

Transcript of Interview with LA'Patricia Washington By Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: LA'Patricia Washington

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

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Location (Interviewee): Jackson, Mississippi

Location (Interviewer):

Transcriber: Angelica S Ramos

Some of the things we spoke about include:

Celebrating small moments. Joining the military at 17; leaving the traditional workforce for independent contract/gig work: doula, photo editing, jewelry making, online broadcasting. Father passing away at the end of 2019; nursing homes before the pandemic. Mother has Alzheimers, and that impact on mother's ability to make decisions; mother catching COVID; mother living without internet connection and in a house with poor insulation. Providing medical support to the state of Mississippi for 15 months during the pandemic through military service: COVID testing in prisons, nursing homes, etc.; reactions to uniform. Under resourced pandemic healthcare: supplies, people; traumatic working conditions; numbing. Working 17-days straight; sleep deprivation; needs for accommodation in schooling. Patient anxieties about COVID testing, conspiracies; compassionate listening and communication. Changing regulations/policies in work and in school. Service in rural areas of Mississippi. Picking up on the energy of others. In-person vs. online therapy. Anti-masking sentiments in Mississippi. Poverty, low incomes, and lack of education in Mississippi. CDC messaging on Ivermectin directed to Mississippians. Commissioning late, Jackson State University lack of communication and direction when dealing with soldiers/students during the pandemic and graduation process. Getting training as a doula during the pandemic, virtual doula teaching and online doula mentorship; pre-COVID expectations about doulas. Living with cats and emotional support (Cleopatra and Dynasty). Family experiences of attending birthing and labor for family members, nurturing cousins. Hospital COVID restrictions on doulas accompanying pregnant patients; preparing pregnant clients to go through medical appointments and the birthing process alone (without doula, friends, or their partner); teaching pregnant people about their options. Medical racism and the importance of self-advocacy; 3x higher mortality among Black mothers in the USA; assumptions that Black people don't feel pain or feel less pain than white people. The value in teaching black clients about medical racism and pregnancy. The value in teaching white clients about medical racism and pregnancy. Having lost a child from an ectopic pregnancy that doctors ignored; medically terminating the pregnancy to survive. Abortion advocacy and right to choice. Overt and colorblind racisms. Anti-Black racism and police brutality; police knowledge about domestic violence and their assumptions about survivors; fearing for the safety of Black family members; not wanting to see another #justicefor... Racist associations with Blackness and aggression, violence, addiction, and anger. Having locks; assumptions based on hairstyle; hair as a part of a spiritual journey. Having survived childhood and adult trauma; dissociation and humor as coping strategies. Transgenerational impact of domestic violence starting in the womb. Trauma in the welfare and fostering system; trauma in staying with parents who are not prepared to nurture their child's needs. Bio-psycho-social assessment; the importance of health maintenance. Learning about the "spark of life" from Dr. Trenia Allen, PhD at Jackson State University School of Social. Work (professor), gratitude for transformative lessons. Elaborate bubble baths as selfcare, treating self with meals and drinks. The wisdom of pandemic babies. Wondering what parts of the pandemic policies will be considered inhumane in hindsight.

Kit Heintzman 00:02

Hello.

LA'Patricia Washington 00:04

Hi, how are you doing?

Kit Heintzman 00:06

I'm doing well. How are you doing today?

LA'Patricia Washington 00:08

I'm doing well. Thank you for asking.

Kit Heintzman 00:11

Can I ask you to start by stating your full name, the date, the time and your location?

LA'Patricia Washington 00:17

Okay, so my name is LA'Patricia Washington. I am here in Jackson, Mississippi. Today is March 1, 2022. And the time is 1:10pm.

Kit Heintzman 00:32

And do you consent to having this interview, recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under a Creative Commons license attribution noncommercial sharealike?

LA'Patricia Washington 00:42

Correct. I do.

Kit Heintzman 00:44

Would you please start by introducing yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening to this? What would you want them to know about you and the place that you're speaking from?

LA'Patricia Washington 00:52

I am 30 years old. I am a soldier in the military. I have obtained my master's in social work. I am a birthing doula currently, I have a background in child welfare, mental health, forensic, Social Work. geriatric care, and I have been a emergency medical technician basic for the past 12 years.

Kit Heintzman 01:28

Would you tell me a story about what life has been like in a pandemic for you?

LA'Patricia Washington 01:33

Life in the pandemic has been scary. It has been a lesson. I have seen things that I can't I can't unsee I have learned to celebrate some of the small moments, the small achievements of life, constantly having people pass away. Whether it's celebrities or government officials, or your family and friends that you hold dear to your heart. That has been very emotional. And also the lack of care within our medical facilities between funding, the need for staffing and unrealistic work conditions for medical professionals as well. A lot of that has been very

disheartening. So overall, I have just learned how to take one minute, one hour, one day at a time and move myself forward. I can't predict how the next day is going to be. And hopefully you get to watch this video to understand my experience, because I'm pretty sure once it's over, I won't want to talk about it again, so.

Kit Heintzman 02:55

What are some of the things you've been seeing in healthcare settings?

LA'Patricia Washington 02:59

I have been seeing a lack of proper prevention care such as like the mask, the proper gowns, just anything that has anything to do with contagious prevention. I have seen a lack of it. And that has been between funding and staffing that has been a major issue. I have seen where you know, nurses are doing travel assignment, they're going to places and they're not getting the adequate rest time that they should they're working double shifts. They there's so much trauma packed into their shifts. I have seen a nursing home that was once the that was once fully staffed with the full amount of clients in there or patients in there. And I have seen it look like an abandoned nursing home pretty much lack of staff realistically that that one nursing home had one director, and at that current time, I can recall seeing about three or four nurses as far as staff with over 20 plus patients. So it has been very disheartening. Patients have not been able to see their families as often as they, they would especially during the peak of the pandemic. People, people the only way that they could see their loved ones during the peak of the pandemic would be standing outside of their window and waving at their loved one. So if someone didn't have someone that was willing to do that, they did not get to see their family. And that led to a lot of medical costs. nobody's being able to get away with a lot of things that they normally would not. And I'm not necessarily blaming the medical facilities, it's just kind of the way that the cookies crumble in the in those situations.

Kit Heintzman 05:13

Would you tell me a bit about what your day to day life looks like right now?

LA'Patricia Washington 05:18

Hectic, my day to day life is hectic right now in toll of the pandemic, prior to the pandemic, right in November of 2019, I lost my father. I was in the middle of undergraduate school, and I graduated graduate school and then in, in 2018, I started my master's at the end of 2019, my father passed away. Then, of course, we rolled right on into COVID. I served with the military providing medical support to the state of Mississippi for about 15 months. And I traveled from Mississippi Delta to some of the much smaller rural areas, giving either testing or the vaccine eventually, to different areas, and especially with a saturation here in Jackson, Mississippi, and local areas. So day to day life is hectic. Now I am kind of doing like everybody else, I do not want to work in the traditional workforce, I do not want to have a nine to five, I do not want to have to. If I'm not mentally prepared to go to work, I don't want to. So right now I am an independent contractor as a birth doula. I have my own jewelry business. So I started handmade making handmade jewelry. I also do graphic work, I edit photos, etc. I am now a second lieutenant in the military. And I'm an online broadcaster. So I'm doing a whole lot of per se gigs so that I don't have to go into the traditional workforce because mentally and physically, I do not think that that would be the best for me. I believe that I could do it if I needed to. But at this current time, I just don't think that would be best for me.

Kit Heintzman 07:29

Would you be willing to share more about the military medical support you were doing?

LA'Patricia Washington 07:35

Yes. So with that, we first got a call right around. Before the lockdown was official, before we first went into that that first initial lockdown. And we got a call and it was like, hey, because I am I will I was a medical healthcare specialist basically in the military. So we got a call said hey, we need support for this, this. This virus that's going around the states are going into a state of emergency. So just letting you know that we're going to call you at any day in any moment, once we get the teams together. I started out giving the swabs to test for COVID. And that will mostly be for nursing home patients and the staff. And that's how I got like inside access to what will be going on with nursing homes with the staffing because like I said family members couldn't even go in. So a lot of times, we will be the only people that the patients saw beyond staff. Also, I went in mental health facilities. And I also went in prisons as well. So I started out giving the the swabs. When we first started, we didn't really have high numbers because people were kind of iffy about the test. People assumed anything from we were putting microchips in their swabs. They and when I say we, I mean the people that made it not, not us this clarify on that. But they were assuming there was micro microchips in the swabs, they assume that there was like tracking devices, or we were trying to or the manufacturers of the swabs were trying to alter their DNA. There was a lot of stigma around getting tested for COVID. And that's something that we really had to I mean, people were the staff was willing to lose their job, some of them versus getting tested for the virus. And we went from doing the test once to at least doing it every two weeks. certain places, depending on their staffing numbers, their cases of COVID that they reported. Because we went from a regular every day to day, as far as with our convalescent homes or nursing homes, to having to get tested for this, and then the patients start, a lot of them passing away at alarming rates. And then we started having to go regularly, then the staff would have to report their numbers, day by day or week by week. And I would often see some of the same facilities and I see them go from maybe 50 staff to 100 patients to now they have 25 staff to, you know, 65 patients. So it's definitely I saw the transition over time of nursing homes looking normal, because before my father passed away, he was also in a nursing home. So I kind of had an idea of how nursing homes were from that experience with my father. And to just see them dwindle as far as staff as far as patients to see them dwindle to that extreme, was definitely eye opening.

