

Chloe Coles-Wilson

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LIZ BRADBURY: -- a little problem. Okay. So there we go, and I'm going to turn the audio on too. Now, I'm going to read you these -- this piece -- this intro. Oh, turn off my phone. (laughs) I write that right on here, so I don't forget to do it.

CHLOE COLE-WILSON: (laughs)

LB: And I want to also pin -- oops -- pin you in this. Okay. It's good. Pin in the video, I got the audio, okay, it's good, and record it. So with this project, Bradbury-Sullivan LGBT Community Center and the Trexler Library at Muhlenberg College will collaborate on forty years of public health experiences in the Lehigh Valley LGBT community collecting and curating local LGBT health experiences from HIV/AIDS to COVID-19. My name is Liz Bradbury, and I'm here with Chloe Cole- [00:01:00] Wilson -- is that right? -- to --

CCW: Right.

LB: -- I suddenly blanked on it, I was like, wait, I just remember it now -- to talk to her about her experiences in the Lehigh Valley LGBT community during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic as part of the Lehigh Valley's LGBT

Community Archive. Oh, we're meeting on Zoom on July 14, 2020. So 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?

CCW: Do you want my middle name too?

LB: Sure, why not.

CCW: Okay. Chloe Amanda Cole-Wilson, C-H-L-O-E A-M-A-N-D-A  
C-O-L-E-W-I-L-S-O-N.

LB: Good, okay. And will you please share [00:02:00] your birthdate?

CCW: March 20, 1992.

LB: Okay. And you are in Allentown, is that right? We have to have the right town.

CCW: I'm in Bethlehem.

LB: In Bethlehem, okay. So this is the consent part. Do you consent to this interview today?

CCW: Yes, I do.

LB: Good. Do you consent to having this interview being transcribed, digitized, and made publicly available online in searchable formats?

CCW: Yeah.

LB: Do you consent to the LGBT Archive using your interview for educational purposes in other formats including films,

articles, websites, presentations, and other formats that we may not even know today?

CCW: Okay. Sounds good.

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

CCW: Yes. [00:03:00]

LB: Okay? Yes. Okay. So this is just a little bit of identity stuff. What is your ZIP code, so we can have a demographic?

CCW: 18018

LB: Okay, and what is your age?

CCW: Twenty-eight.

LB: And how do you identify within the LGBT community? So basic SOGIE stuff or whatever you want to say. You can say whatever you want in this.

CCW: I identify as queer.

LB: Okay. Oh, so here are some of these thing. And so I already sent these questions. And the concept of the archive, I like to think about it as that there will be people who will, hopefully, look at this many years in the future to see what it was like for people at this point in the COVID

epidemic in the Lehigh Valley who are part of the core community to get sort of an idea. Because there have been other circumstances with pandemics and epidemics where we really didn't talk about people's personal experiences.

[00:04:00] You can say anything you want about this. I have some of those questions. You can answer those, or you can think about those. I'll ask those if you want, but you can say whatever you want. But let's start out with this, are you by yourself in your home or do you have other people there or what's the deal?

CCW: It's myself and my partner and then we have three other roommates.

LB: Oh, okay, okay. I know the answers to some of these things, but you could talk about this for the archives. Have you been working, has your employer closed or laid off, and why don't you talk about a little bit what you do?

CCW: Yeah. So I am program coordinator for Project SILK Lehigh Valley, which is an LGBT drop-in center that focuses on Black and brown youth. So a lot of the work that I've been doing during this time is just planning, programming, and getting the Valley Youth House staff in a place [00:05:00] where they feel comfortable providing services virtually while also responding to crisis. During this time, we did

have a few youth that became homeless and so it was trying to respond to those needs as quickly as we possibly could with -- considering my safety, my staff's safety, and things like that, the youth's safety, so yeah.

LB: How did that work out? I mean I know you can't talk specifically about youths, but why don't you describe a little bit how that happened? And I think that's really important stuff.

CCW: Mm-hmm. So a lot of what we did was six feet, we stayed six feet away, we were masked up. We supplied some hand sanitizer to our workers and things like that. But I was one of the only workers that was really out working with a youth who was [00:06:00] identifying as like unsheltered and was living in what -- in Allentown, what people would call it as like "tent city" where folks -- where all the unsheltered folks kind of cohabitate together and exist. So a lot of it was just like dropping things off on the corner and being like, "Hey, these items are here. I will wait for you to pick up these items." And then, you know, sometimes because we are in partnership with a shelter as well, to give and provide HIV, STI testing but also provide sexual health counseling and things like that. In those moments, we were meeting outside on the porch six feet away. Now

that restrictions have lessened, we've been doing some more contact work with our other sites. [00:07:00] There's been some very interesting things that I've done to try to appease the youth and provide the service, you know?

LB: Yeah, and stay safe at the same time and have every --

CCW: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

LB: That's tricky stuff, so... And is that your main thing that you do? So that's pretty much the main thing you do that you're setting up those kinds of things. So right now, those are the things that you're working on, and there is virtual programming that's going out to people?

CCW: Mm-hmm. Actually starting tomorrow, we're going back into some more in-person services. Monday -- no, I'm sorry, Wednesdays and Fridays, we're going to do like luncheon/snack services. So from one to three, we'll meet with the youth at Arts Park because it gives us the ability to have the space to social distance. We'll take temperatures, we'll ask COVID-19 questions, do quick screenings, and then they are able to be in this [00:08:00] drop-in space. Now, if they want to schedule testing, they can, but it can only be one appointment at a time. So that's where we're at with our protocols and things like that.

LB: That's a great place too. So Art Park, like right in front of the art museum in that big, grassy area?

CCW: Mm-hmm.

LB: A little place for croquet. (laughs)

CCW: Yeah. What happened? Oh, for --

LB: [That we?] frequent for croquet, before COVID --

CCW: Oh, yeah. (laughs)

LB: -- or lawn bowling then.

CCW: Listen, we're trying to think of some activities, so that might be on my list to be like, "Look, let's play croquet."

LB: Lawn bowling would be really good. I think we should have a lawn bowling team there actually someday when we can finally be around in a circumstance like that. But that's a great place because it's got tables and -- you know?

CCW: Mm-hmm.

LB: They're right there. You don't have to schlep a lot of stuff over there. It's great. It looks --

CCW: And it's like a central place, so kids coming from all over the city will be able to just kind of know where it is, access where [00:09:00] it is, and it kind of works. And also too, we might be able to interact with new youth there because there has been a lot of youth out because of the protesting, the Black Lives Matter protests that are

happening right now, which is -- it's so crazy because that's on the other end of the work that I do. I also have an arts organization called Basement Poetry. And we've been doing some activism and advocacy around just like so many things, police brutality, inclusive shelters that will allow trans and gender nonbinary folks to identify in the identity that is theirs. Because if they cannot, it is a health risk. So that's been something that we've been really talking a lot about with these other organizations that are Black- and brown-ran. It's how to have inclusive spaces. Talking [00:10:00] with city council about this. When we're defending the police like when this funding starts trickling down, making sure these organizations are anti-racist, making sure these organizations are anti-oppressive. That's another piece of this too. But what's interesting is the area like... Because the kids are so like, "I don't know what's going on, I don't know what to do with myself," so they've been out. They've just been out hanging out. So I'm hoping that we can foster a space for youth that are just like migrating and hanging out. A place for them to be, a little bit, that's a little bit more supervised, that's safe, that gives them access to services. Because it's been very interesting how like all



the protests have rolled out and just youths, kind of, just hanging out in the city.

