working. That's the biggest fear. Normal wasn't working. Normal didn't have us prepared for a pandemic. This is not the last pandemic, with the way the Earth is burning and everything going. And this is definitely not the last time we're going to see something like this. And the normalcy everyone wants to go back to has ended up with hundreds of thousands of people dead. I think people wanting to go back to normal is very fearful because normal wasn't working and we need to do better for -- if something happens like this again, so hundreds of thousands of people don't die because of a virus that we have all this science for. But we can't get something under [00:35:00] control, or we don't have enough compassion to just stay in our house for a couple months, or if you're going to go out, do it six feet apart with a cloth over your face. It's not a political thing. It's just being compassionate about other people's

well-being. I think that's the most scary part of all this: people don't care.

LB: Yes. I've interviewed more than twenty people, twenty-two people. You're the twenty-second person. Every person has said that. I mean, everyone person I've interviewed said the most frustrating thing is people just not taking care of people. And I think it's part of our queer community that -- I guess there are some people that don't feel this way, but for the most part, our queer community really doesn't want to make anybody else sick, for heaven's sakes, and wants people to just figure it out and do the right thing. So, yeah. [00:36:00] Well, this is sort of a similar question. But what's giving you hope and strength right now?

MM: Hope and strength right now is every time I look up Moderna and they're phase three of the vaccine. I keep very on top of the vaccine info. I don't just watch the news, see what they say. I go look it up and see what the actual companies are saying and what the reports are looking like. That's the only thing really giving me a lot of hope, is that they're going into phase three of the trial. And after phase three, so close to get something out to the public.

LB: You think people will okay? Now, when Trish went to the doctor, the doctor said, "If seventy percent of the public

have the vaccine, that's the end of it." Because everybody, like us, who doesn't want to get it, will be protected, [00:37:00] relatively well protected. And the people who are anti-vaxxers will either get it, but they won't be able to give it to anybody because we have the vaccine. But 70 percent will wipe out the thing. Do you know who are against vaccines or they don't think that -- do you know anybody that's like, "I don't think we should need to wear a mask," that you have a personal relationship with?

MM: I do. I have one friend -- I don't know why we're friends, but we are. She has been good to me, respectful of me. And we're opposite on the political spectrum. She's my age. Actually, she's younger. I know. It's strange. We've always been kind to one another. Great friend of mine. And always respectful towards one another. But she, on Facebook -- oh my God. [00:38:00] Actually, we all got into a big fight with her on social media the other day because she was going on about her rights and how she doesn't need to wear a mask. But we're all friends with this kid on our campus, who has cancer. So, his immune system is shot, completely shot. And we were all like, "Are you kidding me? You know this. We all know this kid, who is a great musician. He has cancer. If you get him sick, you could kill him. You know him. You've worked with him. You know he's frickin' bald,

chemoed [sic] out, completely fighting this, and still a fantastic pianist. And you guys work together in orchestras and ensembles, but you don't want to wear a mask when you go back to campus. But you could kill him." And we all kind of got on her case about it. I've never really seen her be anti-vaxxer, but very anti-mask, very, [00:39:00] "It's my right." When people say, "My body, my choice," for the mask thing, it's so stupid. (laughs)

LB: Not good.

MM: It's so dumb. It breaks my heart more than angers me. She can be such a nice, smart person, but she chooses to think like that.

LB: Why do you think people are like that?

MM: I think it's based off of where you're raised. You grow up in a household that is particularly Republican or very right-winged, you learn from your parents. I could say the same thing. My parents were hateful. My parents said the N word.

LB: You're not like that.

MM: No, I had to unlearn that kind of stuff. You learn it as you're young, and then if you have -- you go into an environment where it's a mix of people, like college, you kind of learn, oh, I need to rethink biases and things [00:40:00] -- learn biases and learn habits that are not

the entirety of the world. It's just my parents or this group of people, this small group of people. I think it's just a learned habit. I think hate's learned.