Kit Heintzman 11:22

Would you describe an encounter for me when you're going to test someone and they're experiencing anxiety thinking that there's something in the test itself, would you describe what that looked like?

LA'Patricia Washington 11:35

Um, I'll do I'll do more so what it kind of looked like with the staff, because when it came to patients, they also you had to thank you, I didn't necessarily know what their medical conditions were. So they might have had Alzheimer's, they may have had dementia, they may have had mental health issues. So different things like that. But when when explaining it to staff, usually, if they did not want to get the testing, their boss would explain to them like it is highly recommended that you get this swab this test done. The likely the likelihood of your employment is, you know, depending on whether you get this done, and we still had some people that would be like, No, I'm not doing it, I don't care, if ya'll have to fire me do your thing. And the type of medic or healthcare specialist that I am person that I am, I would ask that I would ask that supervisor, if he mind me speaking to that employee. And I remember distinctly it was one employee and nursing home kind of had like a shed for some like cleanup supplies, stuff like that. And that's where that's where that that employee was. I went into that very small, dark, damp place. And like, first of all, how was your buddy eating his lunch in here, anyway? And I asked his buddy, I was like, Hey, can I get a minute with him alone. And this was a white man, he was probably some

where between late 30s to late 40s. And he, he was sitting there in his chair. And I was like, Do you mind if I talk to you? And he was like, you know, I don't care. You can say whatever you want to say. And I broke it down to the aspect of if you don't have this job anymore, how are you going to feed your family? How are your children or your possible wife or whomever you care for how they're going to have insurance. And I put it into perspective like that. And I said, I will personally do your swab, I'm going to bring one other assistant here to help me because technically, you needed two people to do the swab somebody to hold the tube and to the other person to swap the person I said, we'll go at your pace. I'm going, I changed my tone. We're going to I'm going to speak to you as such, I'm going to walk you through it. I'm gonna tell you when to take your deep breaths, it's going to you're going to feel safe and you're going to understand that you're okay. And eventually speaking to him in my therapist tone, as my team would say. He agreed and nobody could believe it. I walked out of that shed and took several rights and lifts outside of the nursing home to give back to my team to let them know I needed one person to come with me and to grab the equipment there. Even his employer was like he's gonna do it. He's really gonna do it. And I was like, Yes. And he he did it. He was upset afterwards because getting your nose swab for the COVID vax for the COVID testing. It does make you sneeze. So he was indeed sneezing and I'm saying a little vulgar language, but it was not directed towards me. Um And I could understand people's frustrations, but at the end of the day, for it was broken down into Do you want your job or not?

Kit Heintzman 15:17

When you were doing the testing with people did people know you were military?

LA'Patricia Washington 15:22

Yes, we wore our uniform. We wore our uniform the entire time. So you have to think we would spend, we might get somewhere and testing may start at 6 or 7am. And we're not leaving there until anywhere between 3 and 6pm. And that's like a good day. So we spent the entire time in our uniform. And when we're working with the nurses, they actually liked that, just because that allowed them to, that allowed them to see military, some of them were military. You know, most people that are of age, they really appreciate the military, they, they love to show their support for the military. So as far as me, I was very happy that I was able to do that, because it gave them the opportunity to smile and to be happy. So. And of course, my apartment complex is cutting the grass today. So sorry about the background noise.

Kit Heintzman 16:36

What was, what was going on in, was it rural Mississippi when you were going into rural areas? Or was it out of state as well?

LA'Patricia Washington 16:44

No, I the only place I did service was Mississippi, I think one time we might have went to Tennessee. But for the most part ever, it was predominantly Mississippi.

Kit Heintzman 16:59

What were things like in rural Mississippi.?

Um, so I am actually from a rural area. And my team actually did go there. But I had just got swapped to that team. So I had prior engagement, so I didn't get to make it. But it was it was unique, to say the least. So I didn't actually go in and service my hometown. But I went to an area that was close to my hometown. And we had a

time where we did a vaccine once and the lady was so upset, she like cursed the person that not that did the actual vaccine because I did the vaccine. But the person that did intake after I gave this person their vaccination, um, they have to, and they were like, the intake person was like, That wasn't so bad was it as she was smoothed off, she was like, fuck you, bitch. Everybody in there, because we're like, in a tiny, like, little tiny volunteer fire department or something. So that's where we were. And everybody was just like, you know, so it was it was very unique. Most of the time that people were very friendly. And they were kind, it was mainly the older population that would be trying to get there to get their test or to get their swab. Um, I remember the most touching story that I had like one for one day. And this was not necessarily in one of our more rural areas. So it was a city. But it was a day that we were given the vaccinations and I'll never forget this. It was a family in the car. Once I approached the car. I did my introduction, we discussed the health form everything to make sure everything right dose right patient, no contradictions. And I noticed that the lady in the passenger seat. She was kind of quiet, kind of, you know, kind of standoffish a little bit. She might she looked like she was kind of red in the face, but I couldn't necessarily tell. Was this something that maybe happened before I even got here? Or is it something related to her getting her vaccination? So I would have to sign the paper, get the vaccine and come back to the vehicle because we were doing vaccinations, strikethrough styles under tents over the weather conditioners. And that would be what we were doing. So I went back to get the vaccinations went back to the vehicle. And you know, I was like, you know, they asked like, how many are y'all doing a day and I think at that point we had reached we were doing 1000 Plus vaccinations in a day. So we told her that and she was like, well, you'll, you'll only need so many lists because my I want to say was her brother or her son. She was like he was supposed to come get the vaccination. And between the time of him regiments, registering for the vaccination, he actually passed away from COVID. So it was very emotional in that vehicle. That was definitely a moment where I was just like, wow, you know, in another day that I had, at that same location, given out the vaccines, I had another lady I gave her the vaccine, and she gave me a hug. And you know, we're in the middle of COVID. So hugs are not a thing that we do. And she gave me a hug. And she said, thank you. And I was like, oh, mam, I just gave you a vaccine. It's okay. It's like nothing major. And she said, I have not been able to see my father in over six months, because he had, he had a risk of catching infectious diseases easier. And he had been in the hospital. And so she had to have her vaccine in order to see her father and she was literally in tears. They were tears of joy. And they were still tears of sadness, because I don't believe she had been that long without seeing her father. So it it was it definitely had an array of emotions. And that's another reason why I said there's some things that I saw that I just can't unsee.

Kit Heintzman 21:39

Can I ask what that hug felt like?

LA'Patricia Washington 21:44

Mixed emotions. Because when she said what she said, I immediately thought of my father and how I was able to freely go see him whether he was in the ICU, whether he was in the emergency room, whether he was in the nursing home, I have full access to him, and I just could not imagine how it would be where I could not see, you know, my father, especially during the times where he couldn't work his cell phone. I couldn't imagine that feeling in that that hug felt heavy, very, very heavy. I'm big on energy, I can definitely feel the energy of others. And that that was a very heavy hug. That hug was if I could imagine what that that hug felt like it was, you know, hugging a rosebush. A rosebush is beautiful. But it still has thorns. So you know, you should look at it, but you maybe shouldn't touch it. And that's the best explanation of how that that hug felt it was beautiful. But it hurt a lot for both of us.

Kit Heintzman 22:55

Thank you so much for sharing that.

LA'Patricia Washington 22:57

You're welcome.

Kit Heintzman 23:00

Do you remember when you first heard about the pandemic?

LA'Patricia Washington 23:06

Yes. I remember, I froze up a little bit, I'm sorry.

Kit Heintzman 23:19

You're alright.

LA'Patricia Washington 23:19

So if for anybody watching this, we had to learn to rely a lot on Wi Fi and working at home. And that cost us to put more devices on your Wi Fi. So a lot of times the Wi Fi is not the best kind of kind of goes in and out. And that's something that we have gotten used to in various zoom meetings or Google meetings or FaceTime calls any type of network is more common that people people's internet isn't as great as it was because there's so many people that rely on it between work from home school from home meetings from home, you fat baby showers from home family reunions from home. So that that's another aspect of it as well.

Kit Heintzman 24:16

When you first heard about the pandemic, what was that like? What, where did you hear about it?

