

## Transcript of Interview with Wildstyle Paschall by Shonda Nicole Gladden

**Interviewee:** Wildstyle Paschall

**Interviewer:** Shonda Nicole Gladden

**Date:** 09/02/2020

**Location (Interviewee):** Indianapolis, Indiana

**Location (Interviewer):** Indianapolis, Indiana

**Transcriber:** Lily Crigler

**Abstract:** The interviewee in this oral history is a Black man who self identifies as an artist whose primary medium is photography; he is also an avid writer and local, community engaged, thought leader. In this interview, he shares his story of growing up in the United Northwest Area (UNWA) of Indianapolis and his experiences of COVID-19, activism and protests for racial justice, particularly following the killings of Dreasjon Reed in Indianapolis and George Floyd in Minneapolis.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:01**

Okay, so you should see a little button up above that says we are recording, can you confirm that you see it?

**Wildstyle Paschall 00:07**

Yep.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:07**

And that you're okay with being recorded?

**Wildstyle Paschall 00:11**

Yes, that's fine.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:12**

Okay. So I need to get that recorded in terms of the consent. We, as I just said, we are recording, you know that my name is Shonda Nicole Gladden, and I am the interviewer. I am here with, can you please state your first name and your last name for the recording?

**Wildstyle Paschall 00:33**

I mean, you want my government name or...

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:35**

The name that will be associated with this interview. Ideally, it would be your government name, but do what makes you feel comfortable because this will be made public.

**Wildstyle Paschall 00:47**

Oh, well, it's definitely Wildstyle for sure. That, that is, that's the name everybody knows me by, so we'll stick with that.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:56**

Outstanding. And today is September the 2nd, 2020. It is just past 11am at about 11:08am Eastern Standard Time. I am recording from Indianapolis, Indiana, and I believe, Wildstyle, are you also in Indianapolis?

**Wildstyle Paschall 01:15**

Yes. Uh huh.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 01:16**

Okay. So, just briefly, it's going to be slightly more formal than just a regular conversation between the two of us. It will be that because this is part of the COVID-19 Oral History Project, which is associated with the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive. Can we take a moment to review? What's that?

**Wildstyle Paschall 01:46**

No, go ahead. Yeah, that's a lot. Go ahead.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 01:48**

Okay, then we can we can talk about why that's a lot. But you did review the informed consent and the deed of gift document that I sent you correct?

**Wildstyle Paschall 01:59**

Yes, I agree with it.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 02:03**

So we're just going to review it briefly so that you can audibly give the consent to the thing that you have signed, that you are in agreement with. That-

**Wildstyle Paschall 02:17**

Okay.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 02:17**

-During this phase of our project, our research group is focusing its energies on collecting oral histories that speak to the experience of racial justice and racial justice movements in the context of COVID-19. So the entire contextual reality of what COVID-19 epidemic means for us individually, as well as kind of collectively. And then, for the purposes of a conversation around racial justice and racial justice movements. We've designed this project so that professional researchers in the broader public can create and upload their oral histories to our open access and open source database, everyone will have access to it that wants to.

**Wildstyle Paschall 02:17**

Okay.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 02:19**

That means you, too. This study will help us collect narratives and understandings about COVID-19, as well as help us to better understand the impacts that the pandemic has, over time. The recordings and the demographic information that you have just provided audibly, and those few questions that you responded to, optionally, and the

pre interview questions that I sent you in the email, these, as well as the verbal the verbatim transcripts of our conversation, these will be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive, as well as the Indiana University Library System for the use of researchers and the general public. Do you have any questions about the project that I can answer so far?

**Wildstyle Paschall 03:51**

Oh, no, not right now.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 03:53**

Okay, if at any time you do, please say hey, hey, hey, hold up, let's talk about that. Taking part in this study, of course is voluntary, you may choose not to take part or you may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled, I don't know why we have that. Your decision whether or not to participate in the study will not affect your current or future relations with Indiana University, IUPUI or the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute. You've read some of this, most of this is in the consent form. Participating in this project means that your interviews will be recorded in this digital video, and they will also be transcribed. Your recordings and the possible transcriptions, copies of this and any supplementary documents or additional photos that you may wish to share and the informed consent that you signed and emailed back and if necessary, deed of gift may de-, it may be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive and the Indiana University Library System, and as I shared again, it will be available to both researchers and the general public. Your name and other means of identification will not be confidential. Again, do you have any questions?

**Wildstyle Paschall 05:12**

No, I'm fine.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 05:13**

Okay. So in addition to your signed document, would you please offer verbal confirmation that you understand and agree to these terms? I'm asking that you verbally confirm that you have agreed that your interview will be made available under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-Commercial Share 4.0 International license, as well as the COVID-19 oral history, the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive and the trustees of the Indiana University acting through its agents, employees or representatives that we have an unlimited right to reproduce, use, exhibit, display, perform, broadcast, create derivative works from and distribute the oral history materials in any manner or media now existing or hereafter developed in perpetuity throughout the world. You agree that the oral history materials may be used for the COVID-19 Oral History Project at Indiana University, including its assigns and transferees for any purpose, including but not limited to marketing, advertising, publicity, or other promotional purposes. And you agree that IU will have final editorial authority over the use of the oral history materials, and you waive any right to inspect or approve of any future use of the oral history materials. Again, this is the same document that you've read. I agree, you agree that the public has the right to use the materials under the terms of fair use, and the US Copyright Law Section 107 of the US Copyright Act?

**Wildstyle Paschall 06:49**

I agree.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 06:50**

And then finally, I promise this is it for all of the "I Agree" verbal confirmation. But I'm asking for your verbal confirmation that you have agreed that your interview will be made available to the public immediately or shortly after the Kaltura finishes processing the file itself. Do you agree?