LB: Well, I agree with you about that. I know somebody who was saying that -- he talks a lot about it. He's an older guy. Well, he's my age. And he was a music teacher for a long time, since we were talking about music. And he said that he's concerned about people who have to go to colleges where they cost so much money. It's such a huge amount of investment. He was saying that you could get a degree to teach music, or you could get the skills to teach music by just being at home and doing a year and a half program or something, and you could teach music. And I said to him, "I think that one of the things that saves us is going to college and changing your mind about stuff because you're away [00:41:00] from a family, who may not have very open views." So, in effect, what you're saying is that kind of thing. And while it isn't really influencing the person that you were talking about, the other people are sort of getting it now, I think. You certainly have seen that about your life and -- over the time. Over time. If everything you'd done had been online school, that's tough, I think.

MM: Yeah. The online schooling is just -- I don't -- it's not -- I think it depends on where you are doing your classes.

My last semester, I took -- I was working on an Africana studies minor because that's a field I'm not very knowledgeable on. And if I want to work in student affairs, I need to know. So, I was taking a course on communism, and it was fantastic. And [00:42:00] discussions in that class? Mind blowing. We were talking with the professor. This should be something that everyone is forced to take. The different conversations on immigration, and racial rights, and gender, and sexuality, and all this stuff. I think it's just something that students need to have, especially in this day and age with -- there's so much going on, on the TV. All the turmoil. And there's no place for middle ground anymore. Either you're on one side, or the other. You can't be in the middle anymore because being in the middle is just as bad as being racist.

LB: What's the middle?

MM: Omnipotence and just oblivious, like "I don't see color" kind of people.

LB: Such a crock that is. I don't see color. Don't see color because [00:43:00] there isn't any there. I always talk about this meme that was a bunch of kids from the 1950s or something, and they were all saying the Pledge of Allegiance. And underneath it says, "Remember these days?" And my response was, "You mean when every kid was white?"

And then this person who had put it up says, "I don't see color." I said, "Well, you don't see any color in this picture. They're all white. How could you not see that?" I didn't notice that everybody in this picture was white. Well, that's because you're white, for heaven's sakes. And you think that that's the way it's supposed to be.

MM: (laughs) That's good. That's a good one.

LB: "I don't see color." I have friends, who will say that, who are really okay people. And you just have to grab them by the lapels and say, "That's a racist thing to say. Cut it out. Don't say that. Don't say that." Sometimes, you have to yell at them. [00:44:00] It would be hard, I think, for your friend that you -- all of you are sort of getting on her and saying, "You're talking about killing our friend. How can we just overlook that?" I think that's a pretty effective way of making an argument.

MM: We have tried. I think she's just so thick-skulled. I don't understand how people just can't have compassion for another human being. We're all just trying to exist, and live out through this pandemic, and get through the other side. We can't get through the other side with only fifty percent of people doing the work. Everyone has to do their part. And for the people who have shot immune systems, who are in that higher demographic of more likely to get this

disease -- he actually caught COVID. The kid actually did. He's fine; he got over it. But he did get it for the fourteen days.

LB: Oh, I was going to ask you [00:45:00] if you'd known anybody that had had it. So, this was a person. Have you known anybody else that's had it, or been close to people that had it or died, or know people who have died, or something like that?

MM: The only person I did know was the student I was talking about. My friend's parents, on the other hand, that I'm staying with, a lot of their friends got it and died. People they went to school with. There was a lot of stuff in the newspaper, I remember. Because I sit and talk to my friend's mom a lot. She's really cool.

LB: You meant the (inaudible)?

MM: My friend's mom, yeah. The mom here in this house.

LB: The one (inaudible).

MM: A lot of parents around. But there was a couple friends that they went to high school with, who passed away, and were about their age, in their fifties.

LB: I mean, you want to listen to that and you want to say things like [00:46:00], "Well, were they sick?" Well, that's not really the point. It doesn't matter whether they

were sick. It doesn't matter how old they were. People get sick. You don't know (inaudible).

