

# Arialle Smith Oral History, 2022/03/17

**Interviewee:** Arialle Smith

**Interviewer:** Kit Heintzman

**Date:** 03/17/2022

**Location (Interviewee):** Spartanburg, North Carolina

**Location (Interviewer):**

**Transcriber:** Sally Velez

**Abstract:** Some of the things we discussed include: Starting a business during the pandemic as a doula and photographer of newborns. Support for mothers during pregnancy, birthing, and post-partum in the pandemic; support for pregnant women of color as public health. Pandemic babies. Safety precautions when meeting with mothers: virtual meetings, meetings outside, meetings with masks. Understaffing in hospitals; hospitals visitor/guest policies. The potential long term impact of pandemic stress on mothers, and impacts on fetuses/babies; WWII bombing in Japan and its impact on mothers, fetuses, and babies; wondering about Russia and Ukraine. Medical racism and pregnancy; experiments on enslaved women; origins of American gynecology; distrust of doctors. Pressure for expediency in hospital births: inductions, cesareans; financial incentives for doctors to push surgery. Knowing 2 women who almost died during childbirth during the pandemic; recovery from traumatic birthing experiences. Power hierarchies in medicine: doula, midwives, nurses, general practitioner physicians, obstetricians, etc. Mothering a young daughter (4-years-old at time of interview) during the pandemic; observations about daughter's changing behavior during the pandemic. Schools as social environments; children's milestones having been pushed back. Teaching dance online from home; competing studios anti-masking policies. Going to first big, outdoor event. Holistic views of health and healthcare. Social media and the decline of health in the United States. Guns. How injustices in the United States limit experiences of safety as a Black woman, concerns about having a Black son in the USA. Health as wealth. Race, gender, and vaccination in children. Diet, exercise, vitamins, and the immune system. The problems with the partisan binary; the 2020 election and social media. Family planning: not wanting to raise a child in chaos. Feminism and breastfeeding; population control, racism, and eugenics. Breastmilk as medicine. The myth of race. The environment's health, global warming, mistreatment of the land; Native Americans, stolen land, pipeline. Christianity; faith as an anchor; scripture; needing a savior. Taking time for selfcare American privilege; the shock to the system to have a crisis so severe happening in the USA, rather than somewhere else in the world.

**Kit Heintzman 00:02**

Hello.

**Arialle Smith 00:04**

Hi.

**Kit Heintzman 00:06**

Would you please start by stating your full name, the date, the time and your location?

**Arialle Smith 00:10**

So I am Arialle Kennedy Smith. It is 10:05am. It's March 17 2022, and I am in Spartanburg, South Carolina.

**Kit Heintzman 00:28**

And do you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under Creative Commons License Attribution Noncommercial Sharealike?

**Arialle Smith 00:37**

Yes, I do. I did-

**Kit Heintzman 00:42**

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 coming from?

**Arialle Smith 00:51**

Um, so I am a mother, I'm a wife, I'm a doula. And I've always found myself at the intersection of serving my community, and working with families from more of a nurturing perspective. I've been working with children, honestly, since I was 18. And so that's been about 18 years now. And I've been able to kind of see the progression of both babies to children, adolescents, young adults, teenagers. And to from from like, it seemed like there was a transition in the ages, eve- especially from when I grew up. And and so I feel like this time and during this season, during this time, during the pandemic, it's definitely has brought on some different challenges and different changes. In, in our society, particularly around those areas, concerning children concerning giving birth. There's definitely some things that I've seen and have experienced firsthand when considering the changes that the pandemic has brought, brought about. And yeah, I really, I really think that now, with the advancement of this age, and we have so much access to information and technology, I still find that the holistic practices that I'm able to participate in and to employ with my clients is still superior to anything that has come out. A lot of my mom's come to me, initially they came because at one time at the start of the pandemic they couldn't have a partner there with them in the room, and then it became they could have a partner and then they couldn't have a doula. And now we're back to we can have a partner and a doula because staff quickly realized how helpful doulas truly are and how helpful partners truly are, and how understaffed, they are as well. And there's a certain ratio and protocol that they have, where you should only serve as a certain amount of patients per nursing staff. And a lot of them were overworked and overtired and realize that they needed the extra help of doulas and partners. And so just seeing women even navigate those anxieties. I don't know what the statistics are, I don't know, you know, I know what stress can do to the body. And so, you know, I'm cur- when we look back what the statistics are in terms of miscarriages. There's been a lot of preterm babies as well as perinatal mood disorders, and things like that. Because when, when we're stressed our brains are really, really tired. And when you're pregnant, it's that all the more and so I hope that I answered your questions because I can literally dive into each thing like all the more from what I'm seeing as a doula working both in hospitals and home births as well, which is a completely different experience, by the way.

**Kit Heintzman 04:36**

Oh, I want to know so much more about everything you just said.

**Arialle Smith 04:40**

Right

**Kit Heintzman** 04:41

I got to make a more specific question request. Would you tell me sort of some of the stories of what it's been like for you, assisting mothers pre pandemic and then how that shifted into the sort of different moments with the different restrictions that you were just describing.

**Arialle Smith** 04:59

So, so my gauge is really, I began during the pandemic. And so, um, so lots of stress. And that, well, no, there, there has been a lot of stress because now particularly with women of color, you know, women are four to five times more likely to die during childbirth. And that, you know, I have to make sure that that is the correct statistic, but it is an astronomical crazy amount. And so, now with articles coming out, and we also wonder if the chances are even greater because of the pandemic, because there, the doctors are, you know, being pulled in many different directions with a lot of people. I'm in South Carolina. So there's been a lot of people migrating into the upstate, which makes me think that when it comes to more personable care, it creates more of a challenge when you have so many people in such an influx, and then pandemic babies. So there are lots of people who are having babies. And so I kind of wonder how effective, how, how the practices can provide, like a true like personable and effective care when there's so many people, the numbers were already dwindling kind of before. But even now, with the challenge of having to treat more clients, more patients, I'm curious to see what the statistics will be, you know, in the next five years. And so what I have seen, there have been there's, you know, miscarriages, there have been more so preterm babies, the popular now is inductions, so induc-the the amount of recommended inductions have also gone up, I feel like every mom that I know, and that's the reasoning for inductions has been. And this is what I've heard a doctor saying and few doctors say we're finding that the placenta is having a hard time making it to 40 weeks, and therefore we have to induce you. And so a lot of moms have been scared into inductions. Because obviously, if the placenta doesn't work, then that can pose a real threat to a baby. And so a lot of them are scared. So I learned at a training the other day that our brains are really, really tired because of the pandemic. And so with that kind of layer on top, like I'm concerned about carrying my child to full term, I'm just going to, you know, fall prey to whatever the doctors are, let you know, telling me that I need to do because I don't, I want to be a great parent, I don't wanna lose my child. And so a lot of these women are now doing elected inductions. But what many don't understand is that when you do have an induction, and induction is only as successful as the staff that is serving you so that they have, and induction can be long. So if you've have a staff, that's very patient, and they're not trying to do a cascade of interventions within the first 24 hours, then inductions had been found to be effective. But it really does depend on the provider. And it's kind of like the luck of the draw, because many practices have a rotation of doctors. And not all doctors have the same kind of ideals and beliefs and practices. So the reality of that is, is that not only do we have an influx of inductions, we also have an increase of C-sections. And a C-section is a major major surgery. And it's not anything to be taken lightly as well, because there's also a special care that should be put in place for moms after C-sections. And that is where you can lose a mother, not necessarily during childbirth, but you can also lose the mother shortly thereafter. And if they don't have the proper care, because we're worried about the other numbers that we have to treat, then there's a chance of a mother losing her life. And I do know at least two women who almost lost their life during birth during the pandemic because of them just not really being seen as a person and more so as a number.