LA'Patricia Washington 24:22

I was actually on spring break. So I remember when we were talking about it to the point of it, we would possibly have a you know, a lockdown. And I was just like, Nah, you know, surely not. Like we're not going. They're just being very cautious. They were indeed not being very cautious. They were very much discussing at some point they were talking about and a lot of it was hearsay we wouldn't be able to leave your state, you would have to have a notice if you were crossing state lines. flights were pretty much canceling being shut down. And that wasn't hearsay, that was actual and factual. It was, at one point, it was very hard to get a flight because everyone was afraid to be around anyone else. Life went from what we knew, before mask before, so much virtual interaction. Um, seeing your loved ones, hugging your loved ones speaking to strangers, holding conversations with strangers being in close proximity physically with strangers, or someone that you're not used to living with to not being able to hug your children often not being able to hug your parents, often. Really keeping all of your physical attributes basically to yourself in whatever form or shape that was because people could have COVID and not know that they had COVID. There were so many unknowns as far as to the community to society. That's why some of the conspiracy theories were almost so like, you can't just say no, that's not realistic. Because if you would have told us 5 to 10 years ago that we will be in a pandemic, and you couldn't hug people and you'd have to wear a mask everywhere you go. And you'd start having baby showers in meetings, and you'd be working mostly online, we wouldn't believe you. We'd be like, what kind of sci fi movie are you watching? Like, you need to stop it. And that has been, that has been the reality. So really, I remember like a I'm on spring break, Spring Break got

extended, we would I don't know when we're ever coming back to school. And then returning back to college. before spring break, no real code COVID issues after spring break, Spring Break got extended like a week or two. And then going back and everything online classes, classes, as you had in person virtual, teachers that never really used their education platforms virtually did not know what they were doing. College administrations did not know what they were doing. Jobs did not know what they were doing. So a lot of people just kind of everybody was literally winging it, from your bosses, to your, to your professors to your hospitals, people were winging it, and they were rolling out new rules and policy and procedures. And it felt like daily. Because even for me on the military side, they tell us all you need to do wear this PPE, and that's the protection equipment and you need to wear this PPE and then by lunchtime, they'd be like, no, no, no, you have to wear this PPE you can't take this one off, you got to do this in between. So literally, we'll be changing and we had to adjust to just frequent changes, just frequent changes all the time. Some of them seemed realistic, and some of them just weren't not realistic. And just trying your best to do will be safe for yourself, your loved ones, and your family pretty much.

Kit Heintzman 28:35

So you are doing you're finishing school at the same time as doing the military service and distribution of testing and vaccines.

LA'Patricia Washington 28:45

Correct.

Kit Heintzman 28:45

That sounds very busy and overwhelming.

LA'Patricia Washington 28:48

It was it definitely was. I remember one month, it might have been like 30 Anywhere between 20, 29 to 30 days in that month. And I only had two off days. And one of the off day was a travel day. So essentially I only had one day. And I remember my school's ROTC program reaching out to me like hey, we have XYZ going on. Of course, this was the weekend when I had like a day off and I was like, I'm sorry. I'm doing this on my other side of my military duties and I just can't I don't I don't have the energy. I, We would talk our team would talk about how we it's the 17 straight days that we always call it like we're like we weren't 17 days straight like no off days. So we would talk about it and we once we finally got that like a consecutive amount of days off because eventually some people started falling asleep while driving. And so the big bosses, right, hey, we got to give them we got to give them a break. Like they're dying literally. Um, we, we only had like one casualty as far as someone passing away. But during that time, people were falling asleep while driving because they were trying to get to these places because we'd finished late in the afternoon, you'd be going from one hotel traveling at night to get to the next hotel, because you'd have to be back up at five and six. And when we finally got those consecutive days off, we all slept. Like three days of sleep. You woke up to use the restroom, we didn't really eat because we were so tired. God forbid, we definitely were not cooking. If we had to go somewhere to eat, we weren't doing that either. And some of us were fearful that if we ordered food, we wouldn't be able to stay awake long enough for it to get delivered. And I have fallen asleep during a food delivery. And I don't know what happened to that food. I had to report that I never received it because I didn't. And they didn't leave it there because they didn't take a picture. But we started relying heavily on food delivery services, working from home now. I rely heavily on food delivery services. I mean, it's just, it was just crazy is really, really not what we're used to. I'm also in therapy, as well. And my therapist will often be asking me, especially when COVID first hit like, hey, when do you think that we're

going back to a state of normal. And I will be like, This is our new normal. I don't think we'll ever be going back. And unfortunately, my my beliefs on that still pretty much stand like this is the new normal.

Kit Heintzman 32:07

How's therapy been for you during the pandemic?

LA'Patricia Washington 32:12

Hectic, because again, I went from doing therapy in person, to most of my therapist appointments have been virtual, um, my therapist is amazing. But you got to understand once your therapist gets COVID, or once your doctor gets COVID, God forbid, my dentists had a heart attack. There's just so many different things that once they're unavailable, is pretty much somewhat related to health. And even with me, on the medical side, working with doctors and working with nurse practitioners and physician assistants, they have felt comfortable enough talking to me because they know that I care about mental health. And I always would tell my soldiers if you need therapy, get it. Because I had a physician talk to me and it was just like, hey, I'm seeing so many I'm glad you said that I'm seeing so many patients a day I'm seeing almost three times in a day what I would see in a week. And I think I'm going to have to start back seeing my therapist. And that was an eye opening moment for me because people don't think they're they don't think they're healthcare professionals enough. Like you don't really realize and I don't take out for, you know, a lack of bedside manners. But at some point doctors and nurses they have all voiced that they have to numb themselves to be in order, especially if they were doing something working in the ER or working in ICU. And now we have real COVID units, working in those places after seeing people die after die after die on one shift. And it will be people as many deaths on one day as people were used to in a week or a month. And they would have to numb themselves basically not getting attached to their clients not getting, making their report that they normally wouldn't make being as close to them because they didn't have the time and you would leave work somebody will be admitted or they will be in the ICU when you come back to work they have passed. Running out of beds is has definitely been an issue. And one point states where like swapping ventilators and just different medical like expensive medical equipment that normally one hospital three hospitals would need the quantity that one hospital would need normally, so it's it's kind of like it's just been all over the place. It's really been hectic and crazy.

Kit Heintzman 35:03

How has Mississippi been handling the pandemic?

LA'Patricia Washington 35:14

This is, this is a state that does not like change. You can't tell Mississippians what to do. Because they don't understand why you're trying to tell them what to do. And they're going to do what they want to do to include not wearing their masks to include not gathering in large quantities. And also then, with that, as well, Mississippi is already one of the lower paying states like is, is it's affordable to live here. But the the cost of earnings or the earnings that we get are also low as well. And having that also comes with a lack of education as well, because some, some areas do have, you know, poverty at the end of the day, it's poverty, or lower incomes, that is definitely an issue. So when you start trying to implement new policies that deal with public health, they're like, Nah, you not, covids not real. It's gonna take some the people, the CDC had to release a statement. So that Mississippians would stop going to the pet supplies stores and buying dewormer for horses, because they were buy the horse, the warmer and they were ingesting it at alarming rates. So the CDC had to release a statement to tell Mississippians in particular, hey could ya'll stop and there hurt the horse, dewormer people's people can't get

their horses dewormed and that's not working. So that kind of gives you an idea. And yes, the medication does have a human form. But Mississippians like now don't even have to go see my doctor, they sell their junk at the pet store, I'm just gonna go right on down and get me some horse dewormer. And me and mine. That's what we're going to take. And that's kind of like my best example of how Mississippi has been during the pandemic. I think that paints a picture, a picture of financial staffing. I mean, just everything across the board. It has been like, What the CDC and until I was like, okay, whatever, like, that's kind of, that explains it best.

Kit Heintzman 38:17

So did you graduate during the pandemic?

LA'Patricia Washington 38:20

Yes.

Kit Heintzman 38:21

What was that like?