MM: (inaudible)

LB: And some people, who are perfectly well, get sick. To other people, it's terrible. It's a terrible situation. So, we've asked about that. And let's see. So, let me ask you about Black Lives Matter. I want to have everybody give an opportunity to talk about that or anything about -- if you want to talk about politics, that's okay. I mean, you cannot separate that from what we're doing right now. But talk about Black Lives Matter, if you want to.

MM: Absolutely.

LB: Are you aware of that, where you are? I would guess that everybody's white there.

MM: Oh, yeah.

LB: I'm from New England. I know what it's like.

MM: It is as white as eggs on toast up here. [00:47:00] But surprisingly enough, for this little area, where there are quite a bit of Trump posters and things, there was a Black Lives Matter protest in a city. So -- a little city. Barely a city. A little area that we actually drove out to a couple weeks ago. And it was a very peaceful protest. It was led by African American community members. So, they had the stage. They had the voice. It was very respectful.

People were social distancing away from each other. Everyone had masks. They had masks and hand sanitizer there, and gloves, if the people wanted it. There was a lot of speakers from the community, all African American in some way, shape, or form. Young, old. [00:48:00] Everybody you could imagine had a voice at that. Parents and grandparents. Anyone who wanted to from the community could speak. There was a big road by a roundabout, so we lined up throughout the roundabout with our posters, and signs, and stuff, and were just getting attention to folks, and just getting -- doing what you got to do. It was very small, in comparison to the protests going on in the world. But I think it was still meaningful for that tiny area with a small population of African Americans.

LB: Well, it's great to see people coming together, who are maybe concerned about a part of the population, but not part of the population. It's kind of like the mask thing.

MM: Absolutely. [00:49:00]

LB: The thing about it is selfishness has never been an attractive quality for anybody. So, why would somebody adopt that as their primary qual-- "I'm really selfish, but I can't understand why I can't get a date." That kind of thing. So, that's great. So, what are you imagining? If you don't go -- here's a good question for you -- if you don't

go back, are you going to stay there? If they say, "Okay, we've decided that we're not going to let students back to Lehigh?" Or have they said anything about what it's going to be?

MM: So, Lehigh has said they are doing mainly online classes. They're sending out a more detailed plan on August 3 [00:50:00] of exactly how they're doing things. I know two of my classes are online. I do have to go back to campus because I will be working in student affairs, and staff and faculty will be back on campus. I'm actually going to be managing a building.

LB: Wow.

MM: So, I have to go back, as well as part of the GA. Hmm?

LB: So, what's that going to be? You'll be managing a building that -- as an R-- a residence hall? Or you're going to manage a building that's a different kind of building?

MM: I'm going to be managing a student life building. Their Lamberton Hall. It's where they have a dining facility and they do some of their events. I think they do their drag show there.

LB: Oh, yeah. Okay. I've been there, yeah.

MM: So, I'll be managing that building. Layout's going to be changing because they're making some spaces for classrooms, and just a bunch of layout changes that I'm going to have

to be in charge of. I'll be in charge of COVID-related [00:51:00] things in the building, as well, like cleanups, and social distancing, and all that kind of great stuff.

LB: So, they're anticipating people to come back, but not necessarily go to classes regularly?

MM: Yeah. As little classes as possible in person. The ones that have to meet in person, like health-related fields and the engineering stuff, a lot of the hands-on kind of programs and classes. But if it can be done online, it's going online.

LB: So, if you're all by yourself there, how many more days do you have to be all by yourself there?

MM: The rest of this week. My friend's parents will be coming back at the end of the week. So, I'm just here by myself until then.

LB: So, what's for dinner?

MM: Tacos.

LB: If you run out of food, what are you going to do? [00:52:00]

MM: I got to the grocery store before they left. So, I got a week's worth of groceries, and just have some chicken that I'm going to cook up. And I got some corn I'm going to make into elote. I like to cook, so it keeps me busy.

LB: That's good. That's great. And where's your cat?

MM: My cat? Oh, that's a really good question.

LB: I wanted to see the cat. So, tell me about your cat. Is this a cat that you got at school?