**Wildstyle Paschall 07:12**

I agree.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 07:14**

All right. So now that that is over, thank you, again, for agreeing to sit for this interview with me. I am going to try to make sure to turn that slack off. I thought I closed it so that it doesn't jump back up. And hopefully that will do it. So do you mind telling me a little bit about yourself? Primarily, what are the things that you do on a day to day basis, like your job, your extracurricular activities.

**Wildstyle Paschall 07:46**

Um, that's hard to say. So I am a, a part of, I guess several different community organizations, the Learning Tree being one of them, which is an asset based community development organization and basically means we work in, in my neighborhood, which is the near northwest UNWA area, to really assist our community, and you know, really tried to push the community goals forward. I'm also a central Indiana Community Foundation ambassador, which is a whole more loaded term. But basically means that I try to explain community to the CSCF and also try to introduce them to the community and me-, you know, show them people that are, are doing something that just doesn't always get to their, to their desk. And I'm also a photographer, a producer, a music producer, and a writer at times. And I probably left something out, but I do, I do a little bit everything.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 09:16**

That is a lot that you do. If you can clarify., I heard you say the northeast community, but the you said UNWAD, is that?

**Wildstyle Paschall 09:31**

No, near Northwest, and UNWA is the we have a million different names but UNWA is probably the old name for it - the United Northwest Area.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 09:43**

Thank you.

**Wildstyle Paschall 09:45**

So that's the, that's the neighborhood that depending on who you are, you may know it is.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 09:55**

So depending upon who you are, let's hang out there for just a moment. When you think about the categories of race and gender, so-, social economic status and other kinds of common demographic categories, how do you describe yourself?

**Wildstyle Paschall 10:14**

Hold on, give me that again. Hold on.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 10:17**

Yeah, so, so thinking about the categories of race, gender, social, economic status, and any of the kind of common demographic categories, that one may be asked, how would you self describe?

**Wildstyle Paschall 10:35**

Honestly, I am a low income, black man. I mean, if, I mean if we're just being blunt and honest. That's who I am.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 10:46**

All right. So a low income black man, originally from where?

**Wildstyle Paschall 10:54**

I'm originally [inaudible] And then we, we moved out to the east side for a long time, and I stayed there for a while, for a long time, and then I came back in 2013, you know, back to this neighborhood.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 11:09**

Back to the UNWA neighborhood, and-

**Wildstyle Paschall 11:13**

Yeah, back to the UNWA area.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 11:17**

What, what do you see happening around you in your neighborhood? Now, maybe when you came back in 2013, and then also thinking through the lens of COVID-19.

**Wildstyle Paschall 11:31**

So when I came back in 2013, the neighborhood, it had changed in some ways, especially this part, and because I live on the northern end of it, and I used to live on the southern end. But especially this end, it was a lot quieter probably than it was back in the day. Disinvestment had definitely taken its toll, the uh, I mean, it was, I want to say over, it might have been over 50% of the homes were vacant, in the community. And the house that I moved into had been vacant for a while, and my neighbor said she was so happy that I got here, because she was tired of having vacant houses on both sides of her. And the house next to me was vacant for, you know, and was vacant, and you know, all the, for the next four years. So when I came back, you know, things, the population had decreased. It wasn't, it wasn't exactly what I remembered. Back in the day living there as a kid, there was a lot more people than it is now. And you know, but the sense of community was still, still there. People still talk to each other, took care of each other, but definitely not as many people and things had kind of gotten a little bit more rundown on this end.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 13:03**

So would you say that in terms of the residential space where you live, are these homeowners, are these renters, is it a mix? Could you clarify that a little?

**Wildstyle Paschall 13:16**

It's a mix, not everybody owns their homes, I think there's a few more people on this end that own their homes, than than south of I-65. But for the most part, it's, it's a big mix. But the one thing about renters is you got to understand is, especially on my street, is almost every single person that that's moved in over here is a renter. That may be new to you, but they typically aren't new to this neighborhood. So, so many of them, from day one, you see them talking to everybody, it's because they've lived over here, or they lived on the next street, or they're coming back, or whatever. So it kind of like blows that, that notion of renters being transients, and, and not attached to any community, but the reality is that people over here, they might have lived, they might move every couple of years, and they might move every year. But typically, they're moving from from back and forth over here. So, you know, I live on 33rd street, and they might have lived on 29th or 29th or 28th or 35th and they moving back and forth when, because we have a lot of bad landlords, but typically people that, that live over here end up back over here for one reason or another, and a lot of them are related to each other, families and grew up with each other and so they they ended up staying over here. One way or another.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 14:55

Yeah, so it sounds like the community itself is, is fairly well defined in terms of its membership, in terms of its demographic, that these are people that have been there for long spans of time. So it sounds like you would be able to share perhaps, information about them in ways that would, would have a kind of common trajectory, or there's a story that you are very familiar with is that...

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 15:28

Okay, so, thinking about the stories that you know of your community and the stories that you have experience of yourself, what issues have most concern you about the COVID-19 pandemic, personally, as well as in your community context?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 15:28

Mhm.

**Wildstyle Paschall** 15:47

Um, so the community has a lot of older people in here, and you know, a lot of people have been here, you know, for 20, 30, 40. I have a neighbor that's been, he's lived on Congress, which is just south of 32nd street. So he's been here, let's see, he moved here in '53. That's what he said. He moved into that house before the highway got here and moved, and it was like, 1953. So we've got people that have been here almost, you know, like, 70 years and, and stuff. And so several of my neighbors have have caught COVID; some have died. It was one situation early on with the pandemic was you had, you had some grandkids, and they were living with their, with their grandfather, and the rest of the people in the house, and the grandfather died. And they didn't know that he had died from COVID until they did an autopsy. And so, yeah, it's been, you know, it's, it's been really hectic. At 30th and Clifton, you have a singer's apartment building. And so you know, that, they generally, I'm not gonna say they stated themselves, but you know, they kind of talk to each other the most. But, you know, they've been taking it in stride, they still go out on the street. They're not fearful of anything. I wish they, more of them would wear masks, but you know, it is what it is. But I mean, COVID has definitely hit my neighborhood. There's a gentleman that lives up on 36th Street, him and his wife caught COVID, and he's got, I don't know how old he is, but I do know that my mom grew up in his neighborhood as well. And she said he was there, is one of the adults that took care of the neighborhood when, when she was a child, so he's got to be, he's got to be in his 80s. But they, him and his

wife both survived. So, you know, there's been some great stories and some sad stories with the whole COVID-19 thing.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 18:24**

Yeah, I'm curious. So if you could quantify, perhaps you can, perhaps you can't, but if you can give an estimation, about how many people would you say that, you know, from your neighborhood who have caught COVID-19 and of those who have caught it, how many have succumbed to the virus, and how many have survived, if you can give some kind of roundabout numbers of what you know of the neighborhood?