**Kit Heintzman** 09:40

To the extent that you can while attentive to anonymity and privacy, would you share something about those women so that like to provide a historian access to like the reality of this?

**Arialle Smith** 10:02

Yeah. I think one of the things that I've found significant about one woman in particular, and so, I'm gonna try my best to say it in a way that's not like...

**Kit Heintzman** 10:16

I want to be clear, you don't have to say anything in any particular way.

**Arialle Smith** 10:21

Okay, okay

**Kit Heintzman** 10:21

Like, it's an oral history, the only thing that historian wanting to like listening to this once is you-

**Arialle Smith** 10:29

Truth.

**Kit Heintzman** 10:29

So as you like.

**Arialle Smith** 10:30

Right, right, okay. Well, what I, what I found to be interesting in this particular situation, and what I find to be interesting when I work with professionals, especially those who are in healthcare, this particular couple like husbands and MD, she, she also's professor, engineer, very, very brilliant people, very bright people. Yet, when it came down to childbirth, and when they were in the room, really had a hard time with their provider, one because the provider that they were given only half certificate and obstetrics. And so I mean that first, first of all, I was just like, why would you expect for someone who doesn't specialize in obstetrics, they just have a certificate in it to be a candidate for anyone, whether they were professional people or not. Everyone deserves care and proper care. And so this study had been pushing for hours and hours and hours and hours, her uterus was tired. She had she and she did have an epidural, which can also present its own cascade of problems. She was pushing. And then after she, she ended up having to get an emergency C-section. And when she came back, she lost a lot of blood, she began hemorrhaging. And they thought maybe it was because she had been pushing for so long, and that it caused some strain on a uterus, uterus. Usually you give a woman Pitocin after she's given birth, and I know, I wasn't there so I'm not sure why, why she ended up having she ended up hemorrhaging. What I do know is that she did hemorrhage. They told the nurse that looks like a lot of blood. They were, the nurse was like, oh, she's fine, just go ahead and go to sleep. My mom just so happened to be in there who was a nurse also. So she was also there during birth. She said, no, someone needs to look at her now. And she she ended up getting a blood transfusion. And if she would have went to sleep, I'm not sure if she would have woken up. And so the reason why I know that and I

say it wasn't there was because she hired me on as a doula because of her first experience. Because she almost died. And she literally had gotten to like nine centimeters, she was pushing the baby, but she had someone there who wasn't really trained. And hadn't had all the different kinds of scenarios support from to really help her problem solve in that moment when an issue presented itself. And so, um, you know, we talked to that, and obviously, it was very frustrated and sadden for her and most people know, when you have a traumatic birth, when you have a second birth, you have to work through that trauma, because you usually get stuck at the same point that you got stuck at the last time. Your body remembers, the body keeps count, we know that it stores in our nervous system. And if you know we don't, we, we kind of had to talk through doing that work. You know, even if it was just talking through it, talking to a therapist, even going to a chiropractic- chiropractor, because we also hold emotions, trauma in our, in our womb that were, were our center is for the woman, the uterus or womb, that is our center. And so if you have trauma there and if it's not released, it is show up and so we released that, and it took it, took it took a while and then when it came time for birth it, it, it still took some days for a second birth. It took her a long time to kind of get into that mindset and she did she had a baby vaginally, even though the baby was sunnyside up which is, was another interesting situation. But um, she ended up having the birth that she wanted. Because, because of holistic care and practices and also just, you know, changing some things mentally surrounding birth and working through that, that trauma. And it can happen to anyone, you've seen it in the news where there have been doctors who passed away during childbirth. And I think what it is, is that we, they, what I see on the outside looking into a system is that providers are trained, they're trained, they respect the training, because I think that was one of the questions that was asked, you know, like, even this last couple, like, having a doctor and a nurse present, and then her also being an engineer. Even if you don't specialize, even if you specialize in medicine, you don't specialize in certain areas, you really don't know what to look for. And you would think that you would hold someone elses position in the room onto some kind of regard. But if you have a professional, healthcare professional, who does not either respect your position, or wants to get over, I mean, they can because the thing that made me sad was that they had people in the room that was trusting their, the other person's practice, they were trusting their training, they were trusting they will, she has seen the medicine. You know, they take the Hippocratic Oath, you know, what they are dedicated to, I don't know what it is, but protect and serve their community. You know, that sounds like more like police officers, but I'm sure it's the same idea where, you know, I respect the oath that you took, that you took. And I feel like for some people, however, that is demonstrated is relative, honestly, and yeah, I've had some clients that have also come to me, I had one client whose OB dropped her as a patient because she told him that she wanted to give birth with midwives. And he would, he basically was very upset with her and wanted her to get a real doctor a real provider. And so there's that dynamic there as well. Between some doctors and midwives, or doctors that respect midwives and there are doctors that don't feel like midwives are real. And even though midwives, particularly certified nurse midwives are just as trained as doctors are, they go to, they go to nursing school, they specialize in midwifery. And they are highly trained individuals, particularly if they do the nurse midwifery route. And that's, you know, there's a long dark history with obstetrics and how it even got its beginnings, and a lot of doctors don't know that obstetrics began with midwifery, particularly the granny midwives of the South. And there's a you know, the father of obstetrics, his name is J. Marion Smith. And he had access to 11 slave women and he practice obstetrics on them he practice cesareans on them without any anesthesia. That's how he made his groundbreaking, his groundbreaking findings on, on maternal health that we have today. So it's interesting how doctors don't

have respect for midwives, but it came from midwifery. There's, if you don't know a lot about the J. Marion Smith story, I encourage people to research who he is and how he came to find the things that he found. Because it's true, a true act of terrorism. completely terrible. What do you did to those slave women. And so, which is why I know I keep talking, which is why there's such a mistrust between particularly women of color and obstetricians because that, of that trauma of even how obstetrics got its beginnings. It, it was founded in a very dark place. And so it's very hard for women of color, particularly to trust doctors.

**Kit Heintzman** 19:36

Would you share more about the power dynamics that go on between patients, doulas, midwives and physicians?

