

## Transcript of Interview with Rosie Bryant by Shonda Nicole Gladden

**Interviewee:** Rosie Bryant

**Interviewer:** Shonda Nicole Gladden

**Date:** 10/09/2020

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

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

**Transcriber:** Lily Crigler

**Abstract:** In this interview, Rosie Bryant discusses her life during the COVID-19 pandemic and how her family and community were affected. Rosie is a mother, a community organizer for Faith in Indiana, and has been active in racial justice movements. She discusses her experience with her work in organizing and in other activism work and also talks about the differences between her organization and the Black Lives Matter organization.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:01**

Good morning. Can you see that we are recording?

**Rosie Bryant 00:04**

I can.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:05**

Do I have your permission to record?

**Rosie Bryant 00:08**

You do.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:09**

All right, I am Shonda Nicole Gladden. Today is Monday, October 19th, 2020, and I am here with please state your name for the recording.

**Rosie Bryant 00:20**

My name is Rosie Bryant.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:21**

All right, Miss Rosie Bryant, and where are you located?

**Rosie Bryant 00:26**

Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:27**

Outstanding. So, we are conducting the COVID-19 Oral History Project interview, which is associated with the Journal of the Plague Year: A COVID-19 Archive. I want to briefly review the informed consent and deed of gift document that you signed, and thank you so much for reading it, signing it, and sending it back in a timely manner. This COVID-19 Oral History Project is a rapid response oral history focused on archiving the lived experience of the COVID-19 epidemic. During this phase of the project, our research group is focusing its energies on collecting oral histories that speak to the lived experience of racial justice and racial justice

movements in the context of COVID-19. We have designed this project so that professional researchers and the broader public can create and upload their oral histories to our open access and open source database, and I'm also doing interviews with people who volunteer and/or are recommended, so thank you for agreeing to the interview. This study is going to help us collect narratives and understandings about COVID-19 as well as help us to better understand the impacts of the pandemic over time. The recordings, your demographic information, and the verbatim transcripts will be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year: a COVID-19 Archive and 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?

**Rosie Bryant** 02:04

No.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 02:05

All right. So, taking part in this study is voluntary; you may choose not to take part in the interview, you may leave it at any time, and leaving the study and the interview will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study and in this interview will not affect your current or future relations with Indiana University, IUPUI, or the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute. Participating in this project means that your interview will be recorded in digital video and or audio format and will be transcribed. The recordings and the transcriptions of our interviews, copies of any supplementary documents or additional photos that you may wish to share, and the informed consent and deed of gift that you signed will be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year: a COVID-19 Archive and the Indiana University system, library system and will be available to both researchers and the general public. Your name and other means of identification will not be confidential. Do you have any questions?

**Rosie Bryant** 03:19

No, I do not.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 03:20

In addition to your signed document, I'm going to ask you to give your verbal confirmation that you understand and agree to these terms.

**Rosie Bryant** 03:29

I understand, and I agree.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 03:32

I'm also asking you to verbally confirm that you have agreed that your interview will be made available under the following licenses. The Creative Commons Attribution Noncommercial Sharealike 4.0 International and the COVID-19 Oral History Project, the Journal of the Plague Year: a COVID-19 Archive and the trustees of Indiana University acting through its agents, employees, or representatives having 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 by the COVID-19 Oral History Project and IU including its assigned and transferees for any purpose, including but not limited to marketing, advertising, publicity or other promotional purposes. You agree that IU will have final editorial authority over the use of the oral history materials, and you

waive any rights to inspect or approve of any future use of the oral history of materials. Moreover, you agree that the public has the right to use the materials under the terms of the Fair Use US Copyright Law, Section 107 of the US Copyright Act. Could you please confirm that you agree to allowing us to share your interview under these licenses?

**Rosie Bryant 05:10**

I agree.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 05:11**

Finally, I want to ask for a verbal confirmation that you have agreed that your interview will be made available to the public immediately.

**Rosie Bryant 05:20**

I agree.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 05:22**

All right. That's it for the confirmations. Now we're going to get into the bulk of the interview itself, and you have agreed to about an hour of interview, so we should be done by about 11am Eastern Standard Time. Is that still convenient for your schedule?

**Rosie Bryant 05:38**

Yes, it is.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 05:39**

So tell me a little bit about yourself. What are the primary things you do on a day-to-day basis? For example, what is your job, your extracurricular activities, anything else you'd like to say about what you do on a day-to-day basis?

