

Alanna Berger

2020-07-28

BLAISE LIFFICK: B-L-A-I-S-E L-I-F- "F," as in "Frank,"  
I-C-K.

LIZ BRADBURY: Alanna, could you say your name once again,  
because I forgot to turn on the other backup audio  
recording? So, say that again and do that, so it's on  
there.

ALANNA BERGER: All right. Alanna A-L-A-N-N-A Berger B-E-R-G-E-R.

LB: Great, and can you please share your birth dates?

AB: 7-20-54.

BL: 3-30-53.

LB: Okay. And you're in what town?

AB: We are in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania.

LB: Okay. So, this is the consent portion. Do you consent to  
this interview today?

AB: Absolutely

BL: Yes.

LB: Okay. And do you consent to having this interview be  
transcribed, digitalized and made publicly available  
online, in searchable format?

BL: Yes.

AB: Yes.

LB: Do you consent to the LGBT archive using your interview for [00:01:00] educational purposes and other -- in other formats, including films, articles, websites, presentations and other formats we may not even know about yet?

BL: Yes.

AB: Yes.

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

AB: Yes.

BL: Yes.

LB: Great, can you tell me what your ZIP Code is?

AB: 17055.

LB: Now, they also want to know, even though you've already given your date of birth, what your ages are. It says --

AB: I'm sixty-six.

BL: I'm sixty-seven.

LB: Okay. And how do you identify within the greater LGBTQA community?

AB: Allies.

BL: Definitely.

LB: Okay. And so, you don't identify as LGBT part of the community, other than allies, so that's great. [00:02:00] And I want to say, since we're talking about this -- because I've had other people who are part of the extended family of our community. So, explain why you are part of this community and why I see you as part of this community and your support of the community that you've done? I can see you're wearing your t-shirts, so go ahead and mention that. (laughter)

AB: Well, as I was growing up, I've always known gays and lesbians. My father had a gay cousin. When I went away to school at the University of Maryland, as part of the women's center, I think it was half straight women, half lesbians. We had gay friends on campus. So, I've always known people, but it wasn't until the -- we got involved in with the Silent Witness in Harrisburg, that we really became advocates. And at that point, we became part of the Silent Witness and we changed it to Silent Witness [00:03:00] Peacekeepers Alliance. But we also got involved with Advocacy, which is where we met you. Especially in the

Freedom to Marry movement. And so, we felt it was really important for straight people to stand up and deal with homophobia, just like it's important for white people to stand up and deal with racism. And so, that's been part of our journey. It became a spiritual path in some respects with Silent Witnesses. And over the course of time, you know, we used to say, "Oh, well, we're straight, our kids are straight." You know, and now we have a daughter who identifies as bisexual and a daughter who is transgender. And we also have a daughter whose gender expression is more male. So, we've learned so much about the community. I now have a nephew who came out a few months ago. So, you know, and Blaise [00:04:00] has a niece who came out. I mean, so --

LB: Yeah, you're in the thick of it.

AB: Now, yeah --

BL: We have a lot of connections.

LB: Could you also just briefly explain what Silent Witness did? Because that was such an important part, and somebody will look at this and they may not know that stuff.

AB: Right. With Silent Witness Peacekeepers, we had originally gotten involved with the Silent Witnesses from the MCC

Church in Harrisburg. And Westboro Baptist Church was coming to town and they needed help and Blaise and I ended up getting involved. We went through their training and it was at the showing of "Jim in Bold" at Penn State -- or at William Penn Museum, in Harrisburg. And it was such an amazing experience to be involved in that. And they kept asking us to help until we ended up helping in 2005 with a Pride Festival in Harrisburg and it was one of the [00:05:00] worst days of my life to see such a large group of forty -- fifty protestors. And it was so awful, I had nightmares. And we decided we wanted to do something more than just stand there with signs. And so, we kind of went back to the drawing board and worked with the original Silent Witnesses. We came up with the strategy of upholding the rainbow umbrellas. And, you know, Blaise had the --

BL: Safety vests.

AB: -- safety vests. And we changed the strategy of the counter-protestors to actively escorting people past the protestors. And that strategy was so effective. Within a couple years, people would say, "I never saw the protestors. Where were they?" Even though, when you look at the pictures, you can see their great, big signs behind our

umbrellas. You know, it was still, you know, something that really made people feel safe. Just a couple weeks ago, I was on a Zoom call [00:06:00] and somebody said, "Oh, and you have to know Alanna Berger. She created this group that back at Lehigh Valley Pride, when the protestors walked into the festival, she was there. And I felt safe." You know, this is so many years later and we still hear that.

BL: Yeah, but our main job, of course, is to stand between the street preachers at LGBT events and prevent any kind of confrontations from happening, that would spoil the event. And, you know, we try actively to keep any kind of confrontation from happening, so that there aren't any arrests and that everybody has their right of free speech. And everybody can enjoy themselves at the festival.

LB: I'm so glad you did that and it was an education for me as well and I think one of the things I really found out about it was, [00:07:00] the biggest danger was not really -- the scary, bad people were bad, and the LGBT people, for the most part, could move through that, because we're used to it. But the straight people that were our allies wanted to confront the anti-people and the anti-people, we knew, had made a living from suing people who had physically

confronted them. They would taunt them into a physical confrontation. And I think, you know, I've been -- this Reading Pride Festival which just happened, which I don't really know how that worked, but that was the first time I haven't been at any one of the Pride Festivals in Lehigh Valley or Reading Pride. I didn't even watch it. So, I forgot that it was on. But I've been at all the [00:08:00] main Pride Festivals and the anti-presence dwindled out. And I think it was because of you. I think it really was effective to just quietly ignore them that it was really --

BL: We like to think that.

LB: Well, I think it really --

BL: We're happy to take credit for some of that.

LB: I will be happy to give you credit for that, because I absolutely think that the last thing these folks wanted was for people to ignore them.

BL: Well, it was also important to us to be a symbol to the LGBT community. To stand up for them and to actually stand in front of these protestors and make it clear that we aren't going to accept what they had to say either, you know? Just because we were silent, didn't mean that we weren't sending an important message.

LB: That's really good. [00:09:00]

BL: And that message was being LGBT is okay, you know?

LB: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

BL: And we were going to protect their rights as much or even more vociferously than we would the street preachers for their right and free speech and expression of religion. And that was one of the reasons we chose rainbow umbrellas to be a really large symbol. You know, something people can see from a distance and know that people are standing up for them.

AB: Yeah, at the very beginning, we recruited straight people to help us because we felt members of the LGBT community should be able to enjoy the festival. They needed to be inside the festival and so, we've recruited straight people. I remember at one point I was giving a presentation to Common Roads [00:10:00] Kids, prior to the Harrisburg Pride. And they asked me how I could do this work. And I said, "Well, I'm straight. What these guys say means nothing to me." I said, "If they were attacking Jews, I might feel differently." And then right after that, the Westboro Baptist Church started going after the Jewish



community. And suddenly it was like, "Oh no." You know, so I think that's why I know it's important work, you know?

LB: Yeah.

AB: When I think about the Holocaust and it's like, "Well, they came for the gays first and then they came for the Jews." So, for me, I could not stand idly by in the blood of my neighbor. And I thought it was really important that we all have to stand up for each other and let us do the heavy work, while you all be in the festival and learn and network and, you know, see who all is there. We got [00:11:00] all these resources together for the community, let us deal with the street preachers.

LB: Yeah, well, you did a great job. Thank you very much for doing that.

AB: You bet.

LB: I really appreciate it. So, one of the things we usually start out with is -- let me find my startup questions. Uh-oh, one, two, three. Here it is. Okay. So, you just recently moved, didn't you? To a new place?

AB: Yes

BL: Yes.

LB: Are you hating that or loving it?