**Arielle Smith** 19:46

Oh, yeah. So in my town, there are doctors that are pro doulas. There are doctors that are anti doulas. There are doulas here that are. Um, so there are they have some doulas that are, are a part of particular hospitals. And there are some that practice holistic care there, that are, there are some that are government funded, which can make all the difference when it comes to how you receive care, which is what I know for a fact, from working with moms because I've, I've had some clients who worked with doulas that were recommended by a hospital. And then I've had those same moms that decided to work with me because they wanted a different experience. There are some doctors that don't like to list, and they're not and said also don't like chiropractors, because it's preventative care. When a woman elects to have a C-section the doctor gets paid an extra eight to \$10,000 more. And so there are doctors who have been practicing for a long time. And it becomes a money making machine. That's why, that's where it got its beginning. We saw okay, you know, women are having, you know, women are having their babies in the house. So going back to what I was talking about earlier, women were having their children at home, which means it was more cost efficient for them. And so what happened was, they demonize midwifery. They demonize that kind of practice. And that is what, that fear caused for a lot of women to run to the hospitals. And so there's that dynamic there, we're going to demonize the midwives, don't go to a midwife might die with the midwife, midwives are nasty. And that, that was what was used in the media and the media at that time was newspaper and pamphlets. So they would send that out so people would come to the hospital don't and what they did with the midwives when the midwives were all out of work, they made the midwives nurses. And so, um, and you kind of see that dynamic today, where you have doctors that really just don't care if a midwife is, especially if they're CPM, they're Certified Professional Midwives. And because Certified Professional Midwives don't usually do the medical route, and they are trained under someone. And, and they, whoever trains them, they can only go as high as their training. And so if you're not trained really, really well as a Certified Professional Midwife there are some risks involved with that kind of training because your training is only as extensive as the person who trained you. But then you have the midwives who do the medical route. And they do have that extensive training and they understand some things down to like the bloodwork, they understand the science of you know why pre-eclampsia is very, you know, serious or having diabetes during pregnancy, things like that, like they understand it from a scientific level. And so, but what I, what I see is even from my personal experience, I've seen that there's just kind of like, not having any respect for midwives, and then have also understood that even when there are midwives that work in the hospital, even some of the nurses have taken on some of that behavior

where they're talking down on the midwives. And so I think there's just this dynamic that has existed since years ago that have kind of spilled over until today. And when it comes to doulas, doulas aren't medically trained. So we're at the bottom of the tot-totem pole, but depending on your training, so I was I'm a certified holistic doula. And I was trained by a doula who worked in the hospital, had an extensive understanding of how the system work. She also had been a doula for five years and worked with all kinds of families, and really just brought all those stories and her experiences together, to and, and then her different trainings from other training programs, and created her own because she wanted more of a holistic, full perspective, and so from that I learned about the different dynamics that exist in different hospital systems here in our town. And how to doula families of color, you know, differently than other families that I may doula and even just the dynamics that we may experience there which, you know, you can see sometimes even in the hospital system and so, um, yes, there are some doctors don't prefer doulas. I've never had an experience where that doctor was completely dismissive of me. Not blatantly, but more so they might have their back turned to me or they might only speak to the, the client, and they may not even acknowledge even the partner because if you have an agenda, any other voices, like me from my observation could pose a threat. And again, like I said, it's preventative care. And so what I do is I give, you know, most moms who come to me, they don't want a C- section. So I give them strategies on how to avoid that. One of them being that laying in the bed. And so now you'll go to hospitals and like, they'll try to keep a mom in the bed, because, you know, they know that gravity is the best thing for birth, walking around, sitting on a ball, keeping your mind, your mind in a great space, if you're confined to a bed, for some women, that can be torture, not only to their body, but mentally. And so. And usually, if a woman's laying on a bed, and she's having these contractions and she's gonna have an epidural, so then she has to really lay in the bed and we just have to hope and pray that her body progresses and she pushes the baby out. And so a lot of that just don't like doulas because of prevention. But then there are some doulas that are, some doctors that are pro doulas, because usually women who have doulas tend to have a shorter labor, which is usually what also matters for them. I feel like well, if I'm going to be here, I don't want to be here for a long time. And if I'm going to be here for a long time, and I want to intervene to kind of speed things up. If I want to speed things up, may as well make some more money. And so that's just been kind of like my, my observation when it comes to that because, because I, I see a way that dynamic between doulas and doctors and midwives and even Chiropractors is a little bit of like a tug of war of power and control, for lack of better words. So yeah.

**Kit Heintzman** 27:22

What does the word pandemic mean to you?

**Arielle Smith** 27:27

Um, pandemic, you know, I never looked up the word. Something that spreads. But what I'm seeing, pandemic is representing, has represented a true like virus, not only like in sickness, but like in mindset. A pandemic, there's been a pandemic of fear. I felt the pandemic has brought on a lot of like stress, a lot of mental strain, even our children, it's projected that our children won't progress, like their milestones have been pushed back, because they, they didn't have that social interaction. Which is interesting. So I feel like pandemic is kind of like spread different kinds of things. Not only virus, viruses of like a physical virus but like a virus of the mind during the pandemic, all of a sudden access to social media, to media well, which I felt like brought some great changes but also brought out the worst and,

and when it came to injustices. Yeah, and I, and I feel like it caused a lot of mental strain for a lot of people, a lot of people. So I think that's what the pandemic means for me, or to me. But again, for me also the pandemic bought out a new opportunity, because that's when I started my doula business. So I'm just kind of wanted to be a soundboard for moms who are stressed out or who felt like they needed more support wanted just a caring, nurturing presence during the most scary experience during this time. And so that's kind of been a blessing in disguise. But um, but yeah.

**Kit Heintzman 29:40**

What was it like starting a small business during that pandemic?

**Arialle Smith 29:44**

Starting my Doula business. I mean, it was easy for me. I'm thankful that like when you're called to do something, it just kind of happens, it kind of just opens up for you. And I did my training got my certificate and I had my client within like the first few months. And it's be- it hasn't stopped ever since. I've also, I'm also a newborn photographer so I've been taking photos of the babies as well, they're after they are born or, you know, sometimes I'll do a client and then they'll bring their, their baby. But it's been, it's been, it's been great. It's been fine. Um, it wasn't too hard. There are some hospitals that still don't accept doulas so that can be in- that was interesting. Like if I had a client that gave birth at a particular hospital that didn't accept doulas I couldn't take them on, and they just had to trust that the care that they would get would be sufficient. And then you realize, you know, you can't help and serve everyone. Like, I would love to, I would love to help everyone if I could, I would. But um, there's some hospitals that still aren't serving everyone. And so some of these moms have to choose between the hospital and extra care.

**Kit Heintzman 31:13**

What are some of the ways that you support and serve mothers?

**Arialle Smith 31:17**

So the way that I, I work with my mom, so a doula supports a mother emotionally, physically, spiritually, and I meet with my mothers, two, two to three times throughout their pregnancy starting in the second trimester. One of the things that we go over I do like an intake form, I get their wishes, how they want the hospital to feel, they, they give birth in the hospital, like what do they want to see? What do they want to feel? We kind of like go through like the five senses. And I get an idea of how I can really like serve them, because not everyone likes the same thing. I give them strategies. So I'll give them questions on what to ask their providers, sometimes they have questions too like, they may not understand the hospital, the medical jargon, and I'll give them insight to what some of those things may mean. There are some first time parents that literally like have never like held a baby before. So they have no idea of what it's like to give birth, to be a parent, and so kind of provide just a little bit of like education when it comes to, comes to that, you know, this is the first stage of life versus the second stage, this is a transitional stage. If you want to breastfeed your child, these are some strategies that, that you should employ prior to giving birth so that she can have an effective feeding method once your baby arrives, because breastfeeding is hard. And so we're fortunate to have some, some amazing lactation consultants here in the upstate. And I usually send my clients, I encourage them to make an appointment with them so that they can get some training one on one, as as both birthing body and



partner. And so a lot of times, I'm giving them strategies on how to have an effective birth, and then postpartum strategy for postpartum as well. And so that is support during their prenatal phase, I might give them additional like nutrition guides as well. And we do comfort measures. So how to cope with those labor pains as they come because they are definitely strong surges. And if you don't know how to breathe, you don't know how to even just shift your mindset to release your baby. It can feel like torture. So I kind of give them some strategies concerning giving birth. I also, for postpartum talk about what they want it to look like, what they want that to feel like to and how can their partner or family like support them. During the pandemic, there are a lot of people that weren't opting for having visitors. So for mom and for new parents and for parents in general, that can be a lot it can be a lot to not have that support. But a lot of there were some opportunity for postpartum care there as well from postpartum doulas and so, which I got trained in as well. But during the, to during my, my doula practice started at the pandemic, during my doula practice I kind of just go through like the overall picture with them. We kind of come up with goals and my goal is to help them move towards those goals.