**Rosie Bryant 05:53**

Yeah, so I'm a community organizer with an organization called Faith in Indiana. I'm also a mom of three. Other two are grown and out of the home, one is at home and is like, the big baby of the family, which she is because she's the baby. I also enjoy going to the gym. I enjoy going roller skating and actually something that people don't know, I like to ice skate as well. I enjoy reading books, so my day-to-day work is like working on, as a community organizer, helping my daughter with her schoolwork and just trying when I get a chance to get some downtime to do some of the things that I, I like to do, and I also enjoy watching TV, actually.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 06:50**

So when you say a community organizer with Faith in Indiana, can you speak a little bit more about what that role looks like?

**Rosie Bryant 07:00**

Yeah, so we build relationships throughout the community. We're a faith based group, so we mainly do that through congregations, although I do that in other groups and organizations as well. We build relationships with them, talk to them about what they care about, and then we move on issues based on what they care about, and

some, some of the issues that I focus on is criminal justice reform, police accountability and gun violence work. And we moved to win policies that can make a change in those, in those areas for the residents, and for myself.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 07:37

So have, how have your day-to-day activities changed since the beginning of COVID-19?

**Rosie Bryant** 07:44

It's actually got, I've now have more work on top of my hands than I did before. I have more meetings. We are all online right now, for the most part 90% of my work is now virtual, with the occasional in-person meetings of things that we just, like if we have to do a press conference, normally those are, it's harder to do a press conference online because TV doesn't have a way to like actually record an event. So we, when we can, we do those, our media stuff online, and when we can't, we do those in person, but I try to limit what those look like and how many people actually get out to the event. So most of my meetings are online; I do those constantly back-to-back; it's sometimes even difficult just to have lunch. I can go throughout the whole day and don't even realize I hadn't ate until like eight, nine o'clock at night, and I'm like starving, which is actually not good, and it's not healthy in any type of way. I've also changed my dieting and the way that I eat since COVID, so that looks different. Time with my daughter looks different, so I had to like, when she started back at school, I had to like create actual time that I put on my work calendar that like "guys, I'm not available for this time, for this time" because this is the time that my daughter may need me to answer questions or to help her with her work or assignments, so I created that. I had to change the time that my daughter and I spend together so then, so many things.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 09:34

So thinking about the categories of age, race, gender, sexual orientation, social-economic status, and other common demographics, how do you describe yourself?

**Rosie Bryant** 09:48

Um, I don't know. I feel like I'm in this weird age group, like I'm 37, but it's like, I'm not like older... I'm not like 50, 60 where I want to be around 50, 60 year-olds all the time, but I'm also not young, where I want to be what a young 25, 26 year-old, so I'm like in this middle age that really doesn't have... I guess sometimes I'm considered a millennial sometimes, but I really don't feel like I fit in that range. It's like, it's just difficult this age range that I'm in, it's like, I don't really know where I'm supposed to fit in. I identify as African American, but sometimes, I don't know, I don't like adding the American piece on there. It's like, I really just want to be like, I'm African like, I'm not trying to claim America. I just happen to live here, so... And then, of course, I identify as a black woman, and so that's really an important identity to me.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 10:53

And where do you live, the name of your neighborhood, what you call it, and what other people may call it?

**Rosie Bryant** 11:01

So currently, we just bought a home, well, I just bought a home in Mapleton, Fall Creek area... that's just the name that it is. It's a growing area, and when I say growing as being gentrified, so it was important to me to be in an area in a community where I've lived before as a kid, and what I know it is, so it doesn't change to something else that I didn't want it to be in, to be, which is probably likely going to happen. So that's the area that I live in.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 11:36**

And what do you see happening around you in your neighborhood?

**Rosie Bryant 11:41**

It's changing in a sense of demographics, meaning like the current area that I live in, it's actually not as, it was heavily African American area, poor area, there was a certain area that in this, this community that wasn't it was like this little, I don't even know how to explain it, of like, not wealthy, but black people that had a little more money and had some nice homes over here. And then you can go to one section where it was just like poor run-down homes, section eight homes, a lot of poverty, crime used to be really heavy over here. 38th Street, where I'm closer to, is like one of our main streets and then that was like, for me that that was like the party street for a lot of people in the neighborhood, and when I was younger, it definitely was. And there's just like a lot of things that I remember growing up like James, the dancing man who just recently passed away like, that is an individual that was really influential in our life, in a lot of people's lives, growing up over here, like he just danced on the corner all the time. A lot of people knew him. And also the other lady, I can't think of her name right now, that was always in the neighborhoods. So just a lot of childhood memories over here, and now it's changing to more middle class, wealthy, young, white people are starting to move in a lot. You're seeing a lot of the homes being rehabbed. And the area was surprising, I want to say more white liberals are moving over here in the area, was what I'm noticing, so yeah.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 13:31**

And what issues have most concerned you about the COVID-19 pandemic?