AB: Well, we're --

LB: Or something in between?

BL: Mostly loving.

LB: Good, good.

AB: Yeah, it's a brand-new house and so, we're working out some of the kinks, but it's in between two of our kids.

LB: Oh, well that's good.

AB: And two of our kids with grandchildren. So, it was really wonderful at first, before COVID. Because we were getting to spend so much time with the grandkids. And, you know, so, that part's been really fun. [00:12:00] Since COVID, we went through a period of isolation because my son-in-law had to go back to work. And my daughter's working from home. And they were afraid that -- you know, they didn't want to infect us. And Blaise's son is also working from home and -- but his boys spend time with their mom and his son didn't trust that they wouldn't do something. So, we haven't really been able to see them either. Yeah, the house is great. I mean, we've got all this extra time now to fix it up.

BL: And one of the reasons we moved up here is I retired. And so, getting closer to the grandkids was a priority. We also

wanted more of a townhouse situation, so there wasn't any yard to take care of. And they were building some new stuff, fairly near [00:13:00] where our grandkids are, our kids and our grandkids. And so, that was the major emphasis. But we really like this area.

LB: Oh, good.

BL: It's worked out well for us in a lot of different ways.

LB: Good. So, it's just you two in the place?

BL: Yes.

LB: Because I --

BL: Us and our dog, Brigid.

LB: Okay. Well, dogs matter because the animals really matter. Certainly true and I've talked to -- this is my fifteenth COVID interview and I did ten HIV/AIDS interviews for people who lived through the AIDS epidemic too. This was all crammed into this short amount of time, but the people have been vastly different, in terms of the people I've been talking to and I've just been talking to somebody who's really alone, who really doesn't even have a dog. So, it's an interesting thing to have some people who have large numbers of people in their house and other people -- how different that is for them. So, are you communicating

with your grandkids and your family and stuff online? Are you doing Zoom stuff with them or -- [00:14:00]

BL: Oh, yeah.

AB: Yeah, we had a situation after the kids went to virtual learning -- after the grandkids went to virtual learning. I was Skyping with the grandsons, trying to help them with their homework, because mom was still -- you know, she was still working. And their dad wasn't home, so I would Skype, so that they could share their screens and I could see what they were looking at and I would help with their homework. And that was frustrating, but also fun. You know, because at one point, you know, I would say something to one of the boys and he'd say, "Yeah, I could do this faster, but I really like being on the phone with you." But one day, he just -- he was sitting there and then he just started staring out the window and tears were just rolling down his face. And he said, "I hate COVID. I may never see you [00:15:00] again." And I started crying and Blaise started crying. And I called my daughter and I said, "You know, we've been isolated alone, separately, how do you feel about us coming over?" And so, we started going over, wearing masks and all that kind of stuff, for a while. And

then we just kind of -- you know, things have improved in Cumberland County. So, I go over several times a week now, to see them. But yeah, that was -- we were having some Zoom chats with our kids. And then some other political things happened and we -- the kids don't agree with each other and so, we've kind of cut those down to just smaller -- because we have six kids. He had three, I had two and then we adopted Ashley. And so, you know, it's a large group of kids. [00:16:00] And we just do them individually now.

BL: But we also get together weekly with a group of friends.

LB: Oh, that's great.

BL: We have actually started doing that in person, once a month. And we've been doing that for, what? Two years?

AB: Two years.

BL: And then when this hit, we decided, "You know what? While, we're not going to do what we used to do once a month, we're going to get together on a weekly basis and just check in with everybody. Make sure everybody's okay and, you know, if there's anybody in need, we'll find a way to help." And we've continued that now. The group has dwindled down to just a core few. But I still feel it's important to have that face-to-face contact, if not, person-to-person.

While talking to people on the phone is nice, seeing them is just better. [00:17:00]

LB: It is.

BL: And it's been important for me to be able to see people and keep in touch with them that way.

LB: Yeah, good. So, let me see here. Yeah, some of this stuff is -- now, you're probably too existential for this. You are really thinking about the questions instead of people going "ahhh". So, like I just talked to somebody who was 22, they just graduated, and they were so cavalier about everything. And this is a trans kid who just graduated from Moravian and is going into graduate school at Lehigh and had to leave Moravian at the end and, you know, went -- but their parents don't support them. So, they couldn't go home. So, they had to go into -- this is the interesting story. They had to go with a friend to her house, with her parents, in Massachusetts and this young person has been there for five [00:18:00] months with these people. And I said, "Well, are they there now?" I was talking to him and he goes, "Well, they went on vacation and she had to go back to school." I said, "You're alone in the parents' house? Where are you?" And he said, "It's Hampton,

Massachusetts. It's in the middle of the woods." I said, "Well, do you go out for walks?" He said, "No, there's bears." (laughter) And then I said, "What are you doing inside?" and he said, "You know, I'm doing this stuff." And he was so calm about everything. I thought, "Okay." And this is a tough situation, you know, in a lot of ways. He goes, "Well, my cat is here." You know, so, he was just -- I thought, "This is a person." You know, I guess maybe it's a little bit of the effect of being 22 and thinking, "I've got my whole life to forget about this."

BL: Well, yeah, they're pretty resilient at that age.

LB: Yeah, yeah. And for those of us who are old, we're thinking, like, "Am I ever going to stop being angry?" And I was just talking to a good friend, just the last person I spoke to, and she said, "I'm angry all the time. [00:19:00] I was never like that before. I was pissed off all the time." So, I said, "Yeah, it's going to be hard to stop doing that, if we can ever stop doing that." So, you're not working. So, you don't have to be worrying about being laid off and that's a good thing. You have family around. So, what do you think about Rachel Levine? We want to talk to everybody about that, because we love Rachel Levine.

BL: You know, we love Rachel. She's just terrific. And we've known her for quite some time.

AB: Yeah, we met her -- because I was going back in my mind when I saw the question. We met her at a GSA summit. Do you remember those? That Louie Marvin had started.

LB: Yeah, yeah.

AB: And we met Doctor Levine and we were so blown away by her presentation. We went up afterwards, you know, stood there looking like groupies. And got her contact information. And she has been such a powerful resource, even way back when. [00:20:00] You know, because Blaise had done the Safe Zone training. And would get trans kids and needed advice. I used her as a resource for the class I taught at Lebanon Valley College. And when I saw that she was appointed by Governor Wolf, I was like, "Oh, the best person ever."

LB: Yeah, I know. I know, lucky.

AB: And, you know, with COVID, I watch the news -- the broadcasts of Doctor Levine and Governor Wolf, just to see her. Because she is so calm. She is just grace under fire. And I am just -- wow. We would not be where we are today in Pennsylvania, if it wouldn't be for her.



BL: I wish there was somebody nationally who had her depth of understanding and compassion. Doctor Fauci is great, but he doesn't get to say much anymore and -- [00:21:00]

LB: Right, well, that's the thing.

BL: We really need that. The country really needs that. And so, I think Doctor Levine has been just tremendously helpful to this state and has done an extremely important service for us. Aside from all that, I think she's just a wonderful person all the way around. And I find her completely trustworthy. Just in anything that I've heard her say or read that she's said, that I question. And it's not that I will take everything she says as gospel, but, you know, it's pretty close to it.

LB: Well, I think certainly we're in the position where, you know, we don't know anything about -- this is an illness that -- I just read an article in the New York Times that said it'll be, you know, thirty years before we [00:22:00] really understand everything about this. But the thing you can count on from her is she's not making this stuff up. She's not just saying this stuff for political clout or this would sound good or Governor Wolf is telling her to say it, you know?

BL: Yeah, well, politics doesn't have anything to do with it for her.

LB: Right.

BL: It's just science.

AB: Exactly.