**Wildstyle Paschall 18:53**

So I know of probably about four or five that have caught it and survived. And I would say I know definitely one person and then another person that we suspect died of it, you know, but we know one person for sure died of it over here. And it may be more, you know, that's just off hand knowledge like, that's not anything from the CDC or the Marion County health department, but you know, that's just my personal knowledge.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 19:34**

Yeah, so thank you for bringing up Marion health department and the CDC. I'm curious, how does this pandemic compare to other big events that have happened in your lifetime? Perhaps that the CDC may have been tracking that you can remember in your own lifetime, or that you have heard Marion health department has tracked in your own lifetime? Are there differences, are there similar experiences that you can think of?

**Wildstyle Paschall 20:06**

I've never experienced anything like this in my life. I don't remember, I know, there were, you know, there was panics over what was an H1N1 and stuff in the past, but I don't remember anything, ever even coming close to approaching this level of disruption, you know, like having to make change. You know, before you would hear about stuff, but like you, I would never know anybody that it affected personally. I wouldn't, I remember, when West Nile hit, I think there was a couple of people that died, but for the most part, you didn't know anything. And I didn't really change, you know, I didn't change my lifestyle. I didn't stop doing what I was, I was doing, I didn't see anybody else doing that. So this is the first time that, that people are actively like, Okay, well, looking at a government agency and trying to figure out okay, you know, what should we be doing? I've never seen that in my life.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 21:14**

Yeah, so how have you changed your day to day activities in response to the pandemic? Or, and, or and or how have relationships changed for you, and people around you in response to the pandemic?

**Wildstyle Paschall 21:30**

So me personally, um, you know, I'm always in a lot of different meetings and stuff, so a lot of that's over Zoom. In a neighborhood, though, like between the neighbors, it's not that much of a change, I think in general. I mean, you see, you see us wearing masks and stuff like that, but the people on our block, right, wrong or indifferent, and it's probably wrong, but generally, we-, we're out talking to each other, and we don't have a mask on, and we're not. So you know, chances are, if if one of us gets it, and then we're probably all gonna get hit, but right, wrong, or indifferent, you know, for the most part that, it hasn't changed people's relationships inside the neighborhood,



but it's a lot different going outside, you know, and people are a lot more, more cautious. it seems like, you know, outside of the community, so.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 22:29**

So, you say inside the neighborhood, inside the community, outside the neighborhood, outside of the community, could you give a kind of boundary marking about how far the neighborhood extends to where you would say that inside the neighborhood, we are doing these things, and where the boundary markers might be for what looks like to be outside the neighborhood?

**Wildstyle Paschall 22:56**

So um, I'm at 33rd and Clifton. So I mean, the neighborhood is kind of, the larger, the larger area that, that most people kind of know each other and consider to be like, the same area is really Martin Luther King Boulevard, or Martin Luther King Street, and then you have all the way over to the canal, down to about maybe 18th street and Riverside. You know, and that's pass hardening. And then you know, so that, that whole area is, is kind of, it's kind of one big neighborhood, and people generally, I think, think if you're getting, you know, people get on the buses, and they're on a bus stops, and they've got their, their masks on. But I mean, if you're in any one of those places, and you're walking around, typically you're there all the time, and, and people just kind of go about their day, as usual. But you know, like, if you're getting on the bus and you're going downtown or, or going somewhere else, that's typically where people, even in my neighborhood, seem to be more cautious. Like they're, they take more precautions, but kind of in our own neighborhood you don't, you know, people aren't masked up the whole time and you know, when they're on the block talking to their neighbors that they're typically not wearing a mask with each other. So, you know, that, that hasn't changed, but you know, you know, if we're going, if you're going downtown or you're going out to Lafayette road or something like that, and it's not a familiar surroundings, I think that, I don't think that's, I don't think it makes sense, but that's how we, that's kind of how you judge you know, what people are going to have on, and they're going to have a mask on and stuff like that.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 24:55**

Thank you. That's very helpful to share your personal community context and just kind of your perspective on how COVID-19 has shape or is impacting or intersecting both of those. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your personal experience with COVID-19 or your community experience with COVID-19 before we shift to the conversation around racial justice movements in the time of COVID-19?

**Wildstyle Paschall 25:22**

Oh, not a whole lot. I mean, I don't want to give people up in the conspiracy theories. But I know that the end of December and January, I got sick with and I, and at the time, you know, people didn't know much about COVID, and they didn't have standardized symptoms. But when they standardized the symptoms, I swear that I had every one of those symptoms; I lost my, my sense of taste, I got the chills a couple of times, I almost thought it was getting pneumonia, but I didn't feel bad because I had pneumonia last year, I didn't feel that bad. And then I had this cough that just wouldn't go away, and I had low energy. And around this time, I was going to a downtown gym and, and stuff and may have been exposed to people that were traveling and stuff, so I don't know if I had it or not. But whatever I had seemed to match a lot of the, almost all the symptoms that I've heard of COVID-19. And that was back, I think I got sick in December, the end, very end, it was after Christmas, and I was sick into January. So...



**Shonda Nicole Gladden 26:36**

And to clarify this is December of 2019 into January of 2020?