**Kit Heintzman 35:02**

When you're meeting with them during the pandemic, what was that? Like? Did you meet outside? Did you talk about safety beforehand? What were you? How, how was the pandemic complicated the meeting in a way that might not in another time?

**Arialle Smith 35:16**

Yeah. So at first some people were like into like the whole virtual idea. There was like a whole shift towards, let's try virtual services, but it's not the same. We did some things virtually, like I would do maybe like my first meeting virtually. And then as people became more comfortable towards the top of 2021 I would meet in their homes with a mask, we would be distance, there will be some people who just were completely like uncomfortable. And then I, you know, we could, we would meet outside. But we all eventually knew we would have to be inside. And I mean, even now to this day, like I still wear a mask in the hospital room. And so, meeting, meeting times are different. And we would meet however the client felt comfortable, but of course, it's kind of weird not seeing people's faces. Because I mean, here you don't know that I'm (inaudible), you know, like, I can be smiling and like you just have no idea of like, what kind of personality I really have. And so I think for me, it was challenging to find ways to connect. Yeah, it was challenging to find ways to connect and so I would try to at least do one Zoom because then we can actually see each other's faces. And there are people who are still using that option that or FaceTime. But meeting during the pandemic wasn't, it wasn't like, completely, like, shut off at first I believe it was, but then people became more open, especially surrounding breath, because it's like, hey, like, I need the support, and we're just gonna have to like make it happen.

**Kit Heintzman 37:04**

You had mentioned you are a mother, may I ask how old your children are?

**Arialle Smith 37:08**

Yes, I am. She's three. Oh, no, I'm no, she just turned four. Actually. She just turned four. Yeah, she's four years old. And she spent like the first. Well, wait. Yeah, the last two years. At the start of the pandemic, it was different for her. We were inside a lot. We played outside. We just tried to find different things for her to do. She had to celebrate her birthday indoors by herself. It was really sad that for her,

but yeah, she's three to one, I'm sorry, she's four, she just turned four. I'm used saying she's three, she just turned four. And she's, she is a little riot. But when I gave birth to her, which I can go by off of my experience, I did a birth center with midwives. And it was great. I didn't have a doula at the time, although I wish I did. I had to do it I spoke with but I didn't have one with me, then I had my, my husband too, was a doula that but um, it was. It was great. It was great. It was great to that point. During the pandemic, there was a rise in home births. Because a lot of women didn't want the cascade of interventions, and then they felt like it was safer and healthier for them to have their babies at home versus in the hospital because they didn't want to be exposed to COVID. Because we still didn't know how it worked. And so there was a, a, a, as a deep increase in humberts. I still, I attended some home births there was still hospital births that I attended more than home births. But I know at large the numbers went up drastically.

**Kit Heintzman 39:04**

Do you think your daughter understands what's happening with the pandemic?

**Arialle Smith 39:10**

I don't know she understands, she, I, well, we put her back in school. Um, she knows to wear a mask. So I think wearing a mask has just kind of become a thing. Um, I'm not sure if the uncertainty has, has gotten to her. She has become more of a nail biter, which I noticed. So sometimes I wonder if that's something that has shown up as a result of like, things, you know, changing because we started out not wearing masks. And now we have to wear a mask. And now we have to wash our hands and but we've since put her back in school because we realized that she needed that social element. I was nervous, but my husband was, he was very fixed on her getting a social aspect. And then we put her in dance class and acting classes as well. So she would have some sort of like, normalcy, and then met so midst of this, and yeah, we, we realized that it was very much needed for her. But I don't think she, we never talked about the virus around her, just because I didn't want her to be conscious of it. I'm sure she was, I'm sure she had some consciousness but I just didn't want it to be like a thing where she was afraid of something that we couldn't protect her from.

**Kit Heintzman 40:37**

Would you tell me a little bit about how you've been making decisions for yourself during the pandemic and a sort of compare and contrast what your life looked like before versus what your life looks like now in a kind of day to day level.

**Arialle Smith 40:58**

They now become a little bit more relaxed. At first we stayed in the house a lot. I even ordered my groceries. I sprayed my groceries before I put them in the refrigerator, would wipe stuff down. We took our vitamins every single day, made sure we got outside for some sun. And I also have a dance studio so then I had to teach my classes from my home, offered virtual classes. It was a lot, like it was a lot, so when it initially started I began taking all the necessary like precautions. And then, as time went on, I was like, I mean this to me, it wasn't sus-sustainable to almost be encaged. I still would wear my mask going out, didn't go out to eat as much still like I, I, that was on hold as well. So I did, I didn't then go out to eat to restaurants. But like we would do outdoor activities. So I took my daughter like to the zoo, we will take it to the playground from time to time, but even still limited that interaction as well, because I

heard I could spread the virus even on the playground. We, we eventually implemented some normal things, bit by bit. And, you know, we did, I did some newborn shoots. It got a slow start I think because of the pandemic, I started offering newborn photography during the pandemic. And I would have it here in there not, not so much because people are scared, they're scared for the babies, and I get it. But even that, like I've started to see a little bit of an influx of abit, people just kind of like, okay, you know, we're just gonna move through this, I went to a town in a neighboring city and no one was wearing masks, and I, I felt like an outsider because I was wearing my mask. So I still choose to wear mine. Just because I just feel like it's safer for me for now. Um, and then there are times where I'll go to a restaurant, and obviously I can't eat with a mask on. So like, I'll just take my mask off and eat. It's just, it's just kind of weird. It's like, I will wear masks 24/7 or we don't, you know. And there's times when I wear a mask, and it doesn't, it doesn't make sense, you know, because I'm like, well, I know, I'm gonna go somewhere like 10 minutes later. And I might take my mask off, you know, because I'm not around as many people. So and even in my dance studio, my kids are still wearing their masks, but they'll go outside, and then they'll get something to drink. And they'll take their masks down. So it is kind of weird kind of navigating what's really right, because people are still getting sick, whether or not they wear masks. And then just try to navigate the best way I can go to the I go to the grocery store, and I don't order it as much. And we're out a little bit more than normal. I went to a big event twice now. Excuse me. And I did wear a mask. I was a little bit nervous about it but I was just kind of like gah. I just wanted to see what it would be like to be out and not wearing a mask and was fine, you know. So it just depends on like how I'm feeling in the moment.

**Kit Heintzman** 44:48

What's it like teaching dance online?

**Arielle Smith** 44:51

Terrible, it's horrible. I hate it. The kids don't like it either. And my little kids didn't like it. And I got a lot, I lost some students because they were doing school virtually. And their going from virtual school or virtual dance and that wasn't as fun, and it wasn't, it didn't keep their attention. And there were some studios that were very anti and they kept their studios open and they were anti mask. And some kids prefer to go there. But for me at the time, my stance was I want, I want to protect your kids as much as possible. And for me, that was having virtual classes until I figured out what I wanted to do for the fall. And for that fall, we ended up- so I think March through August we had virtual classes and then when we came back we were in person but with masks and distance as much as possible too. But um, it wasn't great. Because teaching on Zoom, particularly with music, there was a delay and like it's just hard. You can't tell. When you're trying to choreograph a group dance and someones camera is like kind of lagging behind and you can't tell, they can't tell they're left from their right. Smaller kids. It's like we're just offering a movement class at this point. Cause we were offering dance classes and was still trying to choreograph for recital.