LA'Patricia Washington 38:24

To be honest with you, I was like, I can't even, I'm doing too much. I gotta send in my assignments in late, there was a lack of communication. Because you couldn't just go to offices anymore and see people you couldn't just go to your professor's office and see them you couldn't just catch financial aid in the office. People weren't answering the phone. So, I actually had to turn in some assignments on the latter portion just because I had gotten so overwhelmed that I did fall behind on some assignments. And it was it wasn't that I didn't know the the the information it wasn't that I didn't know how to do things that were assigned to me I did not have the time nor the mental capacity, especially with me studying social work. So I will be traumatized from work and then studying Social Work those some of those assignments that normally wouldn't trigger me or anything like that, but I couldn't think about the not one child being abused, not one old person being abused trying to decide or being able to expound upon those things. During COVID I did not have I really didn't have the time and I definitely when I had the time didn't have the mental capacity because I was trying to rest so my my graduation got prolonged and then it got postponed and to be honest with you, here we are graduation was like December I'm still waiting on them to change some of my grades so I can officially get the clarification but I've done all of my classes and my hours and posts in pre COVID You can tell a story like that people be like, Nah, you failed it out. But that really has been my experience. So it was definitely different but I commissioned in December as well. Well, I was supposed to commission that December I ended up not commissioning May, I ended up commissioning in December. So a lot of dates got pushed back. A lot of if you had a process that needed paperwork, signatures from others, etc. Most of the time, they didn't have replacements. Eventually, they had to go on vacation, they might have gotten COVID I lost two, I lost a financial aid advisor. And I lost a veteran, a Veteran Affairs adviser from my university during COVID. So they were the people that I dealt with ever since I first arrived at Jackson State University in 2011. And they were still there. And unfortunately, you know, we lost them I can't I don't know what they passed away from. But that just circles back to saying that COVID definitely took an impact there is every it feels like every time you wake up, every time you check your phone someone has passed away. Or someone that you knew or associated or even celebrities. They're they're passing away and you're just noticing it so much more in media coverage. Family life, you're of course going to know because that's your family. In February alone, I can I can confirm my last two relatives I lost a great Auntie she was 96 and one of my cousins

that basically helped my mama raised me because they used to go on road trips and hang out all the time. So death is, death is ever around us. Unfortunately.

Kit Heintzman 42:17

Would you tell me a bit about your great auntie and or your cousin that you lost?

LA'Patricia Washington 42:25

My great auntie. When my father passed away in 2019, she was there in all white. She got she came up to the family line because it was mostly my dad's dad's side of the family that was there just because my dad's mom's side of the family was mostly in another state. She came, she had her little hat on. She had she had all white on and she made sure that she found me. And they always joke with me because I look just like their sister. My skin is just darker. And she looked at me she said, Ah, he's still looking like my sister because I had not seen her in years. Um, she was sassy. She was kind. She was beautiful. Up until every day of her life until her life came to an end. She was She was beautiful. She was loving. And she she just was that the little the little old grandma that you would want. She was still very vibrant. She definitely had a lot of energy. And I love her. Even though I didn't get to see her as often. She definitely was one of my faves. She was one of my faves. I remember when she would come visit during the summertime we she would teach me how to make tea. She would also make the the pecan praline that had like the caramel and the pecans in there and I don't know what the lady did to them, but they were always delicious. I'm not even a big candy person. But whenever I did go to her home I could smell the pralines like the scent. And I remember that being one of the things that she made that I enjoyed and that I loved. My cousin, like I said she was my mamas road dogs. Now that was my mother's cousin in law. And my dad's biological cousin. So my dad actually was about 10 years or so older than her somewhere between like eight and 10 years older than her. And so when my dad didn't get exposed his father's side of the family until he got older, so once he did you know he would be spending time over there she was her and her sisters would be over there and and technically he, they always described it as he will be taking the most care of them. And my father was known for being mean, certainly, if you will, his entire life. So they will talk about how they wet the bed, he made them sleep in it, you know, just different stories. You know, that was just like unique to my father, but also unique to them. And so they grew up and my, my parents met in a club in a whole nother state. Neither one of them were from, they got married and moved to my mom moved to Mississippi and my, um, my my godmother, which was my mom's best friend. She was also in the club that night, and she met one of my dad's cousins. And so my mom married my dad, and she just has, he's been her partner the cousin he's been her partner ever since then. So when my mom moved back to Mississippi, and had been married to my dad for a few years, cousin that passed, she was like, I don't think you have walking pneumonia. I think you're pregnant. And my mom was like, No, I'm not. No, I am not. And my cousin was like, she remember going to the doctor with her. And she says, she stayed in the waiting room, and my mom came out pissed. In back there, and they're giving you your prenats in that brown paper bag. And she said, my mom was just gripped onto the brown paper bag. Like she was so mad. Because her children were 22, 20, 20 and 21 years old. My mom was a grandmother. And my mom had me at 42. So that's why she was this like, and my mom still had her body looked amazing. She was physically still in great shape. And being a grandmother and having a child at 42 just was not in her plans. And my cousin was always telling me that story. My cousin, she was sweet. But she she had she had a mouth on her. The majority of my dad's side of the family, what comes up is going to come out, no matter who's around and where we at. And I love her for that. I remember the many road trips that we took. I remember, you know, just so many laughs because she was she was commonly my mom would be my mom will be Lucy and she will be Ethel off of I Love Lucy like that was their, that was their friendship, that was their love. And I was just so happy that my mom had somebody you

know that close to her, as far as an in law that loved her and treated her kindly. Um, and reflecting upon that it actually makes me hurt for that cousin's mom because they both had COVID together, and my mom went over there. My mom has Alzheimer's. So like, I have to talk to her like, I'm the mother now. And I was like, Mom, what do you do it over there? Like COVID is going around, you can't be anywhere. It wasn't just saying that. That particular place that she was, that wasn't necessarily the issue my mom has has Alzheimer's. So she just feels like she can go anywhere. And she's a social butterfly, and it just makes my skin crawl. So she was like they said they don't have COVID they just got diarrhea. And I was like, I didn't think they had COVID but now I do have you definitely need to go home. And unfortunately my cousin and her mom had COVID That was my great aunties third round, I want to save COVID And my cousin that passed that was I think her second round of COVID and my mom did get COVID And it's so sad because the mom and daughter duo were living together. So of course COVID does nothing but bounce around through households. And I have seen the impact of my cousin's death taking a toll on her mother, my great auntie, and also my mother because they were close. So they both people that I lost in the month of February were amazing people. They were filled with love. My my great Auntie she was more sweet, modest. She said what she felt but she wasn't as likely to say it as my cousin was. And both will be missed dearly.

Kit Heintzman 49:38

Would you share a bit about talking with your mother who has Alzheimer's about COVID about decision making about her catching it? What, what was that like? What's that been like?

LA'Patricia Washington 49:53

I can call my mom. And so first I gotta give them a background. So Because I went to school and I went to school outside of my area, I am an hour and a half away from my mother. When my father was alive, he was basically taking care of her mentally while she took care of him physically, they were able to work it together. But of course, with him passing in 2019, me being in school X, Y, and Z. That's what had a really big impact on the changes. So fortunately for me, my dad's father, I mean, my dad, son was able to he, my brother moved in to help take care of my father. And he stayed until I got to the place where I can have my mother with me. So she still has someone home with her. He's not there, 24/7 But he's home with her most of the time. So for everything that I can't immediately come home for. He's there, somebody constantly come in and out the house to check on her. So I just want to give that background so people won't be like, Why the hell isn't she home with her mom, like her mom needs her. I'm making the plans for it. But things just have to happen prior to So, um, I was I speak with her and like, Hey, Mom, what cha doing? And shell be like in her mind, She's like, She's a child. And she is so mischievous. very mischievous. So I'll be asking her, like, what you're doing is really like, I can hear people in the background. She's like, Ah, I'm headed home, or I've just left the house or, you know, to make it seem like she hasn't been out long. And then I'm like, Mom, where you been, and she's like I just went to the grocery store. And I'd be like, Okay, what you had to get, I didn't really need I mean, I needed some, just like, Girl, if you went to the grocery store, to socialize say that. Make sure you got your mask on. Oh, yeah, I wear my mask. And I know she has plenty of masks, because every time she gets in my car, she's taking one of my mask. So I know she got masks. She has an a collection or array of masks. Um, and it's actually pretty sad because I also work with my Doula clients. So I do not interact with people for the most part unless I just necessarily have to. And of course, sometimes I go out because I do need that social time outside of virtually. But for the most part, I don't interact with a lot of people because one, if I go see my mom, I don't want her to get COVID again, if I go to my newborn babies, or I go to my pregnant mothers, I also don't want them to get COVID, the mom or the baby. So I'm trying to explain that to her and also explain why she doesn't see me as much as she would like, and why I can't come

stay because she is a small town. So she doesn't have the best internet connection. So a lot of the things that I do, I cannot do there, because she has no internet connection. So also no central heating or cooling. So if it's really cold outside, I'm not shivering me timbers in that house that needs better insulation like, but that is what she is used to that is her comfort area. That is what is her normal. So it's just not my normal. I knew I didn't like that state of normal when I lived there. That's why when I turned 17, I was basically an adult because I joined the military at 17. And I have not permanently lived there since. And it's just, it's really just a lot has been eye opening to be quite honest. She's rebellious. If it's in person, she will try to fight me. I don't know how all my other siblings get the luxury of her not being physically aggressive with them. But she is physically aggressive with me. So and that's things I have to take into consideration. So I treat her I treat her like my child, but I still give her love and respect. I just have to be more stern than a traditional mother daughter relationship. And my girl gives me plenty of laughs She She She is illegally humorous. Like sometimes I get mad and then sometimes it hurts because sometimes like she's getting to the point where she got it over, you know like that. So definitely. It never looks the same. My approach with her never looks the same because anytime that I speak to her I don't know what time frame or what setting or character per se that she's in because I see. I see sometimes her child her child like experiences come out. She's a teenager she was she might be around eight. So that's that something that's totally different for me. But then again, I'm doing all of these gigs so that I can be in the place and save up so I can build me a tiny house because I can't live in that house with her. Because she go, I have two cats and she gonna set them free because every time I talk to her, she's like, what my grandkids doing? I'm like, they're bad. She's like, you need to bring them down here. We can go outside. Y'all can't go outside. She is not wrapping her mind around outside cats and indoor cats. In her mind, every animal is an outdoor animal. And if she sets my girls outside they not coming back I just know how they are they wouldn't be able to fend for themselves out there because it's essentially in the country so yeah, they're they're not outdoor country cats. They're they're inside city cats.