**Wildstyle Paschall 26:42**

Yes.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 26:43**

All right. That is a very interesting, additional perspective. So thank you for sharing that. I don't know that there are additional questions that I have about the COVID-19 and your personal experience or your community experience. But if as we're talking about the racial justice movements in the time of COVID-19, something else comes to your mind, please feel free to invite us to return to that space of conversation. So-

**Wildstyle Paschall 27:16**

Okay.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 27:17**

-Now want to know, if you can share your thoughts about current movements focused on racial justice, such as Black Lives Matter, or any other movements of which you are aware that are happening currently focused on racial justice.

**Wildstyle Paschall 27:37**

I will say that I feel like the pace has picked up because of COVID-19, exposing how flawed our system is and how many people we left on the margins. And also people having more time on their hands to A, for activism and A, to think about what's really going on here. So, um, I would say COVID-19 has, has really exposed a lot of racial inequities and inequities period, but a lot of racial disparities everywhere, everything from who's being affected physically or more likely to die, because of lack of healthcare all way to who's more likely to get evicted, because they're more affected by the economic impact. So, I mean, there's just a lot going on, and I feel like COVID has kind of expose, even with the social service agencies scrambling and really not quite having a, a plan in place to help people and realizing that a lot of the people that they're helping, well, they were already doing bad before COVID. And somehow, you know, we've been missing them all this time. But now we're seeing that it's even worse, and we're having to work harder. So it's been, COVID-19 has been an exposee into American values, and society.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 29:18**

Wow. So COVID being an exposee into American values and American society. I want to ask very specifically about what changes you have seen, in this COVID-19, but also since George Floyd's death, have you seen changes since George Floyd's death?

**Wildstyle Paschall 29:44**

I have seen changes and conversations. Um, I'd like to see some some changes in action, but that's yet to, for a lot, a lot of organizations, a lot of people I think it's been more of the conversations, which is a good start. I think it's, what's happened is it's been a window for everybody to, to watch the video and finally, I mean, unless, you know, unless you're just a sociopath, racist, you know, it's something's wrong in America with George Floyd, but it shouldn't have taken that. So there's definitely, there's definitely changes in conversation going on. I don't know

about changes in policy, though. I mean, especially here locally in Indianapolis, um, when you look at our politicians, they talk a good game, but when you look at the action, okay, what substantive actions have you taken to address police brutality and oppression in Indianapolis? And then you, and if you look at okay, the question about change is much harder to quantify. You know, everybody's talked to good, you know, we've got, I was at IUPUI today with somebody going to the dentistry school, and I, I saw the big Black Lives Matter signage over that walkway. And I looked, I'm like, well, does it? I mean, is that what, is that what we're doing? What actions have we taken besides put the sign up? So, I don't know that, that's a, I see conversations, I see signs. Policy changes and decisions, that's not quite came about yet.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 31:50

And so the changes in increased conversations, what do you think has driven that change or those changes since George Floyd's death?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 32:04

I mean, I think we were already seeing with COVID, with COVID-19, who is most impacted, you know, with the economically and health wise, and, you know, with, with seeing just such a, just an evil video of somebody, you know, choking somebody to death for almost nine minutes, I think that put, put things in perspective of how out of control not only just police, but American society has gotten in oppressing people. People that didn't believe in, in police brutality before had to, you know, or felt that it was such a isolated incident, had to come to grips that there was all these other officers around holding the crowd at bay, and stopping, you know, stopping the crowd from, from, from keeping that officer from killing George Floyd. And so that you didn't have all these, you know, isolated incident of an officer acting alone, you had all these officers supporting you, man. And maybe their foot wasn't on his neck, but they kept everybody else from from stopping the situation. So we had to come to grips that America isn't quite what we, what we imagined it to be or what we want it to be at. And you know, for most people that you know, even police officers, like they, a lot of them recognized it was wrong now, but it didn't necessarily mean that they, they went back to their own police departments and called out the injustices there. But they recognized that that was wrong, and it was a problem. And when people started looking into the Minneapolis police and all the different incidents they had, they realized that this was a pattern and that this, you know, maybe just may be what black people have been saying for years about police brutality and racism and oppression. Finally, I think a lot of white Americans realize, oh, they're not lying. And so that, that was a catalyst to, to some some real difficult conversations. Again, not, not a lot of substantive action from everybody, but at least the conversations are happening.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 34:33

So you said people looking into Minneapolis police and people looking into and people keeping the other officers from actually killing George Floyd. Can you talk a little bit about these people that you referenced in those various scenarios? Who are they, what are they doing, how do they come up on the scene?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 34:57

You talking about like the Black Lives Matter activists, stuff like that, or...?

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 35:01

Is that who you mean when you say people?

**Wildstyle Paschall 35:04**

Well, I will say, so activist, activist is a loose term. Um, I don't, I don't want to think of myself as an activist. I think of myself as just an engaged citizen that has the capacity to do it. I don't have kids, so I can do stuff like that. And I think there's a lot of people that have the capacity, that are finally being listened to. I think a lot of those people have always been there asking those questions, but now they're finally being listened to. So you have activists, you have people that have the capacity to understand what's going on and realize that it is wrong that that we need to take a closer look at all of these, all of these encounters with police and, and look at what went right and definitely look at what went wrong. And so, you know, when the activists and really the world because I'm not an, I would-, if I would ever describe myself as an activist, I'm not an activist from Minneapolis, I'm a, I'd be an activist for Indianapolis, but it you know, that video allowed everybody to really dissect it and become an activist realize well, this is, you know, yeah, that officer did stood on a man's neck for nine minutes as he was crying out for his mother and killed him. Yes, that is evil and as bad, but what about those other officers that were with him and didn't stop him, didn't say anything, didn't encourage him to stop? And I think everybody had ended up becoming an activist on that. They realized like, no, this is, this is something more wrong with just one person, you know, just one bad apple.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 36:58**

So I've heard you use the word 'activist' several times. And there's common language that we've heard in some of these other conversations that gets lifted up as - protesters, organizers, activists - can you talk about the differences in these terms, the ways that these bodies that have been labeled with these terms are, are experienced in this COVID-19 era, and this year that we are, we are seeing in the wake of George Floyd's death? Do you understand my question?