**Kit Heintzman** 46:24

Do you remember when you first heard about COVID-19?

**Arialle Smith 46:28**

I did, one of my students. One of my students actually told me about it. March is when it hit. She told us about it in January and February because she saw it on the news. And she was like, did you hear what's happening in China? And I was like, girl, no, I, don't talk about it. Like I don't, we don't want it to come over here. It's not gonna come over here. And you know, things usually happen in other places and not in America, America. And then it came, and then it, school shut down. And we were just kind of like, and it was, I think, yeah this is a year before their senior year, or was it their senior? This was their senior year. It was a year before their senior year, so and they couldn't go to prom. And, but I remember hearing about it from my, one of my students, actually. And I didn't believe her. I was like, what? No, no, that's not gonna come here, because we never seen anything like that before. And when it came, I was just like, my first thoughts as a mom and a wife went to how am I going to protect my husband and my child, because people are losing family members. And like, my anxiety went through the roof. To where like, I had a hard time at first with it was having like chest pains and from stress, and I had quickly found a way to calm down and not freak out. Because it was very easy for me to be very just afraid for their lives.

**Kit Heintzman 48:19**

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

**Arialle Smith 48:24**

Um, health, for me is all encompassing. So there's mental health, there's emotional health, spiritual health, physical health, of course. And to be in a healthy state is to be in a sound place in all those areas. Definitely connected. And it's the same thing I think it is, you know, health is wealth, truly, right? Health is wealth. And so if you have health in all of those areas, I feel like you're truly wealthy as well because it doesn't matter how much money you have. If you have a peace of mind, peace of body, peace in your body, a peaceful spirit. Those are things that money can't pay for. And I felt like definitely with this with the Coronavirus, it was an attack on all those things, your mental health, your spiritual health, your physical health, emotional health. And it's no wonder some, some people and I hate to say this, took their lives, that- I believe there was an increase of suicide, because it's almost like your health. And all those areas, for some people, felt bleak. Which is really, really sad to think about.

**Kit Heintzman 50:00**

what are some of the things you want for your own health and the health of people around you?

**Arialle Smith 50:07**

I would love to, I would love for everyone to have, find access and to have access to Holistic Health. I'm a big believer in holistic practices from meditating for me, some scripture, I'm a Christian to drinking water to having access to great foods, which I am also seeing that's been threatened. Having access to great foods, great medicine from our earth, herbs. For me, health wise, I, I want for myself and my family and for others, to have the opportunity to experience it from a holistic perspective. But there's been so many things that have been kind of like poured into our society to kind of take us away from what works and what worked. And we're kind of being bamboozled. The sheets are being pulled over our eyes and we're not seeing like okay, this is serious. Like we need to take our health seriously. We need to take the health of our environment seriously. The health of our land seriously the health of our

the mental health of our nation I feel is declining, really, because of social media. I feel like our kids have access to it. Where, where I'm seeing kids that don't go outside, I can tell they don't run, they don't play. They don't seem very happy, some of our kids don't seem to be very, very happy because they don't have that natural, even just going out on the sun, you know? Being vitamin D deficient, going out to play going out to just explore and create and hang out with friends and laugh and be kids versus like, being confined to being sexy on tik tok, like, I feel like health is removing those kinds of toxic things that are taking us away from regarding intended, intended for us where and who intended us to be. And I feel like I would like for people to just kind of wake up, just wake up and take back their health and take responsibility for it too. Because if we're healthy, and we're walking out, even in our passion, the things that we've been called to do, that's a form of health. Because if you're not walking in your purpose, I can't pass that joy on to you. That person can't pass that joy on to other people. And so I feel like when we connect to the correct thing, spirit, soul, and body that will improve our society overall. And I want that for everyone.

**Kit Heintzman 53:19**

What does safety mean to you?

**Arialle Smith 53:24**

Um, for me, a word that I would use to describe safety is being at peace. No matter where I go, no matter where we go. Because yeah, the world does not feel very safe right now. With some, with the imbalance of mental health, and then access to guns, to seeing what I see in the health care system, you know, wondering if you're going to receive proper care, from people, from doctors, from providers to feeling safe to even just go on a jog outside, you know, by yourself, to even be in home alone. Like, I feel like that this time is presented, it's I've, I've seen a decline in humanity, I still believe in humanity, I've also seen a decline. And I do say, I genuinely don't feel 100% safe. Because of the imbalances that we have, and the injustices that we have in our society, especially in America, it's funny how America and around the world is being painted as land of the free and the home of the brave, but I feel like as an African American woman I don't feel the safest here. But unfortunately, I feel like this is the safest place for us to be and it does not feel incredibly safe as a black woman. I can't speak for black men, but eventually I want to have a son, and I already fear for him, and I'm nervous to have a son. And it starts when they're babies to be honest with you. Black boys and babies are targeted during childbirth, and shortly thereafter. I am not an anti vax person, but there have been some studies that have shown how certain vaccines can affect certain races and genders differently. And I believe they're targeted at a young age as well. And not just I believe it's not something that I'm making up but it's, this is a very controversial topic. Very controversial topic. But I believe it's something to be said and noted that I believe that our black men are targeted from when they're babies, infants, and then in school from what I've, what I've seen that can affect them for the rest of their lives. So, America does not feel on safe, does not feel safe overall, when you think about it, and you just, every day, honestly, like, you have, I had to navigate, navigate doing things so that I feel safe. Essentially.

**Kit Heintzman 56:55**

Would you share what some of those things are?

**Arialle Smith** 57:00

Um, oh man, being a woman in general, like, I don't go to the gas station by myself. Or if I do, I'm on the phone. Like, when I'm walking, making sure that I look over my shoulder, I'm getting in my car, I'm always aware of my surroundings. Um, just making sure, even when I go see doula clients that my husband know, he knows where I am, I'll send them an address, because pretty much anyone can book me. And while I do the interviews, you don't always know I mean, I always hope that no one's out to get me, but like, I don't think anyone is, but like, I don't know. I have to make sure that I'm safe. And I'm always aware of my surroundings. And I'm always aware of who I'm around. And that's something that definitely I have to like, navigate. Even now I don't carry cash. You know, at the dance studio, I stopped taking cash. I made that very clear, I do not take cash, cause I don't want anyone to think I have any money on me. Because in, in our town, there has been some people who will run up from people and shoot me kill him for money. Even if it's just a couple \$1,000 I think it's so silly to literally like, take someone's life for like \$3,000, which can be gone like that. So yeah.

**Kit Heintzman** 58:27

Thinking in a very narrow framework of how safety's been talked about for COVID-19.

**Arialle Smith** 58:34

Mhm.

**Kit Heintzman** 58:34

What are some of the ways you've been determining what feels safe for you?

**Arialle Smith** 58:39

COVID. I honestly try to take care of myself from the inside out. So, for me, that's diet and exercise, so that I can build up my immune system. And other than that we've been going out, we wear masks, sometimes we do, like I said, and sometimes we don't, but navigating COVID, it's just making sure, and that's one of the things that I began to focus on too, it's just making sure that trying to make sure that my immune system was in a good place to where if something presented itself to it, that it could fight it off. And so even at the studio, just making sure that things are like clean, you know, the kids are wearing masks, masks, I encouraged my parents to take, you know, their kids take your vitamins, some rest, things like that. But it hasn't been I don't really navigate it so much anymore.