LB: Yeah. Don't forget that when you're at the Art Park that that giant bronze horse that's at the [00:11:00] -- across [from the art school?] was designed by Leonardo da Vinci, who was gay.

CCW: Oh, wow. That's awesome. I would love to share that with our kids.

LB: Well, Leonardo never made that horse, but other people have taken the designs that he made it and then they recreated it in a couple of different places, and that's one of the places where it is. His design was much bigger than that, but it's pretty, and it's Leonardo, a genius, who was gay, so, one of our ancestors. So for you personally in terms of communicating with people in your family or other -- of friends that you may not be able to be near with regard to social distancing and stuff, have you been using a lot of electronic conversations? Like where have you --

CCW: Oh yeah. It's like Zoom, I -- even just today for work, I was on nothing but Zoom calls. Instagram Live [00:12:00] is like our outreach pool, so we can say, "Hey, this is what we're doing." But with friends and family, I'm always on the phone, I'm always texting. It's been really hard. I

will say there were moments during this whole continuing on in this pandemic where I'm like, "I need to see my mom, I'm going to go see my mom, I don't care, I'm seeing her, I don't care, I just -- I can't," you know?

LB: Yeah.

CCW: It was really difficult not being able to have these interactions with my friends. And it's so funny because my friend Will, who is also gay, we were talking about how even the internet, like the way he interacts with guys and men, it's crazy, you know what I mean? He's single, so I'm always talking about safety [00:13:00] because I'm like, "Well, you know, your friend is a healthcare provider, so I'm just going to just let you know like no kissing and remember washing your hands after and stuff." But he was even saying that online, it's insane that people are still meeting up, you know?

LB: Yeah.

CCW: So I felt less guilty to see my mom after I heard about that, so... (laughs)

LB: Yeah, and you be careful and you can -- you know? You know what your level of danger is, and I'm sure she does too. But, yeah, I was just talking to somebody else about that

some people are really not being careful in terms of  
hooking up with apps and stuff. And it's --

CCW: Oh, not at all --

LB: -- other people would say -- in fact, I was just talking to  
Ariel and he was saying, "It's the hi, bye kind of thing,  
hi, bye, but this is just going to be bye." (laughter)  
Because (overlapping dialogue; inaudible). He just coined  
that. He said that "It's not going to be -- it's not going  
to be hi if [00:14:00] there's no carefulness in here." So  
let me see. We did that. We've got a lot of stuff going on  
and -- but let's talk about what your biggest concerns are  
during the pandemic and concerns for the Lehigh -- for --  
in the LGBT community, of the Lehigh Valley. And I do want  
to have a whole section where I want you to talk about  
Black Lives Matter, but if you want to talk about that  
during this part of the conversation, that's fine, go ahead  
and do that too. So --

CCW: Okay, cool.

LB: -- [you're?] --

CCW: I guess one of my biggest concerns is shelter, right? I  
think that when... and I have a very special relationship  
with one of our clients. When I had discovered that they  
were struggling in this way and had no place to go,

[00:15:00] I'm like, "All right, so I'm going to go, and I'm going to hunt down all of my resources," so I'm pulling out all the resource guides, pulling out all the books that I've created and put together, all the protocol. And I'm looking at them and I'm like, "There's nothing that will work for this young person." And this young person is not under the age of 18, so it's not like I can call Valley Youth House shelter. This young person is identifying as nonbinary, so it's like putting them in a shelter can be so difficult. And Salvation Army and all of these other shelters are very religious, and there is -- follow your faith and do what is best in your practice and in your meeting and -- you know what I mean? That's what nonprofits are, right? Like a lot of people start nonprofits from their hearts, right?

LB: Mm-hmm.

CCW: But there is this moment where it's like when will you start to follow and understand [00:16:00] your populations and understand the people that are in your community? And so places like the Rescue Mission, I would never send kids there. It's like the most unsafe place for LGBTQ+ youth or LGBTQ+ people in general. Because it's a men's shelter, but at the same time if you have any type of like, say, moment,

hand gesture, gender expression, that is not masculine, you are ostracized and treated a certain way in that space. So that's my biggest concern is sheltering and especially sheltering for trans and gender nonconforming folks. Now Turning Point, they're really open and have been really working on being gender inclusive, but the pieces. It's like you -- there has to be DV in your case. So if there's no domestic violence in your case, then there's no space at their shelter because [00:17:00] that's their focus. So that's one of my concerns. Another one of my concerns has always been the way things have been kind of given us. Like the messages have been given coming down like news and how youth process it. Because as COVID started, I remember we have two peer navigators Xander and Michelle, and I just remember them just completely shutting down. This is senior year for them, so this is a very important year of their life, and they're excited for everything that we're going to do at the center, they're going to do in their school life. And I just remember them just like mentally gone, shut down when they figured out school was going to be closed because of COVID.

LB: So they were --

CCW: And it's like --

LB: -- high school seniors or college seniors?

CCW: High school seniors. It was so immensely frustrating with how [00:18:00] everything -- the information was coming down and how everything was handled. Everything was very like just put together, which I get. We've never been... Our folk, I would at least say the generations like Millennials and Gen Z's have never been through something like this. So you have half of the population that's never been through a crisis and the other half who has experience with this kind of things. It's just such a cluster of all of these mixed experiences, anyways. But with the schools, like the Allentown School District weren't getting the things that they need right away. There was a moment where the kids didn't even go to school for like -- or have any formal education for three and a half weeks, almost a month until April. In the midst of April, they were able to get like Wi-Fi to youth, [00:19:00] hotspots to youth, and technology to youth, and that was another concern of mine too. So, again, it was just like that just misinformed and then explaining to the youth that this happens sometimes. But when it consistently happens, they're like, "What is going on?" and so then they're in crisis, right, and

they're freaking out like, "What's going on? I need answers," you know what I mean, so...

LB: Yeah. Young people really look to older people to fix things and explain things to them, and we have no answers on this. There's really no -- I mean I'm sixty-three years old, and there's nothing in my life experience that compares to this. I can say that I know somebody who is one hundred four years old, who's been in the center by the way, who was alive during the flu epidemic of 1918. And that's the only other thing that's comparable to this one because [we?] had the flu. Because even if you look at HIV/AIDS, which was a very different thing, it wasn't like everybody had it, and it was really [00:20:00] hard to get it. I mean, you can't just get AIDS. You have to have sex with people and be involved with people. That's not the same situation. On the other hand, right now, every single -- this is a hopeful thing that you can say to youth, is that every single scientist in the world that knows about this kind of stuff is working on this issue, which wasn't true for AIDS. Nobody did anything about that for years --

CCW: For -- yeah.

LB: -- and years and people just died, all over the place. Really, it sounds like such a tricky thing when you have

young people who want these answers, and they're not going to really put up with you saying, "I don't know."