**Wildstyle Paschall 37:34**

Yeah, um, I don't know if I can answer your question. I mean, activists, activists sometimes get a bad rap in some scenarios, you know, in many cases, they're the person that, that is seen as always looking for something like, if you're an environmental activist, then you're, you're looking for the company that is breaking the law and destroying the environment and pouring toxic chemicals or just doing something like that, if you're-, previously if you were a Black Lives Matter activist, even though they do much more than just worry about police brutality, but you, you're, you've been seen as the person that's always after the police and, and questions everything about what the police are doing, and, and in some way supervises them from an outside role when, when people allow it. But I don't, I mean, I feel like COVID-19 is become, you know, it's caused people A, to have a lot more time. A lot of people have a lot more time on their hands, and be able to become, to be more involved in activism and also protesting, and I don't think all protesters are, are necessarily activists. Activism requires you to have capacity in time to stay on these issues, be, you know, be educated on these issues. And there's a lot of stuff that I'm not educated on myself, but I will always defer to Indy10 Black Lives Matter because they are more educated than I will ever be on how to run a protest safely. And so when I show up in those arenas, I am a protester. And, you know, I'm supporting other, other activists that organize this and have a plan for if things go south and we all get arrested. I'm not the one with the phone numbers to get bailed out, they are. I don't know how the system works very well, but they do. They know who to call. They know what lawyers to, to get there. They've got security, they've got the cars that will block our flank and block the sides and hopefully keep people from running this over and they know what to watch for when things go south. So they are the lead activists, and I'm the protester in that role. And so I think people always get it... you know, everything is a spectrum, and people always kind of get things twisted about what everybody's role is. And you know, if you interview a random protester out there,

maybe they're not going to be able to articulate what policies need to be changed with the IMPD General Orders board to make things different, but they are out there for a reason, and it's because they trust other activists to help out with something like that. They trust other leaders to do that. And their role is for agitation, to demand justice, to do what it needs, needs to be done. And I think sometimes that gets, gets lost you know, when when we start labeling things, because I think labels aren't always a bad thing, but I think, you know, they can be weaponized in some cases, and I see it done a lot with, with protesting, and activists because also, when a protester becomes throws a brick, you know, now, now, they've said that now they're a rioter, and they've, they've turned to the protesters into rioters and activists along with them. So, you know, language is tricky, and sometimes it's weaponized, and everything's a spectrum.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 41:32**

No, thank you very much. I really appreciate how you have kind of delineated between protester, activist, rioters, and the ways that you have seen these, these labels, if you will, perhaps weaponize, but certainly expressed in this kind of COVID-19 era and just in general. So have you attended any of the protests as a protester?

**Wildstyle Paschall 41:59**

I've attended quite a few actually.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 42:02**

Tell me about what they look like, the protests.

**Wildstyle Paschall 42:06**

I've seen everything. When Dreasjon Reed was killed, I was there the fir-, the first night. And there was no clear leadership at the scene. And so there was some of the people that probably weren't out there for the right reasons. Some of them actually got into a fight, you know, over, over really, the bullhorn. I mean, they had difference of opinion, but it was really, the bullhorn and the access to believe that they could direct a crowd or redirect the crowd. Later on the next day, there was a rally called downtown. And some of the same people that were down there that I felt were ineffective the first night, first night, were down there, speaking to the crowd and taking over the protests. And but this was not activists, this was a lot of young people that were protesting, a lot of these people knew Dreasjon Reed. And so when the older crowd and the, and the people that sometimes are seen as community leaders left, those young people stayed downtown, and they led themselves on a march around downtown that scared the hell out of IMPD and the city, because they didn't know which activist was leading them, which it was none of them. And they handled it themselves. To me that, it didn't get enough media coverage. I took tons of pictures. But to me, that was probably one of the best, most beautiful things I've ever seen in my life that they took it upon themselves. And it was some tense moments. I captured some of that in pictures of, of the standoff at Market Street and Pennsylvania, where the police had, had brought out the tear gas rounds and they were staring each other down and said that you're not going for another lap. But it ended up, it ended peacefully. And I felt like that was one of the most pure forms of protest because nobody was leading the march for, for any personal gain. They weren't, they didn't have a different agenda other than justice for Dreasjon Reed.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 44:33**

So thank you for sharing that you, you took pictures of that. I'm curious, would you be willing to share a few of those pictures, one or two of those pictures, for the archive so that we could upload it as part of the oral history but also as part of the story that we tell in the Journal of the Plague Year?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 44:51

Definitely.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 44:52

Outstanding. So you said that you've attended many, but this one in the wake of the killing of Dreasjon Reed. For the purpose of the archive, can you explain just maybe in one or two sentences, the Dreasjon Reed context for those who may not be familiar with who he is, what happened, why was there protests, why is this specific, related to Indianapolis or anything you can share in terms of a context?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 45:22

So May 6th, I believe, that would have been, think it was a Wednesday night. Dreasjon Reed was probably and possibly driving too fast on the highway, he got followed, actually by the police chief himself up Michigan Road for a while but the police chief broke off pursuit. And it just wasn't that big of a deal, but another, another IMPD officer picked up the pursuit and followed them all the way until 62nd and Michigan Road where Dreasjon Reed pulled over into a parking lot behind the building, parked his car and ran across Michigan Road. We said the officer then followed him and shot him at least 10 times. And Dreasjon Reed was on Facebook Live as the whole thing happened, and most people that could see the live could see that it was impossible for Dreasjon Reed to have posed a threat to this officer. So people were extremely upset and ready to take action. So that's the context from that, and this was before George Floyd.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 46:52