**Kit Heintzman** 59:52

2020 had this sort of like, notoriousness of political and social events continuing to come. And that was also true for 2021. And it still feels true now.

**Arialle Smith** 1:00:06

Mhm.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:00:07

I'm wondering what some of the intersecting but not identical political, social issues have been on your mind over the last few years that exceed COVID.

**Arialle Smith** 1:00:21

Um, one of the things that I feel is, I don't know if I'm answering this correctly, but I feel like it's a public health issue. Obviously, having access to proper care, during birth, having access to proper lactation care, as well, for women of color. And I feel like during the pandemic, we also saw a lot, a lot of social and justices, particularly with black men, and lives mattering. Um, I, my perspective is that and then, you know, you know, so many other, other things. I kind of tried to like shut down those things because it became overwhelming. Just to see people dying, left and right from either an illness or gun. And I kind of felt like both are a distraction- distractions from a bigger agenda, which we will never know until it's time for it to be revealed. But I do feel like the biggest plot, because if you noticed it, people were arguing over whether or not to wear masks. They were arguing over whether or not to get a vaccine. They were arguing over whether or not other people's lives mattered. They were arguing over just different dynamics, which I all, which I feel like all boil down to fear and control. And we know that if we can divide, we can conquer. And with humanity being at odds with one another, I just kind of like see that happening. Where if we don't wake up to the agenda, whatever it is, we'll be subject to being controlled by the media, especially, for the rest of our lives. And yeah, they're not the same. They're not the same issues. But I feel like it does kind of boil down to the same thing. It's fear and control. We can control people through fear through media, social media, especially. And that's kind of my been my, my, my thing. And it's been very, like I said, like disheartening for me to see the true colors of the people, you know, around, around me. And even just how if we disagree, like, we have to be at odds with each other, like, there's people I don't agree with all the time and I still love them. And, but for them, it's not the same thing. It's like, well, we disagree. And so we're enemies. And I think that's what's been portrayed even through not even social media, even just through television. If I don't agree with anything that you say or do, no, we can't, we may not be friends, or we may not ever walk down the same path together. But the thing that we do owe each other to a certain extent, there are people who don't deserve respect, but the thing that we owe each other is respect and respect of humanity. Um, period, as long as you're not obviously, like encroaching on my safety, and you're literally presenting yourself as an immediate threat to me. We don't have to agree. But we can respect, we can respect one another and respect that humanity and respect the fact that we all literally bleed the same. We literally all have the same on the inside. We have feelings. We have similar anatomy. And it's just unfortunate that that's been like a, a tool that has been weaponized against us. I think that's the real pandemic.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:04:56

How have some of your social relations changed over the pandemic?

**Arialle Smith** 1:05:03

Um, hmm. Well, I'm from South Carolina. I'm from a small town in South Carolina. And while I haven't experienced, um, I haven't had too many negative experiences when it comes to certain things. I've had some. I tend to just kind of stay with family. And I have very, very few friends, with the last election there, there were I hate I hate election time, because people are just so like, weird around election time. And like, I've had people like, come on my page and like, tell me that they disagree with me. And I'm like, well, I don't come to your page and I openly disagree with the things that you're saying. You post

what you post, I post what I post and, and then you get the when you posted on your page, then, you know, that means I can comment and I'm like, okay, but, um, yeah, there were some people that I unfollowed. That I unfollowed even with the, the election eight years ago. I unfollowed some people, because I'm like, I don't want to, I just don't want to see the negativity, I really do try to separate my, if it becomes toxic, I just shut it off. And then in real life, like if I, if I don't want to see a person, I don't have to. But there have been some things and people that I've separated myself from. Which I think is another interesting point is that when it comes to being a Republican or Democrat, I feel like, that's also been a strategic polar thing, like, you're either this or this. And it's like, what if I don't want to be either those things? You know, why is that not a option? Why aren't we talking about that? But then you have people who feel empowered by certain groups, and they want to just be empowered, they want to be in power. And I just tend to separate myself from people like that. And even if I'm confronted with it, and just there have been, mo- for the most part, I just kind of ignore it, because I kind of see that, that they are being controlled, especially by their emotions. And I feel like a lot of times when people kind of present themselves as a powerful being they're truly not powerful, and so kindly they suffer on their own. They're in their own kind of jai-jail or cage and is no need to go back and forth with, with that kind of energy for me.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:08:11

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

**Arielle Smith** 1:08:16

Oh, it's a question mark. So honestly, to me, it seems Carpe Diem, no, it's literally like I have to seize the day. Because who knows? That's how I feel now with the past few years. Who knows? Who knows? That's how I feel about the future. Who knows!? But I'm, I'm, again, going back to my beliefs, that's always been the case. You never know what the future holds. But like I really feel like you never know what the future holds. Like. Especially with now with Russia, the whole Russia Ukraine situation, which is like a new dynamic, which I was also concerned. Okay, so when the nuclear bombs were launched in Japan, I believe it was Pearl Harbor. I'm not a history buff, but there were some issues with deformity and babies. And so, you know, I was curious about that, you know, for the moms out there, and if, if if. I'm sure there's some pregnant women in Russia and Ukraine. And then if China gets involved, and we get involved, you know, when things are flying and going, I was, I, I thought about that. I was curious to know, like, how that would affect birthing moms. I, I, I really did think about that. I thought about that. And I was like, I wonder, you know, there have been some preterm babies lately. And so I was wondering if there was something happening in the energy fields, like just from, with things being released in the atmosphere, from a bombing standpoint, if that affects it, and I, I believe it does, because there has been some preterm babies, even with first time moms. That haven't their babies 37 um 38 weeks, which isn't bad. It's really like that's really term, but it's not always normal. But then there are those I heard amongst some doulas that there women whose water was breaking with no signs of labor. Water just pre rupture. So the future, even for me now, like I want to have more children. I'm nervous about it. Because I'm like, I don't want to raise a child. I already have one. Don't want to, I don't want to raise a child in chaos. So um just not knowing what that looks like. Would it be fair to them? Will, that'd be a world for them to be raised up in? You know? Will we have to be fleeing for our lives? I wonder about that, like well, do what and where will we go? You know? So, one of the things that I do know, that I do kind of want to talk about is that when there's a pandemic or when there is an