BL: And, you know, thank God she's as brilliant as she is. You know, she understands this stuff and can present it to us in a way that is easy to understand. And it's such a shame what's happened to her in terms of the bully online, the trolls, as it were, that just won't get past their prejudice to listen to the science.

LB: Right, it's true. [00:23:00]

AB: Yeah, but the fact that, you know, when she was first appointed, I thought, "Oh my gosh, you know, a trans woman."

BL: Yeah, it was a brilliant appointment on the part of the governor.

LB: Yes, it was very, very smart. And, you know, how terrific that there was someone with the kind of credentials that she had and the kind of extraordinary presence and calm. I mean, this is the person who, for the most part, is not really bothered by this crap that she has to endure. The

worst thing about it is not that it's happening to her, it's that for the transgender population and for our particular transgender young people who are seeing it happen to her. And it scares them because they think, "If this could happen to her, then it could happen to me." And I think I've said to our other employees -- we have now, 14 employees at the center, and I've said, "One of the things we have to emphasize is that [00:24:00] heroes have to take crap. They always do. You know, people who are major civil rights leaders, they don't just coast through. They always have crap and one of the reasons we admire them is because they can put up with -- if it was easy, everybody would do it, you know? We wouldn't get to admire those people.

BL: Well, the other thing I'd like to say about Doctor Levine is what a great role model she's been for our daughter, Ashley.

LB: Oh, great.

BL: You know, Ashley went -- her story has evolved over the last decade or so and I know that she has viewed Doctor Levine as her role model. And a really good one. And I know Ashley has greatly benefited from that a lot.

LB: Well, that's good. That's great to hear. (Inaudible).

AB: Even when you talk about heroes, [00:25:00] you know, at one point, the street preachers would focus on us, you know, and I was a faithless Jew and Blaise was Professor Yuck and Reverend Reprobate and, you know, they would focus on us and leave everybody else alone. And so, I think that might be part of the hero's role is to take some of that crap.

BL: Be the lightning rod.

LB: That's a good point.

AB: I hate to see it happen to Rachel, though, because of what you said. With other, trans kids being afraid. Ashley has gone through a lot of trauma recently because of the trans people who were murdered. You know, I think there was three within a two-week period.

LB: Yeah, it was horrible.

AB: And that was just as traumatic for her as well. So, trans kids, the whole thing with dead naming is one of the reasons why we ended up adopting her, [00:26:00] was because she was afraid that she would be buried under a marker that had her dead name on it. So, you know, it was one of the reasons, but it's one thing that when they dead name somebody, that just is so frustrating. Yeah.

LB: Yeah, I take a lot of time trying to explain that to people when I'm training, that this is just one of the worst things you can do. And in fact, I've had young trans people say that their names are even more important than the pronouns, it's really the name is what I've had several people say. So, what's your biggest concern about the pandemic?

BL: Well, mine generally is how many idiots there are out there who don't take this seriously and are going to keep it going as a consequence. [00:27:00] And that it's already -- you know, if they had just paid attention in the early month, the first month when this was coming out and done the right thing then, we'd be done with it by now and schools could open this fall safely. And instead, we're taking a crapshoot with our kids' lives. You know, I understand the economics of having the schools closed and yet, the economics don't mean a damn thing to me if what we're trading is people's lives. And so, the fact that this is going to continue for probably at least another six months, if not a year, because these people would not pay attention and would not listen to the experts, would

completely denigrate the science, [00:28:00] is just really angering. And just drives me crazy.

AB: Yeah, and I think that's one thing that maybe because of the work we did with Silent Witness Peacekeepers and the amount of research we put into the idea of, you know, civil liberties and freedom of speech and all that sort of thing, that it's not what people think it is. Yes, we have civil rights, but we also have civic responsibility. And people are completely ignoring that aspect of it. Like you said, in the New York Times, there was a great article on the cult of selfishness.

LB: Right, I saw that, yeah.

AB: And how people are just all about themselves. They're narcissistic that, you know, they feel that wearing a mask is their right or not wearing a mask.

BL: That's oppression for Pete's sake!

AB: Yeah, the oppression is just -- [00:29:00]

BL: You know, it makes no sense. And it disturbs me the number of people who are like that.

LB: Yeah, that's true.

AB: Yeah, the number of people I've taken off my Facebook list.

LB: I know, it's just very depressing, isn't it?

BL: Yeah.

AB: Yeah.

LB: It's so hard.

AB: I've dropped friends who had idiots commenting on their Facebook posts because I don't want to see it on Facebook right now. It's just more than I can stand watching that. But I think also for me and bringing this back to the LGBT community, the fact that, for instance, all the Pride Festivals have been cancelled or postponed, you know, I think back to the early days. I think it was, like, 2006, there was some problems at Harrisburg Pride, [00:30:00] the organization was falling apart. And one of the things Blaise said was, "We have to make sure the Pride Festival keeps going, because if we don't, the street preachers are going to take credit for it."

LB: (laughs)

AB: And it was --

BL: So, we ended up getting involved in the organization as well.

AB: Yeah, I became vice president.

LB: Oh my gosh.

AB: And that's what I'm thinking this summer, that the protestors and the street preachers are going to claim victory, that it's God's wrath that all these Pride Festivals had to be cancelled. And it's not true and that upsets me, and I know how important it is for the community to be at a Pride Festival. You know, all these many years that we've gone to a Pride Festival and, you know, there are people who go to every Pride Festival, every weekend. I mean, they just travel around the country going to Pride Festivals and it's [00:31:00] so important. A safe place for them to be and they are missing out this year. I can't wait for the virtual one from you guys.

LB: Yeah, it's going to be on TV even, too. So, we don't have to worry about -- and frankly, it's already made, or it's put together for the most part. We're adding things into it. I'm not involved with that. But, you know, I've done my part of it. But we don't have to worry about the kind of depressing tech issues that could happen. Which is devastating in, I think, a lot of ways. And of course, I'm not that great at pop culture, because I'm kind of isolated, but there are actually people I know that are going to be at the -- you know, that are older people.



Suzanne Westenhoefer, great, you know, we couldn't afford to have her otherwise. Holly Near is going to be at our thing.

AB: I know.

LB: But then all of our kids, they have no idea who either of these people are. [00:32:00] But then they have this whole set of people that they know and RuPaul people and stuff. And it really is quite an exciting thing. It was also about twenty-five percent of our budget that we make from that. Well, we're doing okay with it.

AB: Okay. So, let's put down donations to the Bradbury/Sullivan Center...

LB: Oh, no, it's that and the gala and we had to postpone the gala to the spring. We hope that we can have it then. But, yeah, that was a big thing. And, you know, we employ 14 people. So, it's scary for Adrian to have all these wonderful people that have jobs and then think, "Okay. If you screw this up, Adrian, I can't eat." And that doesn't apply as much to me because I'm pretty much part-time. Well, I am part-time and, you know, I don't make that much money. But it's a lot of pressure, and plus, [00:33:00] he's doing a lot of national stuff. You know, we've been on

the lawsuits against Trump and stuff like that, for trans health and it's been a big deal. So, you're staying in or are you going to the grocery store or are you just ordering stuff or what's the deal?

AB: We started off just ordering stuff online and then, you know, we started going to the six a.m. senior hour.

LB: I understand that, yes.

AB: Around here, it's been fairly good, in terms of the stores we go to, people are wearing masks, they have the plastic up in front of everybody. And so, that helps with the confidence level.

BL: We've been slowly, you know, going out, just a little bit more. We're not eating out; we don't go to bars anyway and that sort of thing. [00:34:00] But grocery store and an occasional short trip of some sort to, you know, our local hobby store so that we can keep busy.

LB: I know what you mean, yeah.

BL: But we really have limited our excursions, severely.

LB: Yeah, that's what you have to do. And so, what are your hobbies?