CCW: Yeah, yeah, you know what I mean? I feel like all of my youth that I work with, I've known them for a very long time since Project SILK started. And so they are built with the same tenacity that I have and the same questioning of authority, questioning [00:21:00] of the system, the same activist spirit. So I kind of set myself up to have these awesome kids that will advocate for themselves, but then in these situations I'm like, "Why did I do this?" (laughs) It's been very complex. And even for my team, it's been very hard to figure out how to have these conversations without having the meltdown. But luckily, we're going to be starting some therapy services in August, so I think that's going to really help with some of these, like this processing of all the things that are happening. And including the trauma that we are constantly exposed to with the Black Lives Matter, the police brutality, but not just Black Lives Matter but like police brutality and systematic racism and microaggressions and all of these experiences that they're having. They're also processing that too at the [00:22:00] same time that they're processing a pandemic, and we're in this in this civil unrest, and it's



like -- it's a lot. They're going through a lot right now. And then also, they're seeing the systems start to crumble in front of them. So it's like they were aware before that things weren't good. But then when you're not getting educated and your peers in the Whitehall School District or Parkland Area School District and Bethlehem Area School District are all on the computers doing their homework while you're just waiting, it really does go to show you the barriers and how the system fails. And so many youth were responding to that like, "What do I do, what --? How do I respond to this?" And it's just like email, email Congress, email your local reps, make sure people know and are on top of what's happening in your school.

LB: Right, right, right. Register to vote because some of them will be [00:23:00] old enough too, so, you know?

CCW: Mm-hmm. Our kids right now are aging out -- not aging out, but they're coming out of that phase where they're in the drop-in center all the time. So the kids that are in the drop-in center all the time between the ages of like 14 to 17. And then once they graduate high school, they're really focused on their life and themselves and getting things together. So a lot of times, they're not spending a lot of time there. So we have a lot of older youth there, so I'm

always encouraging them to vote and be a part of and know your local government because that is where you have a lot of power and say in what happens here.

LB: Whenever I used to talk to running a voter's -- an LGBT voter's organization -- it's called [PAL?], and we did that for many, many years -- one of the things we talk to people about is being a super voter. And a super voter is a person who votes in every election in the primary for four years in a row. [00:24:00] And whether or not you vote is a matter of public record. So any person can get a list that shows whether or not you voted this in the primary and then that stuff, in the main election every year for years and years. And when you write a letter or you write an email or you write a card to your state representative, they look up to see whether you vote. That's why they pay more attention to old people than they do to young people because older people vote -- are more likely to vote. So when they look at your super voter status or they'll look to see and if you're a super voter, they'll listen to you. And if you're not a voter, you're not even registered, they figure, oh, you're not going to vote for me anyway, who cares? And they really do that, and it's a shame, but it's true. And that's the whole thing about the voice of voting because in the

Obama elections, youth, [00:25:00] college students and 18-year-olds put him in office. That's the swing vote. That is the swing vote. And during the Obama election, Adrian organized -- sent hundreds of kids to go and vote at the voter's places. And he was there at Muhlenberg College, and after he left, they stopped doing that. So like hundreds and hundreds of people were voting and then all of a sudden, they weren't. And one of the things about us being in Pennsylvania is it's a swing state. It really matters in Pennsylvania as opposed to like -- New York is always pretty liberal and New Jersey is pretty liberal, and people tend not to. It's not so close, but it's very close here. So that's great that they're doing that, good for them. Have you been talking to any of the youth and also for yourself stuff about [00:26:00] Dr. Rachel Levine being our secretary of health, and she's the one that's been there in the health. And now what do you -- have you had a chance to see her and talk to youth about her?

CCW: Yeah. A lot of youths are very upset with the way she's treated. I think that that for our trans youth, like that has been the most difficult part of all of this is... Before the Black Lives Matter movement was like -- had this visceral showing up, we were really trying to manage

conversations around transphobia. And every time because we're seeing Rachel Levine, at one point we were seeing her almost every single day, which is beautiful. With style and grace, style and grace, she would like -- was amazing onstage and was [00:27:00] amazing with giving us the information we needed, was very clear and concise, and was about to give us information that wasn't too doctor-y, too wordy, or too -- or filled with things that didn't matter to us, right?

LB: Yeah.

CCW: And it's like even through that, even through all of that beauty and poise and intelligence, it's like people were still just questioning her gender consistently. And I think for our clients, it was more so like, "Well, can that -- will that happen to me if I decide to do something like that? Am I passible?" Those are conversations, and we really worked with her and [Goodwin?]. We had a group, a trans health group that was really powerful, and we talked a lot about -- they talked a lot about passing and things like that. And how that is maybe important for your transition but also [00:28:00] it's not important for the social world. Like you don't need to set up for hyper masculine or hyper feminine identities or these belief

systems or these systems, like you don't need to do that, right? And so, I don't know. Some interesting conversations happened, and sometimes it would happen sporadically with our young people, so...

LB: It's really true that sometimes in circumstances like that, for trans people who are transitioning and they have a certain idea of what that means, it can become hyper-binary that they... You know I can't ride a motorcycle because it won't be feminine enough, and it's really limited I think for a lot of people. Yeah, Rachel Levine is amazing, and one of the great things about her is she has an extraordinarily thick skin. She'll actually say, "I don't care what people [00:29:00] say to me." It's pretty brave. I don't think everybody should feel that they have to be that way, but she's the secretary of health and so, you know?

CCW: Yeah.

LB: She --

CCW: And then on top of that, you're also giving COVID-19 health regulations that people are uncomfortable with managing. And she's giving news that is not the greatest on top of being a fierce trans leader. So it's like -- you know what I mean? Already she was going to get pushback, you know?

LB: Mm-hmm.

CCW: So yeah.

LB: It's tough when you're telling people things they don't want to hear, but that's the thing.

CCW: And you're in... You are representing an identity that people don't want to embrace. Like I know for a while even myself [00:30:00] when I was in chats, in conversations with my -- just like my family, we always have that conversation of "Why are you asking whether or not what her gender is? Like this is bad. It's not the conversation we need to be having. She is giving us the most important health information day to day, and we need to listen to that. That has nothing to do with anything." I think it's a culture shock for Pennsylvania because I feel like sometimes we dress up. Especially in the Lehigh Valley, we dress up like we're -- "Oh my God, we're so progressive, yay," but we're really not. We're really behind on a lot of things. I always say to people, I'm like, "We're always about ten -- five to ten years behind because like --"

LB: Behind what?

CCW: Just behind like --

LB: New York?

CCW: Yeah, behind really progressive spaces, you know what I mean like New York City and... [00:31:00] I think of Philly as like progressive, but then again, there have been -- I've had moments there where I'm like, "Wow, this is pretty conservative," in parts of Philly. So the interesting part is that we -- in Pennsylvania, we have these really small pockets of what we would consider safe places for all people and very small pockets. And then outside of that, it's just like a ring of hate. You know what I mean? And you drive out ten minutes and then boom, confederate flag and --

LB: It's the suburbs, I know it's terrible. Terrible. You're absolutely right.

CCW: It's like crazy.