Thank you very much for that Indianapolis specific contest because this is in Indianapolis, Indiana. Okay, so that's one protest that you say you were attending, and can you share anything about any of the others? Have there been others? Have they all been here in Indianapolis that you attended? Or have you attended protests in other places?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 47:17

I've never attended protests anywhere else. Um, I've attended a lot here. I think there's a lot of other ones that went well. I think there's some that, that went really bad. I felt like that they were infiltrated by people that had an agenda that wasn't the crowd's agenda, particularly the governor's march, march to the governor's mansion, where some of the so called leaders came to the front with bull horns, and turned the crowd back, one block away from the governor's mansion. And we never actually got there. And then, and then had the police walk with us and, and hug the police and all this other nonsense. I was extremely displeased about that. And then last month when two IMPD officers recharged from that event response group, the same IMPD officers that would have been monitoring that governor's mansion protest, they walked back with us, a hundred of those people threatened to walk out over two IMPD officers being charged with battery and perjury for beating women during the protests. So I was, you know, I was upset at the time at the protests. I'm even more upset now looking at the just type of manipulation but also duplicity of the IMPD officers who, who sort of walked, tried to walk back home and armed with some of the protesters and hugged them, knowing that a couple of months later they would threaten to walk off their job because their, their fellow officers were held accountable, you know, for brutalizing somebody. I've been to several Indy10 protests that I felt went really well. I think the funniest one was, I want to say was two weeks ago, where it started out, the, it was just called a car protesting yoga. And basically a whole caravan of people drove up to the mayor's house, blocked off the street, and they did yoga for about an hour in front of

Mayor Hogshead's house. So that was very clever to me, and it was fun in a way that I had rarely seen from other protests. So I really enjoyed that even though I didn't go to the yoga ones.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 50:01**

So what motivated you to attend these protests?

**Wildstyle Paschall 50:07**

Um, I don't want to sound all high and mighty, but I'm 39 years old, and I'm offended that the people younger than me are having to protest this mess. It means that my generation didn't do what they should have been doing and neither did some of the generation before me. And so I feel it's my responsibility to get out there to hopefully make this a better world than what we've handed out to these young folks. It's embarrassing to me. And so I have to be out there to do my part. I have no excuses. Like I said, I don't have any kids, or anything like that. So there's no excuse for me not to be doing what needs to be done out here to make the city and its world a better place for the next generation.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 51:11**

So I heard you mentioned Indy10 Black Lives Matter. Can you tell me more information about that particular organization? Is it a member of, is it considered a Black Lives Matter movement chapter to your knowledge, or is it...?

**Wildstyle Paschall 51:36**

I, see I actually, I don't really know if they're considered... I mean, they're most definitely a Black Lives Matter chapter. I don't know that they have any affiliation with the National chapters, but they've been doing their work since 2014. And they are the de facto people that, through thick and thin, have been through it, they were taking heat long before IUPUI, or, or the governor was ever willing to say the words Black Lives Matter. And so you know, in my eyes, they're the de facto organization that, that handles these things. They've handled it before it was cool, before it was popular, and they've taken heat for it, and taken the bumps and the bruises from it. And, you know, so I support them, especially through all this this as much as possible, you know, in a support role. Too often with activists, or people who think they want to be activists that they want, they do it for the limelight, and that's not why I'm out there. I don't want the limelight. I think that comes with more responsibility than I'm prepared for. And I also don't want to interrupt progress, and they're doing great work right now. And so, you know, everybody that I feel is doing great work is going to get as much support as I can give them.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 53:10**

Are there other organizations that you're aware of that are engaged in racial movements for racial justice in Indianapolis or in Indiana at this present time?

**Wildstyle Paschall 53:25**

There are other organizations. I think it just depends on what capacity like, I mean, if we're talking about a street protest, then Indy10 is probably the one, the organization for that. I think if you're talking about other issues of policy around dealing with depression and poverty and everything else, there are other organizations that are specific, so you know, you got a lot of specialized organizations that do certain things, but you know, when it, when it comes to holding the Black Lives Matter mantle, that's, that's definitely Indy10. Years ago, another organization Don't Sleep was also a Black Lives Matter chapter, and they still exist, and they still do great work,



but it's around entrepreneurship and, and, you know, dealing with the other parts of building a better society for black and brown people.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 54:36**

I'm not sure, but I believe that you are frozen. And so I'm going to notate on the recording that we have gone for roughly 60 minutes, about an hour. And at this point, it seems as though Wildstyle is frozen. And now he has dropped off. Hopefully he will rejoin the interview. I'm going to give it a moment to see if he rejoins, so we can continue the interview. [silence] Hi, have you made it back? I see your name. Not sure if you have audio connected. You can say

**Wildstyle Paschall 55:39**

Can you hear me?

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 55:40**

Yes, now I can hear you. And

**Wildstyle Paschall 55:42**

Okay. Good.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 55:44**

And I can see you again. Okay.

**Wildstyle Paschall 55:46**

Okay. Yeah, I don't know what happened.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 55:49**

So I am noting in the recording that we had hit just about the 60 minute mark. And occasionally in these interviews, when we hit the 60 minute mark, we do have some connectivity challenges, so we'll keep pressing forward now-

**Wildstyle Paschall 56:08**

Okay.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 56:08**

-we have you back. I think it's a point where you dropped off though you were talking about Don't Sleep and other organizations that are doing work around movements for racial justice here in Indianapolis. Is there anything else that you'd like to share about other organizations in addition to Indy10 and Don't Sleep?