AB: Blaise picked up --

BL: I've been doing woodworking.

LB: You are? Because, you know, I'm a big time woodworker.

BL: What's that?

LB: I taught woodworking and furniture design in college?

BL: Oh, did you really?

LB: Yeah, I have a degree and a master's degree in woodworking.

BL: Oh my gosh, well, now we know who to call.

LB: I got every tool.

BL: I'm just doing real amateur stuff. I'm hand carving wands and, like, wizard staffs.

LB: Sure, I understand.

BL: I've started trying to do figural [00:35:00] carvings, but I'm such a novice at it, they're not very good. So, it's going to take a lot of practice. Of course, I got a lot of time now. So, that was the idea, you know, that this would be something to fill some time.

AB: Yeah, and I knit. And so, I've been knitting up a storm in my spare time. And I've still actually -- I'm a Healing Touch Certified Practitioner. And I've still been able to see my clients virtually and doing distance healing. I have apprentices who are still -- you know, we just do Zoom. And I've still been able to do some of that, which was only part-time to begin with. But it seems to be keeping busy.

There are many days where it's like I realize I've just spent two hours scrolling through Facebook.

LB: I know, it's hard to not do it. And you keep wanting to find something good. [00:36:00] You want to find something that's --

BL: Yeah, if only.

LB: It's so hard.

AB: So, we've started watching movies, our old favorites, you know? And the tragic thing is, as we're watching them, there's usually something that is poignant in a way that it hadn't been before. Like, we were watching *O Brother, Where Art Thou?* And I had forgotten about the scene with the Ku Klux Klan. You know, so, this is, like, post-Black Lives Matter, you know?

LB: Yeah.

AB: And it's like, "Oh."

LB: No kidding, yeah.

AB: Or we were watching *The Princess Bride* and Fezzik asks the Man in Black, "Why do you wear a mask?" "Well, I find it rather comfortable, I think we'll all be wearing them some day."

LB: Oh, geez. Oh, man.

AB: Okay, there's a quote.

LB: No kidding.

AB: So, there's something, you know -- really re-watch Xena, the whole scene and it was like, [00:37:00] "Oh my gosh." You know, fighting warlords and it was like, "Yeah, that's what I feel like so often."

LB: I know, yeah.

AB: What would Xena do?

LB: Yeah, we like --

AB: Get her chakram and cut their head off, you know?

LB: No kidding. We like to watch British mysteries. So, we watch all the BBC stuff.

BL: Yeah, we're into that.

AB: That's next.

LB: But here's the problem with that, and I have maintained that this is the case, there's one or two tiny exceptions, but if there's a queer character, they're going to die. They're going to be the person that gets killed or they're going to be the murderer. Almost always. And, you know, there's, like, one episode of Father Brown where that doesn't happen. I mean, I'm talking, we've seen everything

for, you know, way back to the old -- it absolutely happens.

AB: Well, and that was part of my class. Yeah, I mean, we talked about that in part of my class about how that was always the case, up until recently [00:38:00] and even now, it's mostly lesbians getting killed off in shows. And, yeah, so, that part is also -- it's like the ensign fodder on *Star Trek*, you know?

LB: Yeah, right. Ensign fodder, that's great. Now, we were watching *Death in Paradise*, which is actually a fun show to watch, and it's got a lot of people of color, and you know, it's beautiful and everybody seems pretty happy and it's all about Caribbean Islands and stuff. And it's pretty light-duty. It's not really -- there's not a lot of graphic violence in it. But we were watching it and then there was a character and I thought, "Well, he's gay, so, he's going to be the killer." Because the person was already dead. And then the main character comes in, and he's the detective and he says the person's name and he says, "Is not the killer." [00:39:00] And it's that guy and he's the gay guy. They said he's not the killer and then he says, "But you're not really him and you are the killer." And I'm like, "Oh,

the gay guy's the killer." I mean, I had hope and then it was gone. It was just gone. There is a few shows that have -- there is one that has -- the Ms. Fisher series has a lesbian character in it through the whole time and it's supposed to be at the time of World War I, so, it's interesting. But her girlfriend gets murdered and she's accused of being the killer. Often that's the other thing is that they're accused of being the killer. Once in a while they get off, but it's horrible. It's just horrible. It always happens. And we still watch them because we love that genre. But it's very tough. And you run out of stuff. Particularly if you binge it. You watch a whole bunch of this stuff. *Star Trek: Voyager*, we do like that. So, [00:40:00] let's see, what else can I ask you here? We said that, we said that. So, you're staying in. Okay. I just want to say that I say this is my -- I've interviewed twenty-four people and every single one has said that their biggest annoyance and biggest anger is that people aren't wearing masks and they're not taking this seriously. Everyone has said that. So, universally, among the progressive people of the world, we all are just pissed off. Like, we had to go to a doctor's appointment and every

person we passed on the street -- because we hardly ever go out, we've only been out a couple of times. I realized that person's wearing a mask, that person's not wearing one, that's all she said about every single person. It's our thing. But what other kinds of frustrations or [00:41:00] fears -- but frustrations I think would be what you would say. And there's been some small frustrations, I think, too.

BL: Yeah, I don't feel as active. And I know I could go out for a walk and of course the heat's been keeping us in lately. And I really should go out for a walk and I think what's keeping me from doing it is that first fear is that, "Who am I going to run into?"

LB: It's true.

BL: And, you know, am I actually going to be safe doing it? And intellectually, I know I am. But mentally, you know, I've gotten to the point now, where I'm afraid of people. You know, it's not logical. It's purely an emotional response, but you know, I've become very much [00:42:00] a homebody. And that does worry me a little bit because my mother was agoraphobic and from the time she was younger than me, she rarely went out of the house. And I don't want to be that.



You know, I don't want to fall into that trap, because it's important for our health that that doesn't happen, and we get out and do things. And so, I know I'm not moving enough. I hope it doesn't become such a habit because of this, that it becomes a lifelong habit from here on out. But frankly, I'm nervous of going out.

LB: Me too.

AB: Yeah, and I think I mentioned earlier about Ashley having COVID.

LB: Yeah, so, let's talk about that.

AB: And the frustration [00:43:00] especially that she's feeling. Because she has expectations of the --

BL: Health providers.

AB: -- health providers, that they are not meeting. And then she was originally sent to the E.R. because she's on estrogen because she's transgender and the doctor was as concerned about COVID as she was about a blood clot in her lungs, pulmonary embolism. And when they decided it was COVID based on -- you know, they ruled out the blood clots and they decided it was COVID, she was sent home because it wasn't that severe. And it took a couple of weeks for her to actually start feeling better, but now she's starting to

show signs of having had a stroke and cannot get adequate help, cannot get her doctor to listen to her, to understand what she's going through. And I think there's [00:44:00] a frustration that, you know, the healthcare system is so overwhelmed that how do they give individualized attention, when they're suddenly confronted with so many cases. And they don't know what to do about it. And you have somebody who has other conditions. They talk about other things like, "Okay, if you have high blood pressure and diabetes or some kind of lung compromised or all these other kinds of things." But who's looking at transgender people with COVID and what are their unique, you know, situations. And so, that's one of my biggest frustrations is that we've been able to stay healthy. I have gone into a couple of doctor's appointments. They were extremely cautious. They were specialists, you know? So, they weren't overwhelmed. They weren't part of the frontline. We cancelled [00:45:00] dentist appointments because that's probably where Ashley got it. Her endodontist walked into the room without a mask on and so, that's probably where she got it. So, we did end up cancelling our dentist appointments. But we're okay there. That wasn't an emergency. But the frustration with

the medical system, I think that's why I go to Doctor Levine, because I can trust her. I know what's going on. You know, too bad she can't be my doctor.

LB: No kidding, yeah.