LB: I know. I grew up in a suburb of New York City, and it was so conservative there. It was ridiculously conservative there. My parents were the only people who were democrats, and it doesn't even mean that that's radically... They were the only democrats that we knew in the entire town [00:32:00] in the suburb. And now, it's really one of the most progressive areas of the United States and Connecticut. So it's an interesting thing to see, I guess. But that does happen in the suburbs, and it's a shame, and

we shouldn't let them get away with it. There's no question of it. I'd love to live in the city where it's not like that, per se, per se. I mean there are still issues, you know.

CCW: Oh, for sure, for sure, for sure. It's been very interesting. It's been very interesting to see the hate because you -- like because I work... My life is working like LGBTQ+ folks, the marginalized people, I'm always in spaces -- not always, let me take that back. I'm mostly in spaces where I'm accepted, genuinely, like pretty much. I'll deal with microaggressions, and I'll deal with moments of racism and things like [00:33:00] that, which I'm not negating, but for the most part, I'm not like in fear of my life, right? But -- what was I going to say. But, yeah, but like I know that, and I'm now aware that this space is not safe -- you know what I mean? -- all the time. And when I was starting to see those messages and the way -- and the comments about Rachel Levine and her appearance and the way she was presenting or whatever the case maybe and just like the little, snarky things that they would say about her, I'm like, holy crap, we are really behind. And I would have never thought that, but then again, I have to remind myself, I'm in certain spaces because of my work life. I



have a girlfriend and our family's very accepting. We have a language barrier. They speak Spanish, so there's always like a cultural catcher, but other than that, my [00:34:00] family's very loving. There's a lot of education around nonbinary and trans folk. And I'm always doing that work with them every day, and they're always very accepting and loving. But like I forget, I forget, I really do.

LB: Yeah. It's amazing though because you could be talking to people who you just think are wonderful. My dad was a major -- I mean he worked with Martin Luther King, and he edited his books, and he was really, really involved with him when he was in New York City and stuff. And he was talking about all this, and he didn't... I knew that he did these things, and he was very, very positive, and he had gay friends and he -- and stuff. And then all of a sudden, he -- I was saying... We lived in Connecticut, and I said, "So that place where we lived, where we went swimming, was that a restricted place?" and he goes, "Yeah, of course." I'm like, "Wha-- why would you do that?" [00:35:00] And then he's telling me about this club for writers and editors and stuff that he belonged to in New York City -- it was called the Coffee House -- where people in literature were members

of this club. It was only for men, and I said, "Well, yeah, because there's no women writers. I mean --"

CCW: Right, because they totally don't exist.

LB: "How could you do that?" He goes, "Well, they had good soup," you know? So there's that constant vigilance that you'd have. And you think that things are getting better and then all of a sudden, it rolls back. And part of it comes from -- you know? And we can't just blame this, but part of it comes from the current administration, which has sort of opened the floodgates of that, but it's not like that's the only thing. I mean it's not like it hasn't -- there isn't -- this stuff hasn't always been there. I think that's --

CCW: Right. I don't know. I feel like... [00:36:00] And now as I'm thinking of the Black Lives Matter movement, I feel like the current administration definitely has tapped some souls and some wounds on some people and had opened up this space of like, "Well now, I don't have to be silent about my bigotry," but it's expressive, it's beautiful that they don't have to be silent anymore. It's very strange to see. It's very strange to see this. It's very weird how folks who are very supportive of Trump and who are racists will open up and be like, "Oh, I feel safer now. Now that he's

in office, I can say what I want to say, and all lives matter," and so then -- you know what I mean? Like, ah, I don't know. But I will say that like I... It's something I've learned in this -- in the very short amount of time that I've done [00:37:00] a lot of the activism that I've done. In the last five years, I've just learned that racists are in a different place, and they will come down when they are ready. They will work on their stuff when they are ready, and being triggered by them will do nothing for you. And so that's something I've really been working a lot on especially with our youth. Like you're going to see racist things. George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Nina Pop, Tony McDade, these are all racist acts of state sanctioned violence or police brutality, right? You're going to see these things. This is the unfortunate and sad world that we are in. But we have to turn our rage into something else, right, because we will -- we'll self-destruct. And that was something I took a lot -- it took me a really long time to really work on. Because I'm just like any time that I experience a microaggression or any racism, [00:38:00] I would get so hot and so angry. And I would be in this place of just kind of thinking about it and letting it churn in my head for weeks and weeks and months on end and then I'm

recognizing that like I haven't, one, done anything about it, and, two, I'm making myself sick. So it's been something that I've been really working actively on is not even responding to the racist comments on *Morning Call*, the racist comments that are seen on WFMC, especially when -- as we're talking about the movement and as we're processing the things that are happening around us. Because also, too, racists are going through -- and not that I'm giving them any empathy at all whatsoever, but racists are going through a huge change in their whole life. Everything is changing around them. The Redskins have dropped their name and logo, so that's -- for a lot of people who are committed to that [00:39:00] team, that's hard, you know what I mean? And I'm, whatever, this is what you're processing. I'm processing death and safety; you're processing a logo. That's cool. That's fine.

LB: Yeah, death and safety (laughs) versus a logo.

CCW: Yeah, you know what I mean? Just like --

LB: I could not -- you don't even play it, you just watch it on TV or -- yeah, death and --

CCW: Exactly, so --

LB: -- [safety, or?].

CCW: -- I don't know. It's very interesting to watch racist folks just kind of implode and like -- and white America too in general to just implode and be like, "Holy crap, I have to do all this work now. I have to process my identity, I have to process myself, I have to really watch my microaggressions, I have to do all this." It's been really intense for everyone. It's been a lot for everyone. I don't have much empathy for that, but I will say that like I think [00:40:00] we have to put that into consideration as we're doing this work that everyone is at a different place. And so that's really been healing for me because I've been -- I get really wrapped up in what people say. I get really wrapped up in it sometimes and so I'm like, "No, no, no, no, I've got to let it go." *Morning Call* is going to be racist comments because it's been -- we're in Pennsylvania, so... (laughs)

LB: People are commenting on that from Poland, I mean, you know, and people can comment from anywhere on that. Comments are completely not news, and they're just there to rile people up.

CCW: Right. And say things that don't even like --

LB: [They're talking?].

CCW: -- just something intense like --

LB: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) that by the time you get to the seventh comment, the person is completely off the thread of the whole story anyway. They're talking about -- you know? The thing is about putting fluoride [00:41:00] in the water, and by the seventh comment, they're blaming Obama, and by (laughs) the tenth comment, it's about Israel. It's just --

CCW: Right. And then --

LB: -- this has nothing to do with reality.

CCW: And then they toss in this six hundred dollars a week unemployment. Like --

LB: Yes, exactly.