emergency, it is always a good idea to breastfeed, which has been a controversial topic as well. Because you have the formula feeding moms who felt like, who feel like breastfeeding is oppressive. And there was a time when formula was being pitched to working women as a sign of independence, that was a whole feminist movement. And if you must know, I am not a huge fan of feminism, because feminism undermines breastfeeding. And I believe that if you are a woman with a child, it cannot always be me first, when you're a mother, you die to yourself. And so in some ways, I feel like feminism was also a tactic. And a lot of people don't want to see it as that. But I feel like was also a tactic to use to kind of control even how women had babies. And there has been a long history as well, with population control, particularly with black and indigenous women, which I studied in my own multistudies class, briefly. And I learned that while you can't, Now you can't just abort someone's kid without their knowledge. We can, we can pitch it a different way. And so that along with like breastfeeding has been completely undermined. And I know a lot of formula feeding moms feel like women who breastfeed get lots of support, but it's not true at all. And if you're breastfeeding your child during a pandemic, in times of famine, especially, it can be life or death for you and your family. I feel like there should be more support and campaigning surrounding breastfeeding. But the way that our social media now is set up, you know, if you say something that goes against the belief of another group, that group can cry, oh, you're making me feel bad for not breastfeeding. And it has nothing to do with feeling this has to do with survival. We're in almost in a state of emergency recently, there was a formula recall where babies were dying from formula. So what are you gonna do? If all the formula is recalled? One lady was like, I'm breastfeeding my children, my, my sister's gonna breastfeed her children and they're gonna be just fine. One. How do you know that? You know what's consistent, that was given to us by nature, breast milk, the only time that breast milk and there are times when it is not ideal for a person to breastfeed when they have had a breast reduction, and sometimes their milk ducts were not put back properly. And then there are some other situations like if they have certain diseases, where it's not ideal. But even then, if you have women who are breastfeeding around them that can donate breast milk, because there are antibodies in breast milk. And if we run out of food, and I'm and I'm lactating, I can nourish my family with my milk, not just my child. And I know it sounds weird, but if we have to survive, we could survive off of my breast milk. So like the best thing would be to keep me alive and keep me fed and nourished. So I can feed you know, my family so we can literally survive. And so that's kind of a controversial topic now more than ever. I've had women literally, like, go back and forth with me on social media, when I don't like to go forth. But they tried to pull me into an argument and telling me that I'm presenting misinformation, I'm like, it's literally here on the World Health, World Health Organization websi. You can find all this information there. I'm not making it up. But, but for the sake of, I feel like argument there are people that just don't want to see the truth of how effective breastfeeding is and can be. I recently had a client whose daughter got COVID. So they only had a sinus infection but she had COVID, she had to be hospitalized because the soft spot on her head was spaced. The doctors asked her if she was taking any medicine and they were like no and they're like, well, are you breastfeeding her? And she said yes. so we count that as medicine. Breast milk is medicine. When you get, if you get COVID or anything that you are exposed to, which I love about breast milk, your child, it like, it it changes on like a cellular level and your body creates antibodies towards whatever presents itself in the atmosphere of your child. And so, I'm like it can literally be life or death. When you look at a formula and breast milk under a microscope. The breast milk moves, formula is dead. So for me, milk is superior, scientifically, because of that. And I believe, I wish there were more campaigning for that, but you're not going to see it because a lot of formula companies, one, they supply their own research. And two a lot of them build

maternity wards in hospitals. So you're not going to see a lot of information that will come out that doesn't support how effective formula really is. And I do believe it might have some better formulas than others. And I hope that's the case for the sake of women who can't breastfeed. Like I hope there are better formula options because I do believe that it is important to nourish your child, especially if you can't breastfeed. But I don't think that's another thing. I wonder if we're going to really see the stats on how, how the health of a person is affected, whether they were breastfed or formula fed during this pandemic, especially, so.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:18:25

Would you tell me, misinformation is such a big word in our moment. Would you tell me what that word means to you?

**Arielle Smith** 1:18:32

What? One more time.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:18:33

Misinformation?

**Arielle Smith** 1:18:34

Oh, it's a big word. Oh, yeah, it is a big word. And a lot of people are misinformed. And what it means for me is, like people just stating their opinions and not, and not facts. And even though I know that science still isn't a fact, science changes and that's the whole idea of science. It's a lot of theories and testing, and retesting, and testing and retesting, and testing and retesting. And the only thing that we can look at are the stats. We can only look at the information. We can't completely trust the science because again, it's always the ebb and flow, it always changes. Which is why we don't know how the vaccines really work, because it's always changing. Or, how this virus works because it's always changing. I remembered, realized that COVID was another word for SARS. And I remember when, when the word SARS came out before and it almost came here before apparently, at one time, it was threatening us at another time. I thought it was a life or death thing. And it's, it is for some people, but not for others. And so I think we will never really know how things really work. But then there are those who are just misinformed because they're going off of the opinions of other people versus going off of educational conversations and findings and extensive research. That's really like backed by people who study this day and night and out over years and years and years. So we are in an information age, but I believe because there's so many, so much information out there it's hard sometimes to differentiate between who is misinforming and who's giving the real information. And that we sit in our media all the time, there's people who are like literally like straight up lying on, in the news, making up the stories that we need to hear to I guess continue on, to continue on with the life that we're living so I think that um, misinformation happens when we don't do our research.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:21:04

What are some of the contemporary mythologies of our moment? Things we believe to continue our course.

**Arialle Smith** 1:21:15

Um, what are some of the myths that we continue to believe. Concerning the pandemic or just in general?

**Kit Heintzman** 1:21:29

In general.

**Arialle Smith** 1:21:31

Oh. There's a such thing as race. A lot of people don't, I mean, it's, it's, it's real. A lot of people believe that. We don't challenge where race and ethnicity came from. I don't think it matters. I think it matters, but I don't think it does. It matters for those who want to be in power. The myth is that it matters. And I believe that I know that the history of race and ethnicity was created to separate one people from the other. And I think that was one of the most detrimental things that have happened in our society and around the world along with colorism which is a completely different like another topic from what we're talking about, but I feel like it's something to be noted. It's one of the things that has also been weaponized against us as a society for since time began, you know, light skinned versus dark skin, pigment of your skin being determined whether or not you're beautiful, determining whether or not you're more powerful, determining whether or not you're more intelligent, determining whether or not you deserve more or better care. That's one of the greatest myths and believing that it matters, and wish, again, that will see each other as human beings again, because what, what how we were really connected is through our blood, I think that's one of the greatest mythologies that we have so far, honestly, and truly, um another one is believing that our environment, so one of the things that I have always thought about is the health of our environment. And thinking that we can treat our environment any kind of way, and not reap the consequences of what's happening. IE- global warning, warming. Our food doesn't taste the same. Like animal products, I don't eat animals, but like, I know those, you know, that there's, there's a decline there as well. And so we kind of just think that we can do whatever we want to our farmland, there is a method or strategy for properly taking care of our land. And we seem to think that we can do whatever we want to our environment and turn on land and not pay the consequences. It's one of the biggest lies. And another one, I think, is thinking, believing that we can consume so much negativity, whether it's foods, media, toxins from a literal environment, and also not pay for that as well. I think, I, I believe that sicknesses are also. It's also become normalized as well like being sick. And you don't see a lot of talk about health, how to become healthy how to be healed, because healing almost seems impossible. Which is also not true. And those are my four things. That was a good question.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:25:23

I hope you liked it. You had mentioned earlier that you're Christian, I just wanted to invite you to say something about what faith has meant to you over this period of time.

**Arialle Smith** 1:25:34

Um, for me, my faith is my anchor, because like I said before, that is, at the start of the pandemic, I had a lot of anxiety. Well my chest would literally, like hurt then. And it's been said, like, in these times, people's hearts would fail them. And I believe it's because of fear. Fear is a shadow, fear is crippling. fear can present itself to be bigger than what it really is. And for me, I feel like my faith has kept me

honestly and truly grounded in truth because I know one of the best remedies to anxiety is focusing on truth. And for me, my truth is what comes from Scripture. And something that I've experienced, to also be true. I know the power of the subconscious mind, I know that what we say, see, think, or feel. That's what becomes and um, just want to use my mental capacity to create a flow. I know that every man was given the ability to create their own world, the worlds were created by words. And so for me, I'm using my faith, to use my words to create my- the world that I want to live in and while my words may not affect the world at large it can affect my world. So definitely a belief in something, and even science has proved it that's that connection to something is almost going to be imperative to surviving the unknown.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:27:36

What are some of your hopes for a longer term future?