Kit Heintzman 55:49

What's it been like living with cats during the pandemic?

LA'Patricia Washington 55:53

Man, it's been, it has been interesting because when my depression kicks in, or my anxiety kicks in, and for those that don't experience that, that's where some of the simplest tasks like taking your bath and brushing your teeth and making your phone calls or going out the simple things that you would never have to think about normally. That would never just take your energy and drain you like I don't even have the energy to do mentally or physically. And my castle like a you bit mama, food bowl. Because we don't know what's going on with you but hungry. Me, we need water. Have you not seen this this litter box. Um, I always tell people, they're my little managers like they always make sure that I'm taking good care of them like manage, they manage me with their care. And they have been there during the times that I cry they my my first cat that I got this a little bit older. If she sensed then I'm sad. She'll catch me in the bathroom, rub herself all up against my toes and my feet and everything. And then also she'll like come get into bed with me if I let them in because they bad they just don't be acting right. So if I let them in my room, she'll come snuggle under me and she'll me out to me and she'll put her little nose to my nose. And my youngest cat is I asked them for a chill cat. I said I want to adopt the cat. There's really two, I gave them two chances. And they they both times they gave me hooligans, because my baby all she does is whine complain like she is very talkative. She talks so much that she gets frustrated that clearly I don't speak cat. And I must be broken or something. So my first cat was very vocal until she came around. And my first cat isn't even that vocal anymore. So I guess she likes to heal this, this baby cat is doing all the talking for

everyone. So but they are my loves. They are my headaches. But a lot of the times when I don't feel like talking to people or interacting with people or you know, turning my light on, they are they keep me going. And even in the times that I had medical emergencies, they never left my side. So they're my babies. And I tell people like Don't talk about my kids. Because I know they bad but you're not gonna talk about them because they're they, in a sense, they have saved my life. So.

Kit Heintzman 58:39

I'd love to hear more about your work as a doula during the pandemic.

LA'Patricia Washington 58:45

So first of all, I got trained as a doula during the pandemic. Let's start there. Now um, and the work of doula doula work has has changed drastically due to COVID. You can't afford to see your clients every every time because COVID is out. Training for COVID was virtual, opposed to going into training for two weeks and meeting with your with your instructors and meeting with your peers and getting that physical dynamic that hands on training. So I believe that it definitely have an impact on the scope of doula work because a lot of us may not have gotten training except for virtually and then explaining to people what doulas do and most of the documentation that they see is before COVID And it's a lot more hands on. So it's it can be frustrating. People have to realize what one one doula is not the same to the next. People have different training. People have different personality styles COVID has brought into pack that you have to consider, your family that you have back home. So it kind of a lot more of my services are offered virtually I tried to stick to mental health, I tried to stick to discussing resources. I send videos and I send information like the program that I'm contracted through, they have arrangements for therapists, they have arrangements for yoga, they have different things. So I tried to make sure I'm sending those resources to my clients. Um, when I first became a doula, I couldn't even focus on doing that part of work because I was in undergrad, and then I went into graduate school. So I really did not have the opportunity to fully work as a trained doula until I finished school. Because between COVID mission and the school and internships and just the whole nine, it was unrealistic. So that's kind of been my encounter. And now that I have been working, it is, you know, just trying to get people to understand because even though I just became certified as a doula in like, 2018, a trained doula. I've been doing this all my life. I have over 50 nieces and nephews. But with the combination of my nieces and nephews having kids so 50 nieces, nephews, great nieces and nephews, I have attended their births. This is not just a profession. To me, this is something that I love to do, it does not feel like work. Every time that I'm doing something dealing with my doula work, it does not feel like work for me. I have attended the birth of my oldest God son and I have been there for after due to the mothers with due to my best friend and mother's wishes for her labor process. And it has been beautiful. So I definitely wanted to be able to train myself or get trained in that field. So I could do it professionally. Because honestly, I love it. I mean, I get paid to like cuddle babies. Who doesn't love it. So and we do a lot more than cuddle babies. But that's one of my favorite parts is once you have dealt with mother for months, and and when I say dealt, I'm just saying whatever she experienced is pretty much you experienced discrimination from doctors or feeling like she's not being heard and coaching her to be able to stand independently in the case that you are not and cannot be there. Because realistically, somehow it's something that hotel, some hospitals have the right to say who can and cannot come to a delivery and you have to respect that. So my approach is making sure that my clients understand how to ask questions, understand how to document concerns. And to not just be seen as a first time mom that doesn't know what she's doing, or a black girl aggressive client or anything like that, teaching them the verbiage, how to, you know, get the things that they want, and they need for themselves and their baby. And it's rewarding, because I did have a client that had a situation during delivery. And she told me after delivery, she was like, Listen, you weren't there. But during that

time I heard your voice and your voice kept saying now asks, what are your options? What are your options? And she said, I just kept asking that over and over? What's my options? What's my risk, which one is going to be more likely to be less harmful to my baby, and our baby was born safely beautifully It was a long process. It was a scary process. But she definitely let me know that my presence was there. Without me physically being there. Because I had reiterated those things. Whenever I talked to my clients, I always remind them I'm your doula. So I'm like your shadow. I'm like your best friend during your pregnancy and a little bit after delivery. But I need you to be able to do everything by yourself. I need you to be able to stand alone during your appointments, whether I am there or whether I'm not there. Stand alone during your delivery, whether I am there, I'm not there. And I kind of know that it kind of gets irritating for them. I know. They're like, Why does she keep doing that? But I do that. So when moments like that happen, because you're going to be afraid. But you're also going to be able to say oh, let me ask what my options are. What's my risk? Do I have time to call XY and Z? and different things like that? Do I want an epidural? Do I want to C section. Those are things that I talked to my clients and enough time that, when it does come down to labor and delivery or to their appointments, they know what they want, they know what they don't want. And if the doctor isn't able to give them a medical reasoning as to why their wishes can't be granted, they also know how to move forward from there.

Kit Heintzman 1:05:19

Explain to someone in the future who has such a different lived experience that this world is like imaginarily, imaginarily and odd, would you explain what is so important about teaching medical self advocacy to your clients?

LA'Patricia Washington 1:05:36

Um, so self advocacy, right, people went from being able to take their partner, their their lover, their spouse, their mom, their best friend, to appointments with them to not, some appointments that a patient has to go in alone. Some, some doctors don't even want you to be on the phone during the doctor's appointments. So if they did have that someone that understood medical better than them that normally would go with them, sometimes they can't even call them. So self advocacy and understanding medical terminology or understanding medical procedures is so important because sometimes they don't have a choice. It's them by themselves, it doesn't matter if it's during delivery, doesn't matter if it's a prenatal visit, it doesn't matter. Sometimes it's you by yourself, especially if you don't have that spouse, or that partner or your mom or a best friend to attend. Even if you can have one person. Some places now are allowing two people during delivery, and only one person after the baby's born. And you can get visitors but they can't stay. So it's different rules and different hospitals. But the one thing about self advocacy is so that one, the client's wishes are granted. My biggest thing, and it's everywhere across the US. Black mothers have three times higher mortality rate during childbirth, and delivery than any other ethnicity group. So the highest ranking as far as you know, deaths during delivery, and labor, black mothers have three times that percentage. So when I deal with the demographic of the black community, African American community, people of color also I like to emphasize to them, you have to understand things that are going on with your health, you have to be able to ask the question so that you can stand your ground on what you believe in and what you do not. Because it's it's people that are going in for labor and delivery that should be smooth, and we're losing baby or mom and baby. So that's why it's so important for self advocacy. You can't this is not a time that you can rely on others in these scenarios. And I'm not saying that all medical staff is bad. That's not what I'm saying. But when black mothers and black women or you know black birthing parents have three times the mortality rate at the end of the day, that's scary. So that is just to be a blanket across the board. And I also work with all demographics. Lava doula is open to the LGBTQIA plus community, to people of color to black families to polyamorous families, same sex families. So I am definitely inclusive. That does not mean I'm only my