CCW: -- and how everyone was getting --

LB: -- in fact you know --

CCW: -- that was my debate the other day. (laughs)

LB: Yeah. You know in the trainings I do -- there are a lot of philosophies about training where they try to do all of this empathy stuff and they talk about... And I really don't do that because of exactly what you're talking about. You can't change people from being racist by giving them an empathy training. So what I do is I tell them, "Stop saying this stuff, just cut it out." And at the end of the training and I say, "These are the words you should use

because this is LGBT stuff, so these are the words you'd use. This will create a barrier, you won't be able to do your job, understand that this is what people are [00:42:00] thinking when you say these things so say this, do this, don't say that love the sinner and hate the sin." And then we get to the end of the thing, and I say, "And don't think is way too much for you to learn." Because that's always what they say, "Oh, it's so much." I say like, "Come on, you went to college, this took an hour. You can learn this stuff. It's not that hard. For heaven's sakes, you take trainings all the time. And it's less than programming your phone. So just remember these words and --"

CCW: Yes.

LB: "-- stop just thinking that it's hard to do this, because it's change." And I think that's a very good point that you're making and it's a... And it does drive you crazy, and you have to stop ha-- I don't have any empathy for racists even though when people would say things like, "Well, you know it's hard and they..." I can't, I can't, and maybe it's because I'm older, but I just -- like there is just... There's a very important saying that hit me very hard years ago and [00:43:00] it was you cannot make

compromises with people who don't think that everybody should -- that minority people and disenfranchised people should have equal rights, because they would deny us oxygen if they could. So ask -- expect every equality, expect total equity, because if you say, "Well, we'll take this half nod from you," they don't even want to give us oxygen, come on, you know? They be -- yeah.

CCW: Right, okay, okay.

LB: I don't think it's... When you're talking about the people in the comments section, they'll never going to be able to... They're not there to learn, let's put it that way.

CCW: Yeah, they're not, they're definitely not, they're definitely not. They're there to troll. It's always like an ego test. Like who's smarter in this debate, you know what I mean? And it's just so -- I don't know, anyways. But, oh, [00:44:00] you know? And even our local news has just been so just like really messy in the way they've been reporting and journaling some of these protests and the way they've even been just journaling about COVID-19. And that's like another concern of mine. It's like we already have very scarce information because the WHO and the CDC, who most people are not believing because conspiracy theories have taken over the world, right? (laughs) People that I thought



would never fall into conspiracy theories are loving them now because we've never experienced anything like this, you know what I mean? The fact that we use quarantine in common language is mind-blowing to me, so... So we have the CDC and the WHO that are still really working aggressively and hard on trying to figure out things. [00:45:00] And as science works, finding out the smallest thing is huge for scientists, but for us, finding out that like COVID-19 is not on surfaces is so miniscule, but it took them so much time to get to that, you know what I mean? And so many hours and thought process and chemical and whatever they needed to do to get to that hypothesis that this is what it is, to get to that answer, and to get to us. So already we're dealing with that and kind of like following science as we are going through this and then you have the *Morning Call* and WMFC with their very, very strange and vague things. Like COVID-19 Could Kill You would be like the headline, and everyone is like, oh my God, no, it's going to kill us. But then when you click on it, it's like could kill you if you don't wear a mask and wash your hands.

[00:46:00] (laughs)

LB: Yeah. And well, the [second page?], you know and it was -- oh it was horrible. I remember -- well, I could tell you a

million stories about this but -- and it's all the same gig. It's all the same thing where people are latching on to that kind of urban myth stuff and talking about that as real. And well, you know, that wearing a mask could kill you kind of thing. I was just talking to somebody and how that's just -- it's like an urban -- it's like one of those stories that, well, I have a friend whose brother's name is John, and this happened to him, you know?

CCW: Mm-hmm.

LB: A camp story, you know, (laughs) so anyway. So in terms of your everyday life, and there's a question on here that's sort of a list of questions. It says has it affected your life? And [00:47:00] it's kind of ridiculous because it's affected every single minute of everybody's life, even if you --

CCW: Oh, yeah.

LB: -- say it hasn't, it has. Have you noticed anything that is just glaringly different for you?

CCW: Oh, I feel like my sleep cycle, like sleep has changed immensely. So I already was a night owl, so two o'clock was the cap. That was like, "I'm up too late, I'm going to go to sleep." But when COVID started and because I was working at home, and all I had to do was like wake up, put on a

T-shirt, make sure -- put on my pajama pants, make sure I look somewhat decent, and I'm ready to go, I had all the time in the world. I didn't have a 30-minute commute. I like to say 30 minutes because I like to take my time driving and listening to music and stuff. But I have a 30-minute commute, and get ready in the morning will be another [00:48:00] hour so that's an hour and a half that I've now saved. But I -- because of the anxiety of the pandemic and the anxiety of not knowing what's going to happen next, and as the pandemic went through and then now we're in this civil unrest -- at the end of May we're in the civil unrest, my sleep schedule is like whatever, you know what I mean? I'll wake up in six o'clock in the morning and then I'll start. I'll answer some emails, I'll casually do some filing, organize some things, get myself kind of prepared for the day and then I'll go back to sleep and then I'll wake up again. So it was -- my sleep has been so off because we're -- I'm just so comfortable with being at home, and I get so stir-crazy. So that was one of the biggest changes. Now, my partner is an essential worker. Well, I don't even like using that term, but she has to go outside to work. And for her, she's -- everything [00:49:00] is the same. If you were to ask her this

question, she'd be like, "I don't think my life has changed much, I just miss my family" because she has older parents. Her mom is like forty-eight and her dad sixty-three. Well, her mom is not older; it's her dad that's older. So they couldn't see each other, and he's already had cancer in his health history, and he has diabetes. So things are really like, we cannot see them at all whatsoever. That's just a no go. We can't even take the risk, you know what I mean? So for her, that's the only thing that she would say, but other than that, all parts of her life is kind of like the same, you know?

LB: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

CCW: But for me, it's just the sleep, and my schedule was so off. And even going to the grocery store was just like, it's hell on earth, you know what I mean? --

LB: Has it --

CCW: -- because it's like --

LB: Have you been limiting that, or what's that like for you?

[00:50:00] Explain because you --

CCW: So --

LB: -- people are going to be watching this thirty years from now, so talk about what it's like to go to the grocery store.

CCW: Well, grocery store shopping... So at first in start of the pandemic, I limited. As we started to get deeper into it, I realized that going shopping for two weeks of food wasn't realistic anymore. Because like I was either -- because I always shop a lot of fresh food or -- and then I'll get a bunch of frozen stuff. But I was just like this isn't working, you know? And next week, I don't really want this food, so, like I'm not interested in this meal. So I ended up shopping a little bit more. And because my partner is still going out and working and I'm at home, now I have to pack lunches and things like that. Because there was in the beginning that concern of do we eat out? [00:51:00] Because there wasn't any regulation yet. But we were just like, you know what, let's just -- whatever. At this point, let's just try this. But even the experience at the grocery store, GIANT had, and probably still has this, it's a voiceover and it's like, "Stay six feet away from everyone, and" blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And I'm like, Is this like Black Mirror or --? Yeah, I don't know if you've ever seen that show before, but it felt so surreal because everyone is in their gloves and their masks just like walking around the grocery store, wiping things down. I've

seen people do crazy things in the grocery store, wearing crazy things to stay protected, which I get.

LB: Yeah. Well, people are scared. So are you scared about getting it?

CCW: I think my biggest fear about getting it is -- oh.

[00:52:00] I feel like my biggest fear about getting it is it's just transferring it to older people in my life like my grandmother. So my grandmother is also sixty-three.