**Wildstyle Paschall 56:28**

Um, I would definitely say the Kheprw Institute, they've been doing the work for a long time and, but their work is the building work of the community. You know, you're not going to see Kheprw organize a street style protest, but they've definitely protested some other things in very creative ways. The way they build community, the Learning Tree in which I'm a part of also, does a lot of, of racial justice work in a, in a building type fashion. You have some, some organizations that are shifting towards making, fighting racism is one of the goals and the



Central Indiana Community Foundation is one of them, and their mission statement is to dismantle racism, systemic racism. So I mean, you have other organizations that are making changes at different levels, but with racism, racism exists at all levels. So there has to be somebody there fighting at all those levels, too.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 57:46

Oh, thank you. We're going to shift just a hair as we continue to think about and talk about the movement for racial justice. Can you, what can you tell me about the role of art in the movement for racial justice and or Black Lives Matter?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 58:01

It is, art is a, um, often overlooked, overlooked, overlooked tool in fighting for justice. One of the things that like as a photographer, I'm considered an artist, and I tried to take the best pictures of of the protests because I want people to see that people are fired up and, and demanding change. And so I do my best from an artistic lens to, to give that type of narrative and art, art is really storytelling. And so I think, you know, a couple of days ago, I put up a picture, I was coming back from [inaudible] ...off in the distance on the southeast side, which I don't go over that often, but it was new, it was lit up, it was a crane over it. It was like, at least six or seven stories in the air, in the night sky [audio breaking up] ...and when I got to South Avenue, I realized I knew what this was, this was the new jail. And so I pulled over into the parking lot, and I took a picture of it, and I did a write up and explained how I felt. Seeing this building that I said, you know, must be an expression of our, our power, wealth, and values as a society. With all this stuff going on with racial justice, I said this has to be the building that will house the downtrodden, the black and brown people, the impoverished people suffering from the effects systemic racism. And I put all of that and showed the picture of the jail, and I think, you know, people really kind of, it shocked a lot of people seeing like the imposing artistic picture that I took of the jail in the night sky with the moon above it. Like juxtaposing that with the reality that, that is what the jail is going to do. That is where people, black and brown people that are poor, that have dealt with the effects of systemic racism, that is what's going to house them here. And so that, that was part of my protest right there. And, you know, the Black Lives Matter mural downtown on Indiana Avenue, a lot of, it was very controversial, not just from people that don't believe Black Lives Matter, but from, from people that believe it should, that felt that this city didn't deserve it. You know, that we haven't made any substantive changes, and, you know, that our politicians haven't, haven't stopped the oppression that's going on, and they felt that we didn't deserve it. But when it was still a powerful statement, because as much as there hasn't been enough policy change, when those artists went down there to, to paint that mural, there were people that actively came up and tried to stop them, that there was security there to hold those people back to, to make sure that there was some type of order over the area. And there was people that came up with guns, there was people that came up yelling, and it only took a week for the mural to actually get defaced by someone. So that was, art, the art itself did not change. But the conversation on why, why and people that upset for, for black lives to matter for it to be written on a street for people to want to come up with guns or, or drive around terrorizing people to stop it. That was part of the reaction to it. And so I think people don't understand that art is storytelling, and public art drives conversation. So if you put a public art piece that is storytelling, you're driving now, the public is talking about the story that you put up, whether it's true, whether it's false, whether they agree or whether they disagree, you driven public conversation, and so that, that mural was a perfect example of driving public conversation towards black lives matter, and the topic, you know, doesn't matter here.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 1:03:03

So I'm going to, again, request that we have these photographs to be connected to the oral history, because you have self identified in this moment as an artist, correct?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 1:03:19

Yes.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 1:03:20

And that your artistic expression is related to your activism and that these expressions might be helpful to tell a deeper story, in terms of what you've just shared, and that would be the photograph of the jail in the night sky. It sounds like a photograph of the Black Lives Matter mural. And it sounds like a photograph of the protests, the yogi protesters, that you lifted up, and I believe there was one more but I'll have to check the transcription. But those specifically and any others that you would like to be included, again, in the COVID-19 Oral History Project and to go into perpetuity as far as, as far as the historical record of your activism and your art. Anything else that you'd like to tell us about your expressions, your artistic expressions related to your activism, and your connection to the movements for racial justice, specifically, Black Lives Matter. I'm going to shift...[inaudible] ...in a moment.

**Wildstyle Paschall** 1:04:29

Well, I mean, I've also done some writing. I wrote a piece that was published in New America, the New America blog, it was called Indiana Avenue: the Ethnic Cleansing of Black Indianapolis and that was, that was I'm not gonna say was Black Lives Matter in the the strict sense of what people think police brutality, but it was definitely Black Lives Matter when it comes to lives, culture, housing, quality of life. And I wanted to get that story out there for people to understand how we ended up here and how we've never come to grips with the, the effects of racism, not only from the, from the end of, you know, the end of the Civil War, but to stuff that only happened 50 years ago, or only happened 60 years ago. So, you know, I've done, done a bit of writing as well, so.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 1:05:42

And, again, any additional information you'd like to include in the archive, we'd love to have that. I know that the New America blog, it sounds like it's definitely something we can still have access to, for those who watch the recording, even if we don't have it included in the archive information. Just before we shift to the final conversation around leadership in the future, you mentioned being at the protests, you mentioned being near protesters. And I-, what about this still looming reality of COVID-19? Were you concerned about exposure to COVID-19? Did anyone at the protests say anything about exposure to COVID-19?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 1:06:24

I was concerned. I didn't, I mean, especially the, the early protests in May around Dreasjon Reed, I was concerned, I was, I was was torn on that. Not so much about my own safety, but I didn't want, want it to end up being a this just huge outbreak after the protests, and it ended up not being that. And I think a lot of it, you know, a lot of experts have said that the protests didn't lead to outbreaks because they were outdoors. Most of us had masks on. And so it wasn't as big of an issue as people would have thought. And then at the, at the protests, there were also people that were handing out masks and made, I remember that, that was the first one. The next day after Dreasjon Reed was, was killed when they had to rally downtown, there were people passing out masks, and I took pictures of my buddy, he brought his own masks down there and passed them out to people. And I think that was the difference. And then the later protests as mass became more available, when they would call, you know,

put out a call to action to come down there for a protest, they said, bring a mask, and so people did that. So I think that, that had a great positive effect on, on keeping everybody safe, and not causing an outbreak because, because of a protest for racial justice.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 1:08:08