clientele is only black people of color. No. But I the same way that I speak with my black clients. And when I sit, sit and give different lectures or talks to my clients, whether they are white, black, Hispanic, whatever the case may be, I still just I'd still discuss black mortality rates during childbirth and delivery. Because just because they are not Black doesn't mean that they don't have a black friend, doesn't mean that they definitely understand some of the things that are discussed in the media or on social media today, this kid did. They may be able to help somebody else, even if it's, you need to make sure that you get a doula need to make sure that you have a doula. my Doula told me that the black ladies need doulas more than ever three times more likely to die during childbirth. And that's why I do the things that I do. That's why at the end of the day, my services are offered to all but I will always continue to advocate for black mothers. Because I at the end of the day, I'm a black mother as well I will was my baby in 2014. But I can still consider myself a black mother and I went to an emergency room. And the reason that my pregnancy my pregnancy was entopic, and it should have been caught, it should have been caught earlier, especially considering that once I started bleeding, they just told me Oh, you're just spotting, that's normal. We'll check your HCG levels, and you can come back. And that's how we'll know if you're still pregnant. They did not give me an ultrasound in the emergency room. They did not do all they did was check for the baby's heartbeat heartbeat was there. And they confirmed that I was still pregnant. And when I went to my regular OBGYN, she did an ultrasound saw where the baby was placed, realized my bleeding was not just bleeding, spotting it was my tube was hemorrhaging. Because the as the baby continued to grow, that it was splitting my tube, I lost my I lost my tube that day. So I lost my baby, I lost my tube that day, and my baby had 150 beats per minute heartbeat. So I had to terminate medically terminate my pregnancy, or I would not have survived. There was a one, like less than 1% rate that my baby would have survived. So it was either my life or nothing. And that's another reason why I advocate for abortion, because people don't realize that when you talk about oh, we shouldn't people shouldn't have the right to do any abortions. That technically wasn't abortion, whether you liked that terminology or not. It was a medical, medical termination, my life depended on it. So when it comes down to abortion rules and regulations, one, I don't care if it's gonna save the woman's life or not, if she is not prepared to have a baby, for whatever reason, I believe that she is the only person that should be able to make that decision, I'm definitely going to stand on that with a lot of the abortion rules and policies that's trying to come into effect or being held into effect. Because you never know what that mother is going through what that situation is. And quite frankly, if people believe in if they're pro life, then you need to also be willing to adopt, bring some of these kids into your home, make some of your funds available to these these parents. People regardless of whether they actually use birth control, whether they because believe it or not, we got people out here that can have they can have birth control, and use a condom, they can have two methods of birth control, and they will if it's any little sperm, they'll catch you to get pregnant and we have people are that are that fertile. So every pregnancy every woman's body is not the same. And to think that when women constantly get abortions that they should have to have that child they should have to Why would you do that to a child, because if she doesn't want the child, her having the child isn't always gonna make her want that child more. So then that child goes through life, unwanted, unloved, uncared for medically, school, educational, just all types of neglect. Now you have a broken individual. That's something to think about as far as abortions as well. And just you can't always tell the person like oh, well, you can't get rid of the baby. But when you have a baby, then you can get rid of the baby. Why? Because now she has to look at something that she created and passed it on. These are different aspects of abortion that people don't think about people don't consider. And if I it's just me personally, if you are not opening up your checkbook, your ATM card, your virtual bank account, if you're not willing to help support and get that family therapy, get that family parenting classes help pay for daycare. Some of these people don't have some people don't have cars, you have this different aspects of life that people should take into consideration. They are so stuck on speaking on what a woman should or should not do with her body. You have to be able to take your religious beliefs and set

them aside and think realistically and logically. Because at the end of the day, if a woman gets an abortion and you believe in heaven or hell, her getting her her abortion or not getting her abortion is not going to put you in that Heaven or Hell. Only only the food that you eat will make you shit. So that goes that applies that situation.

LA'Patricia Washington 1:15:03

And that's just, that's kind of my snipping on it. And especially working in child welfare, I can't explain how many times I've spoken to mothers, or I've spoken to fathers, because some women leave, they feed their kids with fathers like you want. Here you go. realize how serious that is, is like you can't, you can't tell when you gotta have this baby. Because at the end of the day, if she does not want the baby, or the parents do not want that baby, and they don't seek some type of open adoption, or they ensure that the baby goes to a good family, you're setting that child up for trauma, there's so much trauma in the welfare system, there's so much trauma in the fostering system. And it's important, it's important to note that, so don't just think you could put a child up for adoption because that child doesn't get picked. They are going to be in the foster care system. If that child has any type of medical issues, people there are great foster homes, don't do not get me wrong. And if you are an amazing foster parent watching this, please, please understand that you are loving you are appreciated. But for every good one, I've probably seen five bad ones. There's people that will get special needs babies, because if you foster a special needs child, you get a little bit more money, because it's supposed to go towards the care of that child. And it doesn't. Those children go into those homes, they get neglected. They get sexually assaulted, they get sexually harassed, they get molested. And they get they don't get food some of them are I've heard of cases where some of them are shackled and chained. So don't just think that if she has this child, she can just get pawn it off to the system. Because that's, that's not the answer either. That should not be the go to.

Kit Heintzman 1:17:09

Where did you learn about compassion?

LA'Patricia Washington 1:17:13

My mom

Kit Heintzman 1:17:15

Yeah?

LA'Patricia Washington 1:17:39

She also told me about fighting too, though, is like either you go show compassion, or you go catch these hands. But no, I do try my best to be compassionate. I, I have complex trauma from childhood on into adulthood. If I told you my Incomplete Life Story, you wouldn't believe it. And I want to be an example for my kids. If I ever have any, for my cousins, for my family, for people from my small town, I want them to understand that you can make it out of those situations you can make it out of those scenarios, you can make it beyond the secrets that you're told have to stay in this house was done in this house stays in this house, you can make it beyond those things. You don't just have to be somebody from a small town that stays in a small town and doesn't you know, try anything or explore anything. If that's what you want to do, then that's fine. But that's not your only option. So I have learned to think about some of the situations that I have been in from childhood to early adulthood. And the person that I I wish I would have had I tried to be that person.

Kit Heintzman 1:19:00

What has been some of the bigger political issues on your mind over the last few years? Because its last few years have been a lot beyond just COVID.

LA'Patricia Washington 1:19:11

I'm definitely also the abortion rules come with my thoughts as far as how we are noticing and higher increase in domestic violence which goes down to police to police brutality, because on one end, you have women screaming crying for help, with restraining orders, calling the police for domestic violence disturbances. And because they dropped the charges, because a lot of times women drop charges or men drop charges because men can experience domestic violence as well. They dropped those charges because they're afraid there is a cycle in domestic violence. The abuse isn't always they got a honeymoon phase, they got all types of phases during domestic violence. And if you do not understand that, you think, Oh, he or she just dropped the charges, they must like what they're going through, they're wasting our time by calling us. And you're not professionally trained to understand how the family dynamic works during domestic violence. That's why we're noticing a lot more women that are dying at the hands of their, their partners, whether they have left them years ago, or whether they recently left them. In this, we're noticing a higher rate of murder, suicides relating to domestic violence. But you also have women screaming out for help. But then you also have, you know, black men that are getting knees to their necks, they're held down until they cannot breathe, they are held down until you know, they're screaming for help. I can't breathe, I can't breathe, and then they're motionless. They're getting shot in their cars in front of their partners and their children. They're just randomly getting stopped and frisked, which was made illegal. So now, in some places are even doing illegal road blocks just trying to catch people for no license and insurance. And then they're also targeting black people during these road stops and stuff. So police brutality, domestic violence, and the abortions are some of the top things in life that I focus on. And more so the police brutality, because you're noticing it just it's everywhere. It's in the media, it has always happened. But what has changed is technology has advanced throughout the years, and now people you is almost no way to avoid it. You can't say that I didn't know. Because unless you're living under a rock, you're not watching TV, you're not checking your phone to use this on Google. It's on Yahoo, it's on Facebook, it's on all social media platforms, pretty much the videos, the statements, witnesses talking about these situations, and it being a black woman in society, and having to watch those things, knowing that I have nephews knowing that I have brothers knowing that I have cousins that fit that stereotype. They're tatted they might have gold in they mouth they might be strong, tall black men. And yes, they might even commit a crime or two. But is that warranted them getting potentially stopped and killed. Because at the end of the day, the police are here to protect and serve it in for the great police they do protect to serve you are loved and you are valued. But for the ones that do not necessarily you know your crooked, you have to take into consideration that just because people see me and they know that I wear the uniform is if I wasn't wearing that, you that that uniform, you will see a woman with locks with tattoos with dark skin. Would you see me as a threat? Would you see my nephews says a threat? Would you see my cousins as a threat? Would you see my brothers as a threat? My nieces, my nephews like would you if you just go off of fitting a description the majority of my family fits the description based just off looks. So I speak heavily about that I speak to and you know, I have talked about it to some of my peers in the military. And I'm like, you know, after like George Floyd, different cases that have happened, and they are so willing to say well, they should just complied. I'm like so if you if you saw me in civi's, you didn't know me. You would you think I should just comply. They were like but we know you and we know you'd comply. And if something would happen to me, then how would you feel? And they really can't nothing's ever gonna happen to you because I mean, your military, your, your, your, your stand up girl. You know, you always tried to do what's right. But that's because you know me. I have locks so people assume that I smoke weed. So that means that I know a drug dealer in their minds because I don't because I'm military. I have locks. So they