AB: My conviction is, are we going to be able to trust medical professionals going forward? You know, assuming that they don't all die from COVID. That's kind of huge. Especially since we're transitioning to Medicare and that sort of thing.

LB: No kidding. Yeah, we went to the doctor yesterday [00:46:00] and it was the skin doctor. So, it was a specialist kind of situation. We both went because we both had stuff. We had to go, and we went into the waiting room and all the chairs were just piled up in the corner. There were no chairs and it was an odd look, you know? It was a thing that, you know, if we get past this, we'll never see that again. It was so bizarre. And the people were great, and we felt really safe, because they know how to clean things, you know? They're good at that. But it is true that Trish just had to go to the dentist, but the dentist was literally with a mask and a plastic thing and, you know, she looked like she could have wrapped her whole body with

-- and Trish said, "You will not be scared if you have to go to the dentist. [00:47:00] I've never seen anything so remote control as the people." So, yeah, that's the thing, because when you see somebody without a mask, it makes you agoraphobic. I can understand that. I have that feeling too. Like Adrian said, "Well, maybe we can open in September." And all I was thinking was, "I'm not going. I'm not going." I said, "I'm not going unless you can guarantee me that I'm not going to get it. I'm not doing it." And I do trainings to hundreds of people. And they were asking me to do one in September and I said, "Only if you can guarantee that a high-risk person could not be in any risk at all." Well, they can't do that. So, you know, I said, "I'll do a Zoom." It's actually easier to do these interviews. The only thing that's weird about it, and you may or may not have done this, that you have no idea whether there's anyone out there. I did a training of, like, two hundred people and I said, "Well, I hope -- and I got done at the end of 90 minutes and I said, "I hope [00:48:00] it's actually still working and the power just hasn't gone off and I'm just talking to myself." But, you know, anyway.

BL: I had to do the second half of the last semester online. And it was tricky. And I know the students found it difficult. You know, this was not a format that most of them wanted and many of them found challenging. And particularly students with any kind of issues in terms of how they learn, et cetera. It's extremely challenging. And boy, I'm so glad I got to retire at the end of the semester, but I feel terrible for my colleagues who I know are so frustrated about, you know, what they are being forced to do. And, I know that [00:49:00] my colleagues in your field, for instance, how in the world do you teach woodworking if you can't be in a woodworking lab?

LB: Yeah, it can't be done.

BL: I know they're just trying their damndest to figure out how to make it a worthwhile learning experience and they're just really frustrated. You know, my field, computer science, yeah, we can get away with it, for the most part. There are some things that I found really hard to present because it's such a non-dynamic medium. And in terms of the tools we have available right now. Now, I know that's going to change. You know, next year, there is going to be a lot of development for new products that will make teaching

online easier and they're going to be good. So, that the next time, it won't be so awful. [00:50:00] But boy, it has forever changed the face of education. Particularly at the university level -- college and university level. And this is going to have a huge impact on how that whole field works from now on.

LB: It's pretty interesting, I've talked to a number of college professors, I think three so far, in this group, and they're all really different. Because some of them were already doing distanced learning classes and they were pretty set up for it and one of them I'm about to interview on Thursday, right from the minute it happened had to rewrite every single thing she did. Everything she did was discussion classes and there was all this presentation by the students and everything and she said, "I don't know how [00:51:00] to do this. I don't even know how to use the tools." So, I know she pulled it off, but she's at East Stroudsburg. And she's going to be moving right into the semester right away and it's very hard. So, yeah, what a tricky thing to do. And then you didn't even have to walk at the graduation. You just waved.

BL: Yeah, yeah.

AB: Yeah, well, Blaise is a computer scientist. So, you know, already, he's technologically savvy, but, you know --

BL: That doesn't mean it was easy.

LB: No kidding.

AB: So, I feel bad for people who don't have a background in computer science.

LB: Sure, well, anybody who has to rewrite a class in the middle of the class -- people don't understand how hard it is to get these things in place. I taught woodworking at State University of New York for the first part of my career and a different life. [00:52:00] And it couldn't be done. You would have just shut it down. There's no way that you could -- it's like you can't take this stuff home to do as homework either. So, now, ceramics people gave people clay and told them to take it home and that happened at Cedar Crest apparently, that they just said, "Here's a whole bunch of clay, make stuff." What a strange thing to do, really, because that doesn't really work. You know, you can't really do it that way. So, it's sort of a fake thing. So, that's a terrible story about Ashley and had you known other people that have had it or have been --

AB: Friends. The daughter of one of our friends was in New York. She was a chaplain and she came down with COVID and she was really sick for about a month.

BL: But recovered, she totally recovered.

AB: Seems to be recovered and another friend who had moved to New York [00:53:00] also recovered. She was really sick for about two months, was not hospitalized, but just took a very long time to recover. But also, you know, so, we haven't really known anybody personally who died from it. One of his daughters works in a nursing facility in Baltimore -- outside of Baltimore and she's been really lucky. One employee tested positive, but showed no symptoms. And nobody in their facility had COVID, at least as of right now. So, that was, you know, pretty lucky. And my nephew works in Country Meadows with people in the dementia unit.

LB: Oh, golly.

AB: He said, you know, as much as he complains about having to wear a mask and shield and all [00:54:00] the protective gear, he said, "We still don't have a case."

LB: Wow.



AB: So, we've been probably among the lucky ones in regard to that.

LB: There's a facility in Allentown -- outside of Allentown. It's something Gardens, I think. And Steve Ziminsky was telling me that his former roommate is there now, and he has a pretty serious heart condition, so he can't do very much. Not very old, he's in his 60s. And they had one hundred people who tested positive.

BL: Oh my.

LB: And it's not a very big facility, including him. Including this guy. And I don't know how many deaths they had. I don't think they were telling. But one hundred people and a lot of them were a significant numbers of care workers too. So, that's a lot of stuff. So --

BL: That's a very high-density situation.

AB: Right.

LB: Yeah, and - [00:55:00]

BL: You know, once it gets introduced, it's going to spread like crazy.

LB: Sure. Well, I have a friend who is a pediatrician and she actually had it and was very, very sick, but she said that, you know, the parents have said, "Well, do you think it's

okay for my kid to go to daycare?" And she said, "Has your kid ever gone to daycare and not gotten sick from something that -- you know, they're going to get it. They're going to get it." And so, I just read an article in the New York Times today that said -- and I don't know if I believe this, but that younger kids don't seem to be as likely to get it. Particularly children under five. And it's even possibly because when they cough and sneeze, when they're around other five-year-olds, they don't spew out as much as we do when we sneeze, as big as adults do. It seems unrealistic to me. It seems like an unrealistic thing. There's some other factors [00:56:00] that have to do with receptors in little children's bodies that aren't as big, I guess, and they're not as likely to latch onto viruses. But it's not like kids don't get the flu. So, I don't know what that's about. It doesn't make a lot of sense to me. Go ahead.

AB: And looking at the data, you know, because they keep pointing to data from Germany and, I don't know, Sweden and Israel and, you know, it's like, "Oh, they had no problem." They also didn't have the same number of cases that we have. Israel did have problems opening with COVID and the

kids. And I think it's -- yeah, they may not be getting COVID, but whether or not they spread it, whether they can carry it home is another thing that we don't know.

LB: Right, we don't know. That's really the thing.

AB: You know, and if [00:57:00] somebody lives in Montana, one hundred miles away from the nearest case of COVID, have at it. Open your school and go for it. In an area where, you know, you haven't flattened the curve yet or it's still kind of -- you know, I think it's a big risk. My daughter's school district has decided to start with online, virtual classrooms. And then reevaluate it every month.

LB: That's wise.

AB: His son's youngest is going to be going to school, but he has learning disabilities. And those are the kids they're bringing back and they're going to --

BL: In a hybrid.