**Arialle Smith** 1:27:53

My hope is, the powers that be, no, my hope is that we as a people take back our power in a sense and to not allow for our future to be controlled. My hope is that we, I, I, it's hard for me to honestly think that we're going to get back to a sense of normalcy. Because I don't think, I don't really don't think that we are. But it would be nice to know that this was just a time in history because there have been times in history where there have been pandemics, epidemics. And I know it has happened, something like every 100 years, and then somehow there's like a reset. I just hope that there is a reset, in a sense. But I don't want to go back to what things were before either because I don't feel like it was great. We're always at odds with each other. I don't believe in world peace. I really don't. I don't believe in, I don't, I don't think as many people as there are in the world, I don't think there can really be world peace. And if there's world peace there's something creepy that's about to happen. Um, being honest. But it's kind of eerie. It would be more eerie for me there was a true like peace. But it would be nice to have some kind of like utopia where we're getting along and people are just existing and living their life. And just being happy and, and joy being normal. But I hate to sound like a pessimist. I just don't think it's gonna happen. I, I really don't. Not, not until. Nope, I don't think so. That's why for me, we need a savior. So, that's all I have. I really don't have anything else positive to say.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:30:25

That's okay. What are some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself and who are some of the people that have been supporting you over the last few years?

**Arialle Smith** 1:30:38

Taking care of myself is hard, full time entrepreneur, mother, and wife. We have been intentional about going on vacation, but I hate the idea of vacation. Because then when you come back, it's like depressing, would be lovely to live a life that feels like a vacation and vacation is just extent of what I do every day. But we work really, really hard. My husband and I work very, very hard. We're both entrepreneurs in our community, we do a lot of community work. There's a lot of work to do. I feel like um, self care for me though, is taking days of rest, which I haven't been able to do lately. But I like to- because I really do like to chill and gel out and go get a massage and just eat some yummy meals and be outside and even exercising, you know, that's a form of self care as well. And the people that have supported me would really be like our moms, our family, my husband, um, they help they've helped out a lot. Even when we go on vacations, have you know, watched our daughter so that we can kind of like

get a break, but even then I feel like she has missed a lot of time with us too, because we work. So just trying to balance when I need self care, versus when I need to be with my daughter, versus when I need to be with my family has been a challenge. But try to, try to take those moments to kind of just like, pour into each other. We've been more intentional about that. Because we work and we work and we work and we work and we work. And I'm always like, we can't, when we die, we can't take it with us. We can't take the time that we should have spent with our family. We can't take back those moments. So may as well enjoy it. I don't believe in torturing myself 24/7 for extended periods of time, like I really don't. So I really try to have moments of self care at least once a month, if I can get it in twice a month. Yeah.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:33:24

We're coming to the end of my questions, and they're all a bit funny. Thinking about people in the humanities and social sciences, so people who do research on literature or art history, or media or sociology. I want you to tell those people what they should be doing with their time right now to help them understand COVID Better. Tell them what matters to you, that we should know about the human social side of this of the last few years.

**Arialle Smith** 1:33:54

Um, I think it would be cool to focus on different groups. Like I think it's neat that you asked what it was like as a doula because people don't think about doulas. Doctors? Yeah. Midwives? Yeah. Mothers? Yes. Doulas? It's an interesting perspective. So what's a different scope. I even thought, well, I don't know if you have the permission to talk to some kids, but even talking to a kid or a teenager, getting the perspective of breastfeeding moms, or brown boys, or Asian, you know, there was a lot of xenophobia at the start of the pandemic. A lot of them were being stereotyped and abused in different regions. Um, I know there's a high concentration of Asian Americans in, in like New York, or like California. Um, what is it like, being considered a model minority? That's what they're considered in society. But then also, during the pandemic almost been like turned against, you know? I'm sure that was an interesting dynamic for some of them. Art is interesting, because I actually grew up doing art too. Um, I would consider myself an creative person. And I express my creativity in different ways. And I actually grew up studying art, not history so much, but I have a very deep appreciation for art. And I do wonder, who will be, you know, there's those classic errors, and we like, do we have that, in this time, in this digital age, there's a lot of digital art. And pretty much like, I felt like anyone now can paint with paint parties, you know, like, but even talking about that, who is the Rembrandt of our age? You know? Will we ever have another Picasso or Van Gogh or a Cassatt? Like, will we ever have that? The guy of our time, um, or do be like that it's assessable. Topics like that, I think just like different perspectives, even the Native American people like where, what, what, where are they? I know there was there was a huge controversial issue with the pipeline. They were building a pipeline. And that's always a thing where the building stuff on top of their land, um, taking their resources. Yeah. Stories like that, and how the pandemic affected them. Believe there's a lot of Native American women missing, things like that, that don't get covered by the media.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:37:35

I want to invite you to think of a historian in the future, someone far enough from this moment that they have no lived experience of it. What was the like distance from our moment? Would you want them to remember about now when writing what would you want them to sort of hold dear to themselves when shuffling through oral history interviews and government stats and policy papers?

**Arielle Smith** 1:38:25

I want them to remember that at one point in time, humanity, Americans particularly, I think, I believe felt really vulnerable for once. We have, I don't think we've ever felt as threatened as we've had felt now. Um and that I- the bubble that we existed in pretty much burst, which was a shock, I think, to our system, there have been other countries that have had turmoil, who suffer. We hear about wars, rumors of wars. We hear about these things happening in other places, but we were so presumptuous to think that nothing bad could ever happen here. And yet it did. And I think for the first time while we truly feel vulnerable, it's so weird, though, but it's also like a weird thing to where like, while we felt vulnerable, we still are kind of asleep to what's really happening too, um, in like, it's almost like we've been trained and sort of a privilege to where we don't really discern how serious what we're going through really is. I don't think we, I don't think we really woken up just yet. And I would want someone to kind of note that, like, America, the all powerful in its most vulnerable state still didn't discern the times that we were really in. And that we're asleep. Still asleep. I, I believe so, I believe so. Because we're just, we live in this false reality. We're just so used to American privilege. So that's been shaken up, have spoken, use this time to describe what we're going through as a great shaken up, a reality check. But I fear that there are people, many people that don't see it as that, and don't, don't get that there are those that do. But I feel like majority people won't get it until it's like too late. And I don't think anyone really knows how to solve the problems that we have in our society. Because it's some it's, it's a lot. It's so much. It's almost like a cancer. It's spreading rapidly. And we don't know where to start to literally, like, kill our country, heal our lands, heal our society. Like there's so much healing that needs to take place.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:41:45

I want to thank you so much for your time, and the kindness, generosity and beauty of your answers. Those are all of the questions I know how to ask, but I want to open some space. If there's anything that you'd like to say that my questions haven't facilitated, to please say so.

**Arielle Smith** 1:42:04

I think I mean, I think it's been a good conversation it's a, thank you for allowing me to be a part of this project. And I hope to have provided some information, at least a little insight to what I'm thinking, it's so much more. So much more to even discuss. Even just like how certain things like break down. I know we originally talked about doula stuff, but I feel like we covered a lot of different things a lot of different topics. So to me, it feels extensive enough, and I'm glad to be a part of at least Oral History, during this time.