seem to think that I have an issue with conforming to society because people have this ideology that locks are unkept, they're unclean. So then with uncleanliness people assume that you don't have money, which that's accurate because we had COVID. So yeah, I'm broke. But With with the lack of income or the lack of funding, because people that will steal and rob. So that goes right back into criminal activities. Those are the things that people don't want to admit that they think when they see locks when they see gold's in your mouth or when they see tattoos. If you don't know what a gang affiliated tattoo is, a lot of people will associate almost any tattoo with a gang, especially when it's on darker skin, and they don't know the person, what does that tattoo mean, is generally is that a gang?, you know, that's, that's the terminology that's the passive aggressiveness that has been passed down through generations. And whether people want to realize it or not. It's a passive aggressive, passive aggressiveness that people commonly used. Because since I got locks, I've only had locks for about four or five years now. Since I've gotten locks. People just assume that I smoke weed that I am a cold, cold hard stoner like all day, I don't I just have locks because I wanted to have locks for spiritual journey. And I also want to have locks for easier maintenance, then works out best for me. But that is a stereotype that I often experience with having locks with having tattoos working out I got some muscles like Oh, girl, are you that strong? You know? So police brutality definitely is a political thing that is constantly constantly on my mind. Because I have relatives that I have a relative this in law enforcement, has tattoos has golds has everything but if you don't see them in that law enforcement and you're only going by a description, they're gonna fit it. So then what? You know, so definitely, police brutality because when I think of my friends going out or I think of my nephews going out or I think of my brother's going out, I have to wonder, are they gonna get stopped by the police today? Are they gonna get mistaken for a criminal today someone that has actually done something? Are they gonna make it home safely? That's something that I constantly think about I constantly sin meditation thoughts of prayer of protection of peace. When I think about family and friends because I want I want them to come home and I don't I don't want to be another hashtag justice for.

Kit Heintzman 1:27:59

What's it like for you to have those conversations with your work colleagues who seem

LA'Patricia Washington 1:28:08

It's difficult is difficult people can often be closed minded, something that always grind my gears. It makes me upset. My my underwear touching me nowhere in a conversation when people are like, of course, they should have complied. And when you refer to people, and you just automatically come off as those thugs why are they a thug today? They're loud, they're cursing, they're constantly talking shit back and forth. Okay, but what part what a part of that is illegal. So is it because you see a group of black people that because they communicate differently, their tone is different to what you're used to that makes you uncomfortable? So in your discomfort, you're calling them a thug. That's still racial. They're still racist. And that that is something hard. This is hard to portray to people because if they had their minds not open, and another thing that it makes me like, cringe is when people say I don't understand this because I don't see color. I am just I honestly I'm more afraid of a white person that says I don't see color. Then I am a one that just openly says I don't like black people. Or I don't like Hispanics. I don't like Latinos. I would prefer someone to say that and to say that I don't see color. Because that means if I'm around you, if I go out with you because lets Keep it real, if you have a white friend and you're black, chances are they may invite you over to a cookout, to gathering and you may be the only black person there. Then if they don't see color, they're not going to see any of their family or their friends or their their racist as co workers, they're not going to see them being racist to you and the potential of the risks. Because as a black person, especially being a black person at the party, and youre one of the few or only black people, you have no

no room to speak for yourself, because it's automatically going to come off as aggressive, you're already going to come off as angry, you're already gonna be having to come off as people who just perceive you as angry, as violent. And one wrong move on one word wrong words, especially to the sort of wrong person could turn up deadly. There has been so many stories released in the media, that people that have gone to parties where it was predominantly white, or they were the only black person or African American person there. And they never made it home. Whoever they left with going to the party decided to leave and left without them for whatever prospective reasons. And that person has never been seen alive again. It happens and especially in small areas. So speaking with people, and them saying that they don't see color, I don't I don't speak about it, because of course, people just come off like why are you getting so upset that I didn't mean it like that. And that's frustrating because people don't understand that saying, I don't see color is not a compliment is not a good thing. Because generally saying I don't see color means that if you are around someone and they are being racist towards someone, you're not going to see that either. You're not going to speak up for it. Some people don't know that that's not necessarily a great thing to see. Or to say. And this is not a like just a drag down on people who say that, but it's to provide another perspective. Because essentially, when you tell someone, especially someone black, especially if they're already speaking about some of the heavy political issues, such as police brutality, such as racism, different things like that, and you tell them that you don't see color, you're also telling them that, given the opportunity, I wouldn't stand for you because I wouldn't even see I wouldn't see the issue that you see.

Kit Heintzman 1:32:51

I'm curious, what does the word health mean to you?

LA'Patricia Washington 1:32:57

Health means the care of your mental, your physical, your financial, and your continuing education. At no point in life, should we be stagnant. And health is continually to maintain almost as if you are a vehicle per se. Vehicles constantly need gas, you can't let a vehicle sit too long. Without driving. The battery has to be replaced or recharged every so often, especially in the weather. And weather changes the dynamic of some cars, how they work during seasons, health is the same, whether it's mental or whether it's physical, you constantly have to do updates. Because as life goes on, you should go you should change. So you're not always the same person. Everything's not always the same thing. So you have to be able to, to adjust as the times change as your as you graduate. As you get that new job as you get that promotion. As people pass away as you get go on vacation. That's all a direct correlation to health. That's why people don't know that most of the time whenever you go to the doctor's office or anything that you have to fill out your information, especially health wise, that's a bio psychosocial assessment that gives them the idea of who you are by biologically. What is your font family dynamic or historical background? And they ask those questions because it plays a major role into a person. And going back into the bio psychosocial assessment. I had a professor, Dr. Trynia Allen. She always spoke about the spark of life. And she spoke about it so much during it was a lecture and it was relating to conception, but it was how conception and pre conception molds a person she spoke about it so much that I painted it, what it looked like in my mind, and I donated it to Jackson State social work student lounge for undergrad and her and that lecture for the spark of life has helped me to become a better advocate a better social worker, a better birth and doula. Because I now realized that if we want to better our society, better the health, physically and mentally of our children and of our adults, we have to mold our minds to think differently. And that's even before we have the child, that child is already predestined. As far as environment, the child is already predestined, as far as the family health history, mental or physical. So the one thing that we can control is the love and the care that we provide to children. Because that's why a lot of women are noticing that when they experienced domestic violence or a deep

trauma during pregnancy, there tends to be ADHD or ADD or different issues that the child may have. And I explained to someone, when you go through domestic violence that baby does too the baby feels your emotions, the babies can hear the sounds. So if you go if you get pregnant by somebody, you're not necessarily wanting to get pregnant by and you go throughout that pregnancy hating that person hate him to hear that person's voice that baby feels that when you swap moods frequently, because it already happens with the hormone changes. But then if your environment has an impact on that, that impact has an impact on your baby. So I'm Dr. Trynia Allen, if you ever watched his baby, that sparkle life he talks about how you drilled it into me mam. And it's definitely molded me to be the the public service worker that I am. Because in every aspect of what I do, it is circles back to community service and working with the public in health.

Kit Heintzman 1:37:26

What are some of the things you'd like for your own health?

LA'Patricia Washington 1:37:33

I wish to, I wish to be able to maintain and get treatment and especially things that need recurrent medication or need reoccurring treatment. I wish they weren't so expensive. I wish the doctors didn't have so many biases. They are professionals that still think that black people do not feel pain. And just because I can come to you and tell you on a scale of one to 10 that my pain is about a seven. But I still look like this does not mean that I'm faking. It does not mean that I am trying to just be getting over to get pills. Um, I wish that I wouldn't be discussing different parts of health with someone that is that does not look like me. And explain to them how I've had surgery and left with no pain medicine, and how they just call their doctor and describe the pain that happened in they got like a three to six months supply. I wish it was more equal across the board. I wish it was more affordable.

Kit Heintzman 1:38:58

How do you think? What kinds of changes do you think would need to happen for that not to become more possible that version of health.