AB: In a hybrid system. I think two days a week, appropriately distanced and all that kind of stuff, to see how they do. Because they're the ones who are really suffering from the virtual [00:58:00] classroom. So, yeah, I don't know, it's kind of -- you know, do I want to risk my grandkids for an experiment?

LB: No kidding. Yeah, you know, I was talking to Steve Ziminsky, he was a school -- he was a music teacher in Allentown School District for many, many years. And he was telling me about things that I hadn't thought of and one of them is that a lot of Allentown schools are not air conditioned. So, what they do is, if it's really hot, they take the kids that are in the hottest rooms and they put them all down in one big, air-conditioned room, like the auditorium. Well, that's not an option. And he said, "How are they going to do that? What are they going to do when it's ninety degrees on September, you know, fifteenth?" Well, tough luck kids. Some of you get to be in air conditioning.

AB: That could have been factored into my daughter's school situation because they don't have air conditioning in their elementary schools. [00:59:00] That could have been a factor in their decision not to bring the kids back. But air conditioning is still --

LB: Yeah, if you don't have filters.

AB: If the air conditioning works, that could spread it through the whole school.

LB: Sure, yeah. It's a Legionnaires' kind of thing. It could be. So, do you want to say anything about Black Lives Matter? Because I'm asking everybody about that. You know, we can't talk about COVID without talking about that and without talking about politics because it's the deal.

BL: It is one of the frustrations that we can't be out on the street with them.

LB: No kidding, no kidding.

BL: I mean, it's driving me nuts that I can't go downtown and help. Alanna and I and I'm sure you as well, since we were teenagers have been fighting for equal rights. It's frustrating, first of all, that we still have to do it. [01:00:00] But, you know, after fifty years. But still, that's our first instinct is to go out and, you know, hold signs ourselves and protest. You know, there's no question in my mind that this can be a watershed moment. Whether it's going to be a positive one or a negative one is yet to be seen. I think the current administration is doing everything they can possibly do to make this as bad as it can possibly get. They are taking the exact wrong approach and clearly making things worse, rather than any attempt to make them better. You know, it is so easy to demonstrate

that black folks and others of color are so oppressed,  
[01:01:00] and they have been for four hundred years. And  
while the oppression is somewhat subtler these days, it's  
still there. And we have got to get past that, or we will  
never reach the potential that this country could reach.

AB: You know, I actually lived in North Carolina when I was  
younger, and it was a really difficult time. My father was  
invited to join the Ku Klux Klan. And they apparently  
didn't realize he was Jewish. We had black maids and  
watching that and participating in that oppression. You  
know, the signs that said, "Colored only," or "Whites  
only." You know, growing up with that was painful. And  
then, you know, coming back to the north - [01:02:00]  
because we were damn Yankees down there, but then coming  
back to the north and the race riots in the high school  
where I was at, you know, in the seventies. And then, you  
know, fast forward to -- it was about the same time we  
started the Freedom to Marry work. We also got involved in  
anti-racism work. And so, that was around 2004. I know the  
people we were doing it with just didn't understand the  
anti-racism. "I'm not racist" kind of thing. And I had  
worked and collectively owned and operated an anti-profit

community restaurant, a Kosher restaurant, in the seventies. And it was like, that went off for me. We were anti-profit. We weren't non-profit. We were against the machinery that made money on food. You know, that made such outrageous profits on food. And so, for me, [01:03:00] suddenly that made sense to me. And it's like, to be anti-racist means you are against the system. And it took me even longer to figure out what those systems were. And as an individual, they are so hard to deconstruct. You know, there's nothing I can do as an individual about the property taxes that cause people of color to be isolated in poor school districts. And so, understanding that and explaining that to people -- and that's what actually has caused the civil war in our own family is that some of them -- "But I'm not racist." It's like, "That's not the point." And trying to explain that to people who don't want to hear it, you know? "Well, how can you tell me that I've benefited from white privilege? I have no money, you know, I have all these problems. How can you say I benefited from white privilege?" "Well, let me walk you through some of the exercises." [01:04:00] Because we have done a lot of work and it's so distressing to be fifty years from

Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King Junior and say, "Oh my gosh, you know, we are no farther, except that so many people are paying attention now."

LB: It's true.

AB: Almost every company that I do online business with has sent me emails, outlining specifically what they are doing to educate their employees. They're donating to the right organizations, they are setting up, you know --

BL: Well, they're strengthening their policies.

AB: Yeah, but they're also setting up opportunities for young people of color, so that they can, you know, be mentored and get skills and things like that. So, beyond the protests, I feel like there is [01:05:00] hope that this time, we're going to make it work. And the continuing protests hopefully will hold people's feet to the fire. So, it's --

BL: It's all we can hope for.

AB: Yeah, we can't let our guard down.

LB: No, that's for sure.

BL: But it's real frustrating that we can't be more actively involved.



LB: No kidding. And we had this thing in Allentown, I don't know if you know that whole thing that happened in Allentown where the person was arrested for being sick and then kneeling on his head. And, you know, it happened five blocks from this window that I'm looking at and I couldn't go to it. And Adrian was there. He actually was there at midnight and he texted me and he said, "This is happening." And I know he did that because he wanted to know if I wanted to come over. I mean, I was just down the street and I said to Trish -- and then they had another protest the next night. And I said, "I think [01:06:00] we should go to this." And the look on her face, because she's very, very at risk. And she's worried about me. And I had very severe lung issues when I was a teenager, so, I don't know, you know, whether that would affect me or not. I've been breathing wood dust my entire life too. So, I don't know, but she's really, really at risk and she has lupus and a lung disease and all sorts of stuff. So, I really deliberated and then I looked at the pictures. I could see the thing that was happening. It was live. And I could see these kids and they were chanting and yelling without masks

on. Not a lot of them, but a couple of them. And I thought,  
"I can't do it. I can't do it."

BL: You know, it's --

LB: All I have to do is be right next to somebody who's  
shouting out and I understand that passion. I understand  
why they want to chant [01:07:00] and yell and stuff like  
that. But --

BL: Yeah, really want to be there. It's tearing us apart that  
we can't participate.

LB: I understand it. I understand. Wow, it's very tough. And --

AB: Well, the other thing too is the intellectual level. While  
everybody in the country is up in arms about Black Lives  
Matter, the whole idea of intersectionality comes into  
play. Because while everybody's yelling about this, Trump  
is taking away healthcare for LGBT people. You know, here's  
where the news is focused, so, let's take away these rights  
from LGBT people and put more kids in cages. And so, that  
whole divide and conquer thing.

BL: And misdirection. He's good at that.

AB: Yeah, yeah. So, yeah, I'm hopefully more than anything.  
That's where I have hope is that we are going [01:08:00] to  
actually start doing things. And if we can get a lot of

these old white men out of office, you know, and I hate to say -- I don't want to limit it to Republicans, because I'm not sure the old, white Democrats are doing much better. Their hearts are in the right place, but they don't have the fire. But that whole notion of this patriarchal, you know, daddy thing. That daddy knows best and he's punishing the kids and, you know, mom has to be barefoot and pregnant in the kitchen and, you know, that is -- we got to stop that somehow. And, you know, I'm kind of on the fence with AOC. You know, her recent preaching was just brilliant.

LB: It was brilliant. [01:09:00] It was totally brilliant. And Trish was playing it and she goes, "Sit down and listen to this." And I said, "Okay. That was brilliant." And every single person that I know that listened to it said, "Okay. That was brilliant." And, you know, even the criticism didn't make any sense, you know?

BL: Right.

AB: Right.