Thank you for that. So I am very much wanting to honor your time. And I know we requested about 90 minutes of your time, and so I'm acknowledging we have about 14 minutes remaining in our time together. And so I want to ask a few questions about leadership and future and then any closing questions and anything else you'd like to share in the time we have together. Has your experience transformed how you think about your family, your friends, community and society? And if so, in what ways?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 1:08:45

I would say yes. I think in some ways, you don't take all of that for granted as much knowing that COVID hasn't been as bad as it could have been. It's been bad, but it hasn't been as bad as it could have been. And, but I worry greatly about my 86 year old grandmother. I worry about my parents, they're in their 60s. My dad's 65. And so, you know, it makes you think more about, about those, I have older friends that have a mentor that he's got to be close to his late 70s. He's definitely in his late 70s now, maybe 80. And we talked on the phone the other day, and he talked about that him and his wife did get COVID-19, and it wasn't that bad for him. I mean, he's, he's got good genes, his father is still alive, actually. And so he's got good genes and everything, but it just makes you concerned and makes you, you know, think about how much all those people mean, mean to you. Also, it makes you think about how, what the economic effects, how all the people that, that are around you how close to the margins are already on the margins that they may be, you know, when they're dealing with the effects, or they're telling you about their, their situation on how they don't know how they're going to pay their rent, or they haven't eaten, or they haven't, you know, they can't afford to go to a dentist, you know, even a low cost dentist or something, but are in excruciating pain. And so, you know, all of that, you know, kind of is sobering. It's definitely sobering.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 1:11:04

And how have municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded to the outbreak in your opinion?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 1:11:15

Um, I would say that there are people in city government that have tried to do a good job, but also think that largely, I don't think city government has done enough. I think that, particularly with the eviction crisis going on in Indianapolis, that this was a situation in the making for years. We've, you know, I've been looking into writing an article about it, and I learned that it may have been 40,000 people that attempted to apply for Section Eight the last time it opened, which was in 2016. And, and our city leaders have allowed this situation to exist for all this time. And now with COVID, now that we have all this, this going on, now we're looking at the effects that things are really bad that, that people really are being evicted that they didn't really have a chance, they should have already been on Section Eight and should have been receiving affordable housing. And when we look at the situation going on with the, uh, the building boom in Indianapolis. The Indianapolis Business Journal describes Indianapolis is having a historic building boom last year, and yet we have all these people that are being evicted this year. So it's real clear that the haves are having less and the people that have been doing good, are doing better. And now COVID is exposing it in a worse way, and I'm sad about that. I don't think the city leaders have

realized that their own policies have caused the situation, and therefore, they haven't put enough policy into rectifying the problems that COVID is causing, and you have this, this much poverty. It put everybody at risk for, for being economically destroyed with the COVID-19. And so I think we need to work harder as a city, not just not just the city government itself, but our nonprofits and everybody that interface as well. I feel like we have to work harder to fix this.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 1:13:52

So what do you imagine your life will be like in a year?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 1:14:00

I don't know. COVID-19 and the year 2020 has shown that you don't know what's going to happen to anything, to anybody at anytime in anyway. So next year, I don't, I don't know. I don't know what, I don't know what the conversation is going to be next year. I hope the conversation is going to be how we fix this mess. You know, are figuring out okay, well, we're, we're putting the policies in place. This is working or that's not working. I hope we're not still at the stage we're at now where we're still acting like we don't know what to do.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 1:14:46

And so with the difficulty of thinking about a year from now, can you, can you project anything about five years from now or...?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 1:15:00

Um, five years from now, I still want to be an artist of some kind, doing some music, photography. I would love to do architecture, not, maybe not as a career, but I would love to design, help design some, some, some residential housing of some sort, not skyscrapers or anything like that. But I'll definitely would like to design some things. And, you know, hopefully, I'm not all stressed out and bothered that, that's my hope for, for five years from now.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 1:15:47

Thank you. Knowing what you know now, what do you think that individuals, communities, or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 1:16:04

They need to keep in mind for the future that having people, leaving people teetering on the margins, just so that they can make a little bit more profit will come back to bite. And I hope they look at the numbers from COVID-19 to go do that. From a moral perspective, I hope people get it, but this just country wasn't founded on morals. It was, it was founded on, on hate for taxation and monetary policy that the British were having. So hopefully people will learn that a little bit of money spent on prevention side making sure that we don't have people teetering on poverty, we don't have all these people that probably should be in some type of affordable housing program that teetering with, with Slumlords that are fleecing them, that if something happens, like COVID-19, and something like this will happen again, of course. That had you put a, you know, ounce in the prevention, then when something like this happens, you would have had a pound of, more than a pound of cure to get back out of it. And I think this is hopefully a wake up call to everyone that feels like well, it's not society's responsibility to, to worry about, about people that are being destroyed by it because eventually, when it gets bad enough, it will be,

and it's going to cost you more money. And even if you don't care about about human beings, hopefully you can care it, you can care-, care about saving money.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 1:18:06

Well, I want to thank you again for your time. In closing, if there's anything else that you'd like us to talk about, related to the Black Lives Matter movement, COVID, your experience of it. But then also, if you can think of any other people that I should be interviewing for this project, any groups, any people, any organizations that come to mind that you would recommend?

**Wildstyle Paschall** 1:18:33

Um, I do. Um, Pam Ross, the Vice President of Equity and Inclusion at the Central Indiana Community Foundation. I would say anybody from Indy10 Black Lives Matter. Maybe D Ross, founder of the Ross Foundation, and you know, there's a lot of other people, but those definitely come to mind.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 1:19:10

Well, that's very helpful. I want to thank you again for taking about 90 minutes of your time today. I do know how busy you are with all of the many hats that you wear and so really grateful for you saying yes. And this concludes our interview. I'm going to turn the recording off at this time.

**Wildstyle Paschall** 1:19:35

Okay.