She's spry, she's doing her thing, she doesn't have any serious health issues, and she's very, very, very, very health conscious and very -- and eats very well and cares about her diet, cares about her, all of that stuff, so...

But that's my biggest fear with getting it. As for me getting it, I'm a young, healthy person, and from the statistics, young and healthy people usually live and survive and sometimes become asymptomatic. So that's

something I was holding on to for a while. Because even when I was working with youth out on the ground, I had a scare where I was like, "Oh, snap, this youth is getting

[00:53:00] tested." So I had to quarantine until her results came in and that was really terrifying. But it was mostly terrifying because of the way like work set it up.

They're like, "You can't do anything, none of this, no, no,

no, no, no." And I'm just like, "Oh, okay," and it made COVID-19 really real for me. (laughs)

LB: Yeah. Do you know anybody who's had it?

CCW: Um, no -- yes, I did, I did. Not any of like my close immediate friends, but a client's mother had it. So that for that client -- and that was another moment during this pandemic that was interesting, was a lot of our clients because they're low-income folk, a lot of them who are... And especially if they're like fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, they're the caregivers in their home. So teaching a young person how to be a caregiver for [00:54:00] a disease that we don't understand, or a virus we don't understand, was one of the -- one of my most challenging moments with this young person. Because it really was like -- you have books on how to take care of your younger siblings, you have all this education. But it's like how do you take care of your mother who's also -- has asthma, has COVID-19, and how do you, one, have her quarantine in your home when you have one bathroom? So it was like creating a whole new plan with this young person on how to keep the house healthy while also having them literally run the household. For that young person, it was so scary, it was so frightening, you know? It's like, "Holy crap, now I have to do all these

things that I didn't think I had to do in these two weeks. Before I was doing it, but now, it's a little different because mom is like completely out of the picture," [00:55:00] you know, what I mean because she has to self-quarantine, so -- yeah.

LB: And then that whole thing of when people get super sick and they have to go in the hospital, and we can't see them, and you don't know what's going on and... Yeah.

CCW: That too was like one of my -- if -- concerns about COVID too, is like if my mom were to get sick, you know what I mean. My mom is -- I think she's turning fifty this year, so she'll be forty-nine. Well, she'll be forty-nine -- she'll be fifty; she's forty-nine. If she got sick and I couldn't see her, I would be a mess. I would be a mess, and -- I would be a mess, I would be very upset and devastated especially if like she died and she died without even me knowing. Because I think like a lot of -- a lot about COVID-19 [00:56:00] that has been very complex and difficult is the messaging between the providers and the patient's families. Because they're so focused on keeping themselves safe, keeping the hospital safe, keeping the people that are in the hospital safe, keeping all the patients safe, separating the non-COVID patients from the



COVID patients. So this whole like, "I'm going to get back to this family about a death that just happened," is maybe happening a little bit later in the day, you know what I mean? Even though it's a huge deal for the family, but for them, their list of worries is so large. You were constantly seeing that in the news too of like... And again, more conspiracy theory of these folks just struggling to get information to people but also struggling to take care of their patients because they're -- it was just so much. It's so [00:57:00] much. And even now, one of my staff members was like, "I'm very afraid," and I was like, "What are you afraid of?" And I get what she's afraid of, but she's just like, "I'm afraid of the uptick and what is going to happen with the hospitals again because the hospitals were packed for so long." It's just such a general fear of like, there'll not be enough of anything, so...

LB: Well, what's the biggest frustration you're having from all of this stuff? I mean we're talking about a variety of things but...

CCW: I think my biggest frustration is us in civil unrest during a pandemic. I think that is the hardest part of all of this is that. It's, oh, like you would think that with the...

[00:58:00] Because what I've noticed, at least, in my social circles, is like everyone who is on unemployment, they're getting the extra six hundred dollars a week, so they're now making money. And I'm a professional, and I'm in a management position, you know what I mean, so you would think I get the big bucks at this point, you know, but no, definitely not. But people are making more money than me, right? So there is this sense of happiness amongst the people of my life, you know what I mean, especially since like we -- like my families have been very poor and low income. So I've noticed that there have been a lot of folks who are low income just experience just kind of some happier moments, you know what I mean? Because there's more money and there's more funds and there's more things available. What was I going on with this? [00:59:00] What was the question again for --

LB: Oh, it's about the frustrations that you're having. You were talking of the money and stuff.

CCW: Oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. So... Jesus, I forgot what I was going to say. Yes, so everyone's pretty content but at the same time, it's like --

LB: Well, you were --

CCW: -- you --

LB: -- talking about civil unrest. You were talking about --

CCW: Yes, yes, okay, there we go, sorry. But at the same time, you would think that like police brutality wasn't going to be happening during this time. You would think like the amount of Black transwomen who have died, six transwomen died in a week, that is absolutely ridiculous, you know what I mean? There has been just so much police brutality, trans violence, racism, systematic racism, and it's like it doesn't stop. And so [01:00:00] I think that's the most frustrating, because I'm watching my friends and then family finally get like a leg up. They get this extra money, people are saving, they've got the extra 1200. Some people kind of financially did pretty well during this whole thing, and then it's like this violence continues on. But racism is going to continue, and that system is going to continue on, and it's like, damn, when are we going to catch a break, so... And I would get mostly frustrated with people pushing back about the protests and pushing back about why are people outside, and I get it, I get it. We're in a pandemic, but people need to move, people need to do this work. I've been really proud of a lot of activists who have been finding ways to get folks who cannot be out involved, and that has been really good, [01:01:00] but

it's -- you know. I think that's my biggest frustration is the civil unrest and how we're still dealing with these big crises on such a larger level? Because Tony McDade, Nina Pop, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, they happened almost in a couple of months, right? It's like the same time frame, so it's like, holy crap, that is insane. What is happening here? Yeah, that's my biggest frustration.

LB: You know what I think about that though as? I think about that kind of horrible racist crime has been going on with that ferocity all along but that now, people are sa-- First of all, they have -- always have their cameras with them with their video, and so there's been so much more live video footage [01:02:00] of this happening so that other people can't say, "Well, that's just not happening, it didn't really happen that way, these people shouldn't have been -- they caused what happened to them." And you say, "Look at this, that's not what happened, look, look at this." And the other thing is that I think people are fed up with it and so when it happens, they're making a public issue about it, which I don't think has happened as much in the last 20 years as it's doing now. And in part it is because people are... I mean people are speaking up about it more, which I think is very, very positive to me I mean

for white people who are clueless and I have people... I know plenty of white people who are clueless and certainly some people in my family and other parts of my family who will just try to look for some kind of excuse for this kind of stuff, and they're seeing these videos, [01:03:00] and they're saying -- I'm saying, "You can't look at this and say --" this is what happened in Allentown. "You cannot look at this and say this was all right. You have to stretch beyond any kind of credibility to say that this nine-minute video shows appropriate action by the police. It doesn't; it just doesn't. And if you're saying that, you're lying because it just doesn't say that." I watched that video six times, and I wrote down every single thing that happened in it. And I saw -- I -- the police said that they had -- that the man had fallen down and they fell down with him. When you watch the video, you can see the police kicked his feet out from under him and pushed him to the ground. They lied in their public [statement?] --

CCW: Right.