LB: Well, she shouldn't be talking out. And that's the biggest danger I think, is when we have people that say, in sort of the guise of, "Well, you have to be able to -- I mean, everybody needs to be calm and self-care and stuff like

that, but don't push self-care so far that you're not doing anything, you know? That you're not speaking out and that you just accept this. That you accept things and that things happen for a reason." Yeah, because there's racists. Well, we're going to change it, you know? They happen for a reason that's stupid. So, let's fix that reason. But it's very tough. I think it's very tough right now for people like us too, [01:10:00] because we're --

BL: It also seems like we're at a period of history where a lot of confluences are coming together. And I do have a little bit of hope that, in fact, this is going to bleed over into the election and beyond. And have enough momentum to actually carry us forward, rather than backwards. I'm not entirely optimistic about it, but I've got that sort of hidden hope that, you know, there's going to be such a backlash from all of this nonsense, that we are in fact going to make progress this time. But, you know, we've kind of felt that way before. You know, when we got us out of Vietnam we thought, "Oh yeah, you know, we're going to beat the, [01:11:00] you know, industrial complex."

AB: The military industrial complex.

BL: The military industrial complex.

AB: We got Nixon impeached, yes.

LB: I know, it's like this.

BL: Yeah, and that we're going to start taking care of people.

Well, didn't quite happen, did it? So, you know, I'm cautiously optimistic in that respect. I do have kind of good feelings about this next election that we are in fact going to be able to make some massive changes. But boy, do we got to get out --

LB: Yeah, I tell you, the thing that is most positive for me was seeing that a lot of the Black Lives Matters protests and the people who were protesting within this, it's very energy-charged and a lot of them were young people. And the young people vote is what brought us to Obama. And which did not bring us to Hillary Clinton because there wasn't that college student [01:12:00] vote. And right now, college students are really pissed off. And they need to understand that it doesn't have to be this way and even their college loan things and stuff and the plans that -- it is true that the plans -- the Biden campaign has some very good steps that are probably from Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, for paying off student loans and stuff. Which these young people have to recognize is this has to

be done, and it's not even that much money. I mean, really, in the grand scheme of things, it helps them to be able to have more disposable income, which kind of takes care of taxes and stuff. And it ends up balancing it out. So, that --

BL: My two big agenda items are that and the universal healthcare.

LB: That's true.

BL: If we don't get universal healthcare passed, we are just never going to get anywhere. I really think [01:13:00] that the whole medical system is a disaster. You know, it started when they started deregulating it and allowing it to make profit, et cetera. And it's real easy to show all the other countries that have universal healthcare, how much better their societies are. How much better protection everybody has.

LB: And the direct relationship of COVID's proliferation, because people didn't have healthcare and because they were sick, they couldn't take days off and you know how that continued to happen. Yeah.

BL: Well, anyway, I'm keeping my fingers crossed that we're going to have a big year.

LB: I hope so. I hope so as well.

BL: God help us if we don't.

LB: Yeah, all right. So, one more thing that I hope that -- this archive project is really fascinating and we're having a wonderful time with Muhlenberg [01:14:00] and Lehigh University working on this too. So, they've done a bunch of older LGBT people talking about all this stuff that happened. I often thought that all the stuff we did to pass all our ordinances nobody would know about that. And I've been talking about that a lot. And they transcribe it and it's really terrific and it's all searchable and you can get it in all the papers that we say, like, "Why are you doing this stuff?" And now, it's all in the archives and all digitalized and, you know, all the Valley Gay Presses that I made, one of the things that happened was, I was talking to Kristen Leipert, who I'm actually working with now on these things that I'm doing, like last year. And I was talking about the LGBT March on Washington in 1993. And I said, "Well, Trish and I went together to that and we've been together for several years. About six years by the time we went to that." And then I said, "We both were at the 1987 march, but we weren't together there." And Kristen

goes, "Yeah, I know." And I said, "How do [01:15:00] you know that?" And she said, "Because I read all the papers as I digitalized them, and I read all the stories and I know everything about your life. (laughter) Great, somebody does. So, she said that she knows everything. And then she'll says things like, "I found this video of the first Pride Festival. Who can you identify in the thing?" So, I'd watch the whole two-and-a-half-hour thing and I said, "Well, there's me way in the back." Because they only did the front. They only videotaped the front and I named a lot of people that were there and stuff. And it was very interesting to see, you know, I think all those people look the same as they do now, even though it was, you know, twenty-seven years ago and I'm the same. I still have those pants, you know, that kind of stuff. (laughter) Which always happens to me. I actually said, like, "Is that me? Oh yeah, I remember those pants." (laughter) But the whole thing has been very terrific [01:16:00] and one of the things I hope and one of the reasons for this is to collect information from people who are talking about what's happening now, so people in the future can look back at this and say, "These are real people and how this was



affecting them." And we don't have that for the flu epidemic of 1918, when my grandmother died. My grandmother died of the flu in 1918. So, what do you want to say to people thirty years from now or forty years from now or fifty years?

BL: I hope life is better.

LB: Just a soundbite. A soundbite.

AB: Yeah, you know, a young person called me about the Defund the Police Movement and, you know, she had a questionnaire and we walked through the questionnaire and I talked about how I've been doing this work for 50 years and I really thought it would be solved by now. You know, when I was a teenager, I thought this would all be a thing of the past and it's not. [01:17:00] And I go back and forth between anger and despair. And the one day I was talking to my grandson and he wanted to know about history. And so, you know, we were talking about history and he said, "Well, I'm really afraid the world's going to fall apart." He said, "This anti-racism work," he said, "I need to get involved in that." He's nine. "I need to get involved in that anti-racism work." He said, "I feel bad that I can't save the world." And it was like, "Oh my gosh, that's how I

feel. And I said to him, "You know, I often feel like that, but what got me through was the idea of think globally, act locally. Change your own little part of the world." And, you know, I raised my kids to be, you know, anti-racist. And, you know, my daughter married a black man and our son married [01:18:00] a Vietnamese refugee. We have a transgender daughter. And so, we've got this conglomeration of culture and ethnicity in our own little family. And so, they don't care about skin color and things like that. And we started Silent Witness Peacekeepers, you know?

LB: Right.

AB: And we created that in our own little part of the world, and we made such a difference. And so, if everybody does that, if everybody does their part, then maybe we will change the world. And that's what I told the young woman. I said, "I don't want to make any assumptions. You sound like you're young." I said, "We thought we were going to turn over this utopia to you guys and you still have to do the work. And you know, we're here to help. We can't be out there anymore marching, but we're more than willing to support you in the ways that we can." And so, if somebody

is watching this thirty years from now and the world is a  
[01:19:00] much better place, yay.

BL: Yay.

AB: If not, you know what? Ask --

BL: Sorry about that.

AB: Yeah, because we're more than happy to, you know, listen  
when they complain and give them advice if they need it and  
do whatever we need to do.

BL: Yeah, obviously, we've always felt it's incumbent on all of  
us to take positive steps toward a better future. And not  
just complain. But, you know, take an active role, as much  
as you can. You know, not everybody has to be out there on  
the street. But as much as you possibly can to support that  
movement forward. I hope to God it's better thirty years  
from now. And if it isn't, we're sorry. We're doing  
everything that we can think of to do. [01:20:00] I'd like  
to think that the last three years or so in particular,  
have been an aberration that doesn't get repeated.  
Unfortunately, I also know from history and looking back  
thirty years in the past, what they did then that has  
continuing repercussions now, in a negative way. And I hope  
that the steps we're taking now lead to more positive than

negative. And by the time thirty years from now -- you know, universal healthcare in particular, I think, if that hasn't become a reality, I just don't have any hope for the country at all. If they haven't done more to make reparations for the centuries of oppression of people of color, I don't have any hope [01:21:00] for this country.

AB: Or the indigenous people.

BL: Yes, them as well. As a country, we have to own what it cost other people to make it what so many people think of as the greatest country in the world. Yeah, we're not the greatest in many, many ways.