MM: Yes. I got Magic -- his name is Magic. He's a black cat. When did I get him? 2018. He is my registered emotional support animal.

LB: That's so great. Is he good at it?

MM: Hmm?

LB: Is he good at it?

MM: Yes. He is fantastic at his job.

LB: Good.

MM: He's very good at his job. He's really good at letting me know when I particularly am getting sick. [00:53:00]

LB: Oh, that's good.

MM: He's caught both of my UTIs before they got worse before. He sits on my hips, and he kneads my hip area very aggressively. So, then I just go to the doctor, and they're like, "Oh, yeah, you're this close to getting a kidney infection."

LB: Oh my goodness. Well, cats are smart.

MM: Cats are very smart. He's very smart.

LB: It's good that you've adopted a black cat because they're at risk.

MM: That's why I got him. There were so many at the shelter. So, I got him. He's my little buddy. So, we're in this together.

LB: Well, good for you. Well, I think we're coming to the end. So, here's the thing. When we look at this presentation, we imagine that someday in the future -- and it could be a long time in the future -- it could be twenty, thirty, forty years -- and somebody's going to look at this and see you talking about this. And you said a lot of interesting things. [00:54:00] But what's something you'd want to communicate to somebody in the future about how you feel now, and what you're hoping to see happen, and that kind of stuff? I mean, they know the future. You're talking to somebody who can see into the future.

MM: Oh, geez. I think the most important kind of emotions to put forth in the future -- like I've been saying, this is going to happen again. This is going to happen again. Maybe someone's going to look at this when it is happening again with a different virus, or a different disease, or type of global emergency. I think the best thing, the most important thing to understand, is the need for the human compassion. And no matter what communities you belong to, racial, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, age, whatever, I think it's just most important to think

about the community aspect and the care. [00:55:00] We need to care about everybody. We're not caring everybody right now, and look how well we're doing. We're doing an interview online, in a computer, states away. People are dying. People are in hospitals. We're really not doing a good job at maintaining this virus, no matter what that idiot in charge says.

LB: We're talking about the Federal Government here.

MM: Hmm?

LB: We're talking about the Federal Government here.

MM: Oh, yeah. All of them. No, Governor Wolf, I love him.

LB: [Pennsylvania state?] Yeah, it's Governor Wolf. Well, I have really loved talking to you, Miles. I'm so glad that I got to talk to you today. And I hope -- and I don't know how I feel about you being there all by yourself in the middle of no place with a bear.

MM: I'm okay with it. The parents have been here almost every day in the house. So, I'm good. I have a little peace to myself. [00:56:00] I can relax, watch the TV, sit down, do some cooking, do some reading. It's quiet.

LB: Is it a big house?

MM: Hmm?

LB: Is it big? Is it a big house?

MM: It's a big house. It's bigger than my dorm. So, anything's bigger.

LB: Well, I mean when you're there with other people, you don't feel like you're on top of each other? Or is it that kind of place?

MM: When they're here, yeah, it feels a little bit on top of each other because the kitchen's really narrow.

LB: Well, I'm so glad that I got to talk to you today. I really appreciate it. Thank you so much for doing this.

MM: Of course.

LB: And we will send you the transcript. They send it to a transcript -- the college program, where people learn how to do these transcripts, and then they send it back with it all written out. And you can look at it and see, and say, "I didn't mean to say this." And if you want to take those things out, you can. But I really think everything you said was brilliant. So, I hope you don't --

MM: Thank you.

LB: -- feel the need to do that. And [00:57:00] it's been terrific to talk to you. So, it's just been great. And I hope I get to see you more, Miles. I miss seeing you. And so, I hope when we all -- when things get back to normal, we'll get to see each other more.

MM: Absolutely. I hope so too. Hopefully, this virus will end soon. I'm over it.

LB: Okay, well, I agree. But we have to be careful, so we can stand it, right?

MM: Mm-hmm. Really.

LB: Well, thank you very much. I'm going to turn your recording off.

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