LA'Patricia Washington 1:39:09

More people have to be willing to be open minded. There has to be more forums even if it's just like this. So somebody can come back. Watch those, watch these things, attend these lectures, attend seminars to gain the knowledge to gain the understanding. Because at the end of the day, people can't relate have compassion or empathy for some situation or something that they personally do not experience. So they had opportunity to meet someone that has these life experiences that they do not to ask questions to gain understanding. They're more likely to be open minded about whatever the issue or situation is that's going on.

Kit Heintzman 1:39:56

What does the word safety mean to you?

LA'Patricia Washington 1:40:07

It's hard to answer that, that question. Because in so many areas I, I frequently don't feel safe. And just like the saying goes, you can't miss something if you've never had it. It's hard to explain it if you never felt it.

Kit Heintzman 1:40:27

Coming from that place, how do you, how do you process how do you respond to the really sort of narrow conversation of safety that sometimes emerges under COVID-19?

LA'Patricia Washington 1:40:42

Disassociation, when a conversation goes too deep, too dark and too fast, I disassociate. I find myself daydreaming. It's not that I don't care. It's not that I don't listen. But I've met my trauma capacity, per se. And I just can't, I can't handle anymore. So I often daydream. When such conversations go too deep, too dark, too fast. I even say, Hey, you taking me too fast and too slow at the same time. Like, whoa, whoa, like I try to put some humor into it. I try to lighten the mood. But if it's something that I can't necessarily, I don't have that freedom to speak on. I'm just I'm disassociating I'm daydreaming.

Kit Heintzman 1:41:41

How have you been deciding what feels safer or safe enough for you in the sort of daily management of COVID?

LA'Patricia Washington 1:41:53

How many people are going to be there? Are there restrictions on who can come and who cannot? How important is it for me to be there. It's not important, I'm probably not coming up. If I'm if I really don't want to do something, or I don't enjoy being with someone or I don't enjoy like there, if there is no benefit for me, or to better society. I'm not probably not more probably not attended. Because it's just too much happening. There's too much happening in in the city of which I live, there's too much happening within the state that I live. And it's just too much happening within the country that I live in. And at the end of the day, I have to care for my mother. So when I do different things, I have to take into consideration how would this impact my mom.

Kit Heintzman 1:42:56

What have been some of the small moments that you've celebrated over the last year?

LA'Patricia Washington 1:43:03

Commissioning. Speaking out for myself, in a time of which maybe normally wouldn't have or 10 years ago I wouldn't have. I'm feeling love and giving love. Learning to communicate. Learning to listen, learning to understand that my love language is not everyone else's love language. friendships or relationships ending because of growth, and not because of something negative happening. I'm finding more about myself, eating good food going out to new places. And the increased value of seeing a stranger smile or laugh.

Kit Heintzman 1:44:05

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

LA'Patricia Washington 1:44:10

I can't even afford to think about it. Honestly. I can only take it if it's not dealing with business or my military career or my babies and my mother's or my own mother. I can't afford to think too far in advance. Because I hate getting my schedule set up or my life plan kind of going in cahoots or whatever and then all of a sudden it constantly changes. So I don't even set myself up for that disappointment or the letdown per se. I just get myself together and you know, just try to I just try to take it one day and one thing at a time.

Kit Heintzman 1:45:00

What are some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself over the last few years?

LA'Patricia Washington 1:45:05

Bubble baths, my bubble baths have become very elaborate. They got Epsom salt, I got the salt flakes. I have flowers, dry flowers, dried citrus, bath oils, different soaps, candles, I put my crystals on the side of the tub, that has been definitely something that I do as far as self care going out and sitting at the bar, because you can isolate yourself better ten, attentively at the bar, going out eating at the bar, just me reminding myself that I deserve this. It's okay to treat myself. I'm not thinking oh, I don't have the money to do X, Y and Z, especially when it comes to travel or a new experience. Because I'm not guaranteed to be here within the next week or the next month. So I ain't got money, but I got me we're gonna figure it out like. And allowing myself to not be perfect are not strive for perfection, I kind of show up, I give it my best. And I'm out. And that's what I have to give anything that I do professionally, or just that anything that's going to have my name on it, I want it to be as great as possible. So I'm always going to put 115% into it. But at the same time, I'm not killing myself to put 200% into it. Because I want to be able to enjoy the life that I live for however long I have it.

Kit Heintzman 1:46:49

This is, we're nearing the end of my questions.

LA'Patricia Washington 1:46:53

Ok.

Kit Heintzman 1:46:54

There's so we know that there's all of this biomedical scientific research happening right like COVID and the body and viruses and but there's also this like really human side to the pandemic of what we're going through right now. I'm wondering what you think people in the humanities and the social sciences should be studying right now to help us understand the human side of what we're going through.

LA'Patricia Washington 1:47:22

Um, these these darn pandemic babies. They are, that is a right now, if you watch this, and maybe it's turned it out by the time you watch this, but that's a that's a tick tock sound that's used a lot. But pandemic, babies are being born alert. They can almost tell you yes and no, they they got teeth in the mouth maybe. And they appeared to be wiser beyond their years, even fresh out the womb. Understanding how if a mother was pregnant when she was pregnant during or prior COVID and studying the behaviors and the behavior patterns of that child throughout life, studying the different people the different vaccinations that were given, and the long term effects of it. For those of us that were alive, well into developmental stages, five years and above, how did how is that empower we now? So 10,15, 20, 50, 100 years later, how are we? What were our behavior patterns would changes in health, especially mental health, but physical as well? What changes has there been opposed to the people that were born during the pandemic and that may or may not be thriving because they were born during it so it is their normal? The chain the changes in currencies, how we're going from physical coins and physical dollars to cryptocurrency, FTS and just all other streams of virtual funding or monies and what birth defects are being seen more now. And how are the people that had to go into living under a rock because they refuse to get a vaccine, how many people went under the radar how many people left the USA how many people are went from off grid living? Or they went from you know, normal day in society and they chose to do off grid living. How are they

doing? What impacts? Did they make a good decision? How is how has their quality of life being? What mental state are they in? Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 1:50:06

I'd like to, I'd like you to imagine talking to some historian of the future. And we know that history is when written, imperfect and filled with holes and filled with places people forget to look. And if you could tell that historian that there's something they have to tell like, what is the story that cannot be forgotten? What would you tell them, they need to hold on to for this moment that has to be remembered?

LA'Patricia Washington 1:50:47

how society was able to somehow adjust, but you cannot take any one person or persons too fast. There has to be communication. There has to be education. And there has to be a grace period. Um, let's not forget how we had the pandemic. And then we have currently as of today, what seems like a war with the Iran situation that's going on? What can happen, there needs to be plans in place to try to avoid different things that have happened negatively, whether it's in the US or outside of the US, because at the end of the day, this pandemic affected more than just America need to have more grants, emergency grants and legislative funding ready and quickly available for life during a pandemic, life during a pandemic and natural disasters. Life during the pandemic and losing someone we just lost a prior Miss USA to suicide. The dynamic of suicide is changing. This is a stereotype is statistics that women are less likely to commit suicide in a way for which they would have to be taken care of per se. But we're learning we're we're seeing changes in that statistic is getting more more vocalized more publicized about women that such as the prior Miss USA, they jumped off a building where they actual suicides, or were they suicides in the the ideology behind suicide and self harm. Are they changing? And what impacted did COVID or the pandemic or the natural disasters? What impact has that had on society? And what could we do in a future emergency that will better preserve or better take care of or just be better prepared for the people in the communities and groups within society.

Kit Heintzman 1:53:35

I want to thank you so so much for your time, and the beauty of your answers. And those are all of the questions I know how to ask at this moment. But if there is anything that you would like to share, please have the space opened.

LA'Patricia Washington 1:53:55

I kind of touched on it before. But I'm sure that someone watching this 20, 30, 50 years from now will be like what were they doing? I'm sure that there's things that we started out with that absolutely make no sense. And that absolutely seemed inhumane at the end of the day. That is why the last question. I talked about being better prepared, even for some of the most outlandish situations and circumstances because I can I could probably put my bottom dollar on the fact that at least one thing that was commonly done during this time or before this time will be considered inhumane. And that's because there's one crooked or bad public officials, people in decision making roles or caretaking roles, but it's also because everything was so uncertain The policy makers and just anyone that had a decision making role could not think of and or prepare themselves for the current pandemic that we are in. So even though a lot of things are going to be inhumane, you should definitely call them out as being inhumane. But also think of ways that if this ever were to, like in some form of clear up, but yet it kind of happens again, that society will be better taken care of.

Kit Heintzman 1:55:44

Thank you so much.

LA'Patricia Washington 1:55:45

You're welcome. Thank you. It was a pleasure and I appreciate you reaching out to me a lot. This means a lot to me.