AB: No, right now we're the third world banana republic.

LB: No kidding.

BL: I think the ideals of the country are wonderful, you know, the phrase that all men are created equal is probably one of the greatest phrases ever written. And yet, even at the time it was written, they didn't mean it.

LB: It wasn't true, yeah.

BL: We have to mean it. And if another thirty years goes by and we haven't made great strides in meaning it in this country, then I'd say the experiment's [01:22:00] a failure. But I'm hoping that's not going to be the case.

Obviously, I'm trying to do whatever I can. And we all are, in this family for sure, trying to do what we can to live up to those ideals. And to make sure that nobody feels like they're on the outside.

AB: And that's assuming we haven't fried the earth.

LB: And then there's that.

BL: Yeah.

AB: Yeah, I remember being part of the first Earth Day.

LB: Me too.

AB: I was in high school. We formed the Clean Earth Association and we got permission to have an assembly. And, you know, we were out there educating in 1970. You know, and I started habits back then. Like turning off the water when I brushed my teeth. And every time I [01:23:00] do that, I think I've been doing this since 1970.

LB: Well, we're doing what we can do. We've got a history of doing what we can do. And we do have to recognize that, you know, if you look back to the 1950s, it's pretty much a sucky time. You know, the McCarthy Era and rampant Jim Crow and, you know, pre-Martin Luther King. And the beginnings of the Vietnam War and witch hunts and terrible government. And certainly, the incarceration of LGBT people.

BL: Yeah, one of the things I've always said to Alanna is, particularly when we were working on the issue of same-sex marriage, was I'd like to keep Susan B. Anthony in mind. She worked her [01:24:00] entire adult life, into her nineties, trying to get them the vote for women and it didn't happen in her lifetime. But it did happen.

LB: Yeah, it's true.

BL: And, you know, what's to say, you know -- I can't even think of the saying that I want to project at this point. But, you know, just because it's not going to be effective in our lifetime, doesn't mean we are free from the responsibility of trying to make it happen in our lifetime.

LB: That's true.

BL: And that's something that I've always lived by, that I've tried to pass on to my children and obviously we're trying to pass it on to our grandkids.

AB: Yeah, the ethics of the fathers. You may not finish the work in your lifetime, but neither are you free to desist from it.

BL: I knew she'd know the quote. [01:25:00]

LB: Good for you. Well, that's a terrific note to end on. Thank you so much for saying that. Thank you so much for talking to me. You've been very inspirational.

BL: Thanks for asking us in.

AB: Yeah, it's amazing.

BL: We're very honored.

AB: Yes, very honored and it's wonderful seeing you again.

LB: It's great to see you too. I will give Trish a hug. I'm going to turn off the recorder now. Oh, whoops. Wait, oh no.

BL: Don't tell me you didn't record it.

LB: So, I just did this entire recording with forgetting to do the video of this. But I did do the audio. Thank goodness. I missed Blaise Liffick and the wonderful Alanna Berger. Both of them from Silent Witness talking about brilliant things. We have the entire audio recording. They will make the transcript from this. So, there will be a written transcript from this as well. Oh, does this suck big. I'm very, very sorry. Maybe I'll come back to you, [01:26:00] because everything you said was brilliant. Maybe when you go, you'll go, "Oh, I forgot to say this thing." (laughter)

BL: Anytime, Liz.

LB: Oh, no, not anytime. This is so tough for you to do this. But you did a wonderful job and I really, really appreciate it. I can't believe I didn't do that. I even looked at the thing and said, "Is the thing on?" But the red light wasn't on. What a fool. Well, I've only done that -- this is the first time I've done that in all of these. But I did get the audio. But luckily, I said, "Oh, I don't have the audio on. Let me turn it on." So, that was good. I might have to come back and do you again. Maybe next week.

BL: We could sit and read the transcript, how's that?

LB: You could, maybe. Maybe do that. (laughter) No, that would be wrong. That wouldn't be good. Well, think about -- I think that the things that you said were brilliant and I did get all of the audio of it. And [01:27:00] I'm so terribly sorry that I messed this up.

BL: Oh, it's fine.

LB: I can't believe it.

AB: And you are recording now, right?

LB: Yes, I'm recording both of the things now. So, say that thing that you said at the end of the statement that you said about --



AB: Oh, from the Pirke Avot the ethics of our fathers. You may not complete the work in your lifetime, but neither are you free to desist from it.

LB: Well, that was brilliant. That was the gist of the entire interview, which is in the audio. Thank God I got the audio. I'm sweating because I've messed this up. So, anyways, well, I do have the audio, thank God. So, I do have the transcript for that, and I think that will work, because people will look at it and stuff. Thank you. And I actually think that we have a -- and [01:28:00] I'm going to encourage them to do this, to be sure that you're on this. This is an ongoing grant through Lehigh University that they have been doing these oral histories. And they've done a number of people. It takes them a lot longer to do these things than it takes me to do it. They have a team. But they've done, I think, ten people and they're doing me now. And I said, "You can't do it all in ninety minutes, because I have a lot of things to say and I have another interview next Monday. But I think that they should talk to you particularly about the stuff you've done for Silent Witness and your lives too, because you've had such a significant life and I'm going to make them do this, since

I screwed this up. So, they're going to get in touch with you in the next round of grant stuff. And I'll force Mary Foltz to do this. She's a wonderful interviewer. Much better than I, because I can't shut up and she'll let you [01:29:00] actually talk. And I think that your life experience has been so significant and I think that's a very, very important thing for us to be able to include into the oral history, because your involvement with the LGBT community has been extraordinarily significant. Our Pride Festival and the -- and now, we're running it through the center. It's been twenty-seven festivals and the circumstances of the anti-LGBT and the anti-preachers that would come were getting worse and worse. To the point where it was one time we had a guy that set up next to our booth, while we were trying to get to sign and he just screamed through a megaphone the entire time of the entire festival. And it was impossible to actually engage people because of that. And that wouldn't have gone away. That was before when you started to do something.

AB: Yeah, and that was something that -- you know, [01:30:00] we did a lot of research on -- and we worked with the Harrisburg Police. The Harrisburg Police were great back

then, as were Parks and Rec. Through so many of the lawsuits, they had great advice for us. And we also worked with Steve Glassman. We studied Supreme Court cases on freedom of speech. We followed, you know, who the street preachers were. And, you know, looked at their lawsuits. And so, we actually did a lot of work to get where we were. You know, for instance, we would take these packets of information with us and show them to the police beforehand, because we'd always meet with the police. And, you know, well, they're not allowed to interfere with this, because that was a Supreme Court case decision. And so, the police went, "Oh, really?" You know, so, those were the kinds of things [01:31:00] that, you know, we were able to do. We were more than just a pretty umbrella.

LB: Oh, no, I was there. I remember it and I remember a couple of Freedom to Marry things that were particularly hard when you weren't there or when you weren't there. Not Freedom -- not just Silent Witness, but you particularly weren't there. And sometimes the other Silent Witness people didn't quite know how to convince the police that the preacher with the megaphone standing behind us, doing the

presentation, was not really supposed to be doing that. And how they were breaking the rules.

BL: We have a particular knowledge set that is hard to pass on.

LB: It's really important to be able to have that and to have the presence to convince people, you know, you're going to get in trouble if you do it the wrong way.

AB: Yeah, but Doctor Blaise Liffick was [01:32:00] able to get through to the police in ways that a lot of other people can't.

LB: Yeah, thank you for doing that.

AB: So, his thirty-nine years of teaching at the college level really came in handy.

LB: Okay. Well, I'm going to stop this now, for real.

AB: Okay.

LB: And stop that, for heaven sakes. And I just wanted to say I'm going to stop the recording now.

END OF AUDIO FILE