LB: And I have to say that --

CCW: Even like just the comments on the spitting, [01:04:00] he was vomiting, so of course, he's going to spit out whatever is in his mouth or maybe he's continuing to vomit, but it

was very clear and apparent that he was vomiting. So it's like --

LB: He was sick.

CCW: He was sick.

LB: He's a sick guy, and he's praying. You know every -- there's just -- there's no excuse for this. And what's going to happen, because I've seen this happen for 30 years, is that the police, they're always going to excuse themselves. They're going to say their -- "Well, but yeah, but this has been --" and they're going to say that. And I think that it's going to be... Unless city council people band together and stand up against this, it's going to be awfully hard to get the police. The police will never admit they're at fault in my -- they just never will do that but -- so things have to change. I mean divestiture is really significant [01:05:00] because they're just never going to admit the way the system is set up now, and it doesn't even matter who the police officers are. They're always --

CCW: Exactly. Because policing is a very toxic culture, you know what I mean?

LB: Yes.

CCW: And after a while, once you -- because even -- and even in the line of social work, I've seen some things, I've heard

some awful, horrendous, terrible stories. And I've only been doing -- I've been doing volunteer work for about seven years but -- and always in the community for a really long time, but this work with Project SILK has only been for three years. And in these three years, I have heard, seen, some crazy stuff, and it really doesn't [01:06:00] change the way you see people. But once I get to that point where I'm like -- I'm starting to see -- feel myself fall back into like bigotry or fall back into like a space of hatred, I'm like, "I need to train, I need to train, I need to read, I need to educate myself. I need to get back into this place because -- and I need to like have healthy, healthy conversations with a therapist. I need to do self-care." Because that's when I know that, one, I'm tired, and it's -- I'm exhausted, right? And that's what I think is happening with a lot of police officers is that their exposure to violence is insane, it's insane, you know? In my place as a social worker, my exposure to violence is pretty intense, but I'm getting folks either prior to events or after something very terrible has happened. Because I also do like [01:07:00] sex trafficking work with the shelter as well, and I do trainings on that with our agency. And some of the stories I've heard from

these young folks is devastating stuff. But again, I'm only hearing it. Just imagine being the police officer seeing and reacting and doing the -- that physical brunt work in order to take care of a person. And they're constantly being shown this stuff and so their place of bigotry and hatred -- if it already isn't there. Because a lot of police officers go into this work either thinking "I'm going to do the best, I'm going to be a public server, I'm going to do a great job." Some police officers, and it's very, very rare but some do go into this work being like, "I'm racist and I want to continue to raise Havoc in my area. I have upset, like mental health issues, whatever the case maybe, I want to be a terror," right? [01:08:00]

LB: Right.

CCW: But you have these folks who go in here, and they're like, I'm going to do a great job. And they go in there and then their exposure to violence heightens and heightens and heightens and heightens, and nobody's managing it. No one is managing the sickness and the monster that is being created. Like, no one is managing that. So yes, so then you -- leading up to this moment of a man who when you watch the video, he is just sick. And there's no way that he -- his resistance is because he didn't need to be restrained.



You can listen to like people -- there are -- people will do terrible things, right? We totally understand that. That was just a human condition, a human experience. But people for the most part, you can feel when they're genuine and they're genuinely hurt when you are healthy, when you are okay. And then for that police officer, he was not okay. Something else happened prior from that [01:09:00] nine minutes that pissed him off and got him upset, something at home, something in the work field, the fact that he's not processing the trauma that he's constantly seeing on a daily basis. And so in that moment he was fed up. The police officer was fed up, so he responded in the way he did. If you're not thinking about holistic care for these people who are constantly exposed to trauma, then you're not doing -- you're not -- you're doing such a disservice. You're doing such a disservice to people.

LB: Well, it's certainly true that -- I mean I think that it -- for police officers in Allentown, most of them do not live in the city. They believe that they -- their experience is that every single person they come in contact with is either a person who has done something bad, they believe that, or -- because it so frequently is -- or a victim of somebody who has done something bad. [01:10:00] That there

is no in between. There's no activists and people planting gardens and folks that are playing with their kids, and there's just nobody that isn't a perpetrator for them because everybody they deal with is a perpetrator. And that's one of the problems with the way police are that they -- that they're totally reactive. So they only are there to react to some emergency situation, which is often a very negative thing. And they never have experiences working with people in the community to -- let's build a, I don't know, a garden shelter in the park. They never do that. They never say, "Well, we're here today to be at this big barbecue for the community, to just hang out with you to see what you think is going on in the community." We never do that. And so as a consequence, their constant experiences with people [01:11:00] who they either think may have done something bad or who have really done something bad. And then they have this terrible, terrible attitude about the city because they never see anything positive in the city. They just never see anything positive any place in the whole -- anywhere at Lehigh Valley. A lot of them live way up in the Poconos, and they're afraid, they're afraid to live in the city. I've actually had them say, "I'm afraid to live in the city because my family

would be terrorized," and there's actually no statistical evidence to that at all. I mean there's lots of older police officers that have lived in the city for years and years and years, and they manage softball teams for kids and they do all sorts of stuff and they... I know some of these guys. And they don't think everything is bad because they live here, and they know that there is an organization like Project SILK that's having youth programs in the park, hanging out. They're just doing it, so... [01:12:00] But they're conditioned to be constantly suspicious of everything because they never have an experience that is anything other -- in fact, they never get out of their cars or off their bicycles. Even the bicycle cops don't get off their bicycles.

CCW: Their bicycles, yeah, they do not.

LB: Have you ever seen --?

CCW: They do not.

LB: You have never seen one of those cops off of his bicycle. It's like this thing that he's afraid to have an interaction with a person, so he's got that bike. It's like the car, he never gets out of the car, or if they do, they just sort of stand there. Even the way those guys were standing there watching the guy who was sick so far away,

they just watched him and watched him and watched him. It's an interesting thing.

CCW: Yeah. And again, it just goes back to what you were saying too that like they're set up to react to violence, and that's it. [01:13:00] That is something that I think that... As we are talking about defunding the police, as we're talking about abolishing the police and all of these things, that's something to also recognize is that when people fall into these systems, they are also going through immense emotional and intense changes. And not giving them any empathy for the shit that they've done. But this is -- you create monsters. You create a team of folks who are in this belief pattern with a certain set of skills, you know what I mean, and there's no continuous training. Something that I've been working on in our space, our Project SILK because we've had moments and struggled with all types of stuff with race and things like that. And I say [01:14:00] all the time like, "This is stuff that you have to do consistently." I'm consistently training. And some people will be like, "Oh my God, oh, you're so smart, you're so -- look, oh yeah, you're on to -- you get it." But I'm like, "No, I don't. I also need to continue doing work like I'm still..." There has been programmed -- conscious and

unconscious programming of sexism, homophobia, transphobia. All of these things have been into my body, right, so I need to find ways to make sure that they never come out and they are completely -- not never come out, but they're gone, you know?

LB: Right.

CCW: It's continuous. So police officers should be going to a racial equity training yearly. They should be attending these things. These things are important and vital for the education of self. [01:15:00] And I think everyone should consider those things. I read up, and I read up and I'm constantly paying attention to Human Rights Campaign, them, any LGBTQ+ resource area. I'll have scheduled time to be like, all right, I need to make sure I'm caught up with language of the times. I'll talk to my youth, "Are there new -- are there anything new that I should know? Is there information I should know? Is there culture pieces that I should know, so I am aware and I am not hurting you?" If you are a public servant or you are a person that's working with social services, you need to do that work consistently.

LB: Right, right, right. That's really true. Well, we're just about to the end of this. So imagine that somebody is

looking back at this from 30 years hence, [01:16:00] and it could be you because you'll still be around. I won't be but you will be. So you looking back, people are looking back at this way in the future, and you're going to give them a message about what's going on now, maybe a message of hope and a message of awareness that you could pass on to them, what would you say? What's sort of a thing that you would say about that?

CCW: Oh, I don't know. I feel like I've just been --

LB: I think you've been --

CCW: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible) continue to educate yourself. I feel like --

LB: What you just said was very significant because when you're talking about -- you can't just say, okay, I know everything now, you know?

CCW: Yeah.

LB: You can't take a two-hour training and think okay, now, I'm --

CCW: Exactly. That's something that I've been really pushing with my supervisor is that our staff needs consistent, constant workshop, training, workshop, training. [01:17:00] Training is a little bit more official because they're learning a new skill. Workshop is where you practice, have

some conversation, it's a little bit more lighter, right? I guess I would just tell people who are peering into the future is I hope people are still reading. I hope people are still educating themselves and really spending that time. Because ego trips are serious, and I feel like a lot of times when you think you are so woke and so educated, you tend to completely breeze by education. You completely breeze by things that you should know, and you become ignorant very quickly. So I'm always ready and always open, and I hope the same for people in the future too.

LB: Oh, that's a great thing to say. Thank you so much for saying that and for doing this interview. And I'm so glad that we got a chance to talk, and it's been really helpful. And I hope you stay [01:18:00] safe and your partner stays safe who has to be an essential worker, which I do understand that that term is -- actually means for many people, "You have to work, but we don't have to pay you a lot of money. And you don't --

CCW: Mm-hmm, yeah.

LB: -- get a choice as to not wanting to work." I've talked to several people that have had that situation where it's, "If I'm so essential, why am I not getting paid for --"

CCW: Right, okay.

LB: -- "why am I not being taken care of?" You know that is important. I hope that all of your family is safe and stuff like that. I'm glad to hear that there's going to be some counseling components for Project SILK, and how is that going to work? I need to know about that because I get loads and loads of [info, whine?] calls and often calls from people who are counselors that are trying to place youth, which I will immediately tell them [01:19:00] about Project SILK. So how is that going to work, that counseling component?

CCW: There's going to be a few things that we're going to work out. The therapist is like now she is becoming licensed, which I'm like, yay, proud for her. She just finished her licensure. Her first test -- I think she has a second test to take for some other level of licensing, but... So the counseling will work where it would be like short-term counseling. So we would say that the client would be able to see the -- I'm sorry. The client will be able to see the therapist for six to eight weeks and then we will review and see if -- that there needs to be any more further like treatment. And a lot of the focus would just be on the gender and sexuality stuff. She has a ton of training on LGBTQ+, [01:20:00] Black and brown youth and how those



intersections affect health. She is amazing, and she's also getting a certification in geek therapy, which is like video game therapy. So that's really, really, really cool. So that's where we're at now. We're going to kind of keeping it short term just to get her flexible. She is only -- just to get her in a good place. She is only part time, so her caseload is probably going to be like maybe 15 to 20 youth, kind of the starts --

LB: Great, wonderful, that's great. So --

CCW: Yeah, and we're really excited to bring that service. It's something that we had in the beginning and then our therapist in the beginning just needed a lot of work. And we needed to find someone that was going to work with the populations and not work with them. Because that's what was happening a lot, like just pushing away [01:21:00] certain folk and I'm just like, "No, these are priority populations, what are you doing?" You know what I mean --

LB: [You're like -- yeah?].

CCW: You can't just turn people away because you're uncomfortable, then you need to quit your job.

LB: That's really true. When HAVEN first started over at -- in Bethlehem, they kept talking about -- the people at the church kept talking about it -- and we were involved at the

beginning of it, kept talking about how they wanted to train people to... Because the youth were at risk and they kept talking about the high level of or the high instance of suicide and the high instance of self-harm. But then they would get these really problem kids, young people who would -- problem youth who would come to the thing. And they'd say, "Well, this person is too much of a problem, we can't have him around here." (laughs) Some of the people that I was working with said, "Okay, wait a minute, these are the kids that are the highest risk. You can't tell them that they're the ones that can't come here."

CCW: Exactly.

LB: "Of course they're hard. [01:22:00] That's the reason that they have to be supported. They're the hardest ones. They're the most at risk. If this was an easy circumstance for these young people and their life was an easy thing and easy for them to interact with --" (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

CCW: Our services would be nonexistent.

LB: Right, right. Sure, everybody likes the A+, Poindexter-y kid who is going to say -- do everything you say but when you have somebody who -- and they had kids who were really problems, and they said they can't come anymore. We

actually worked with them and said, "You cannot do that. If you're saying that they can't be with the youth, then you have to get another two people who are facilitators to work with them one on one if they were too dangerous or whatever to be around the youth. But you can't turn them away.

That's --"

CCW: Yeah, you got --

LB: -- (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

CCW: -- to find a way to make it work. So that's why having this therapy of -- a therapy [01:23:00] position is really going to be beautiful to our services. And then we're adding on two peer navigators. One is a part of the ballroom scene, and the other one has a really, really great connection with the community, so we're really excited to have them. And then we're going to be adding on another case manager, so it's going to be a crazy --

LB: That's terrific.

CCW: -- set. (laughs)

LB: That's great.

CCW: I'm really happy that our services are expanding because they're just -- they're so needed. They're so needed.

LB: Yeah. I'm not very hip to this but -- I mean that's probably an old-fashioned thing to say, but when you say part of the ballroom scene, what did you mean by that?

CCW: Oh, so they're a part of the... I'm trying to figure out how to explain this, so... Like *Paris is Burning*.

LB: Oh, oh, okay, okay. Yes, like that kind of --

CCW: That culture [01:24:00] is still continuing on and so they're -- they have -- they're a part of the house and they go to balls and they compete, and they are professional voguers. So that was just such a unique piece to our team, and we're really excited, so...

LB: Cool, all right, I can see that, yeah, good. That sounds exciting. I think that's an excellent thing. Well, good. Well, thank you again so much, and I really, really appreciate it, and it's been great to talk to you. And I hope you have a great -- a nice rest of the evening and get a little chance to regulate your sleep patterns.

CCW: Yeah. I need to work on that, so... (laughs)

LB: (overlapping dialogue; inaudible)

CCW: I hope you and your wife are doing well and your family is doing well during this pandemic.

LB: Uh-huh, we're great, we're great. Well, thanks a lot.

CCW: Thank you.

LB: Bye-bye.

CCW: Bye.

END OF AUDIO FILE