**Rosie Bryant 13:37**

Ah, a lot. One of them is just the high rate of death among African Americans compared to white people, and really having them, really informed about what this is and that it's a real thing, has been an issue. The misinformation that's out there about it when I hear black people speak about it, even in my daughter's school, a mother refusing to wear a mask when she comes into the school because she doesn't think it's real. She thinks it's fake. Um, and so those are been really one of my highest concerns is that the rate of death for black people.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 14:22**

And do you personally know people who have died?

**Rosie Bryant 14:26**

Yeah, so one of, the church that I grew up in Kingsley Terrace Church of Christ, there was a young woman, she was probably younger than me like, maybe 34. She passed away which was really, really concerning, and which one of the reasons why I transitioned my eating because I wanted to be a better example on like the health of our community because what's not really spoken about, I don't feel like is enough, is that a lot of the people that are passing your way have pre-existing conditions that are highly related to like our individual health, right, and that, you know, this soul food, soul food mentality of food that we've been eating for decades is actually killing us on the inside, so I really want us to get to rethink the way that we look at food, and the way that we look at health in our community, and start trying to do some things a little different.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 15:25**

And so, when you talk about and think about doing things a little different, I'm curious, have you seen people around you change their day-to-day activities, change their opinions or their relationships in response to the pandemic?

**Rosie Bryant 15:49**

Yeah, so I've had a few people reach out to me about like, what it was that I changed, what did I eat, just asked me questions, and so I was able to inform them on that. I've seen a big rise in just black people overall, moving away from eating meat since COVID, which has been really astonishing to me, for the black community anyway, because we like, food is like, our love language in some ways, and so that's been interesting to see. I've seen people, like, of course, try to take it a little bit more seriously, and so like hand sanitizing, mask. I've been seeing more often with people, some people, if they can, deciding to keep their children home, and work and do schooling from home, so I've seen some of those changes. And I've seen, what's great, as I've seen parents start thinking about, "well, if I'm doing this now, maybe I can homeschool my child, maybe I don't have to send them into an education system that's not benefiting them." I have a friend whose daughter who's excelling from not being in a school when she wasn't when she was in school. So I've been seeing some changes in that way as well.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 17:11**

And so I heard you say, some people sending their children into the school building and some not. What has your family decided to do as it pertains to schooling your youngest?

**Rosie Bryant 17:26**

We started off trying to just homeschool her, and mentally, for her, it wasn't working and educationally, academically, it wasn't working as well. And so we had to make the hard decision to one, remove her out of the new school that we decided to put her into and put her back into the old school that she was in prior to COVID and allow her to go back physically in the school. It was a really difficult decision, and there was two things like, her dad went back to Atlanta, I'm still here, and so I'm the only parent in the home, and it was making it really difficult not having a second person in the home. And most importantly, her mental state was starting to concern us to the point to where like, it was really concerning. She was having some mental breakdowns that was concerning of her feeling alone or feeling isolated. She was making some statements that were really concerning about the house being too dark. And so, for us, it was important for us to put her back in the school, so she can have some of those social interactions in the safest way possible. And we thought that like, "Okay, we're going to put her in this place, and then we're going to really just go a little harder on our health," because that's important, too during COVID, and so just pray that it'll all work itself out. And we have seen like her mental spaces, she's in a lot better space now, academically. She's, she's back on it, and it's just it's been, it was a better fit.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 19:03**

So, how does this pandemic compare to other big events that have happened during your lifetime?

**Rosie Bryant 19:11**

How does the pandemic compare to other big events? Um, I will say it's stressful. I don't know if I will compare it to other big events because I've had bigger events that were more stressful when my mom passed away. That was way more stressful than this, but it's been hard like, I have a brother who's autistic that stays in a home, and we are unable to physically see him, so we haven't seen him since COVID hit, which has been really hard on us to like, not be able to physically spend time with our brother, especially because we just bought, I just bought this new

home, and I, and normally, in my apartment days I wouldn't bring him over into the home very often because he's, he's autistic, and he's loud, he bounces, and he's not as high functioning as other autistic kids. And so now we're in his home, and he can just, he can do whatever he wants, and so I was really excited about bringing him here. And, and so that's been really hard on us. It's been even harder because my sister recently had surgery because she was going blind, and if she didn't have the surgery, she was for sure gonna go blind. So that was difficult because we couldn't be in the, only one person could be there, and of course, that was her husband that was there, but it was difficult for us as sisters, because whenever any of us like, we have somewhat of a difficult relationship, but when it comes to like surgery and stuff, we are always, always, always there, like physically there. And so it was difficult to not to physically be there and to distance myself from her just in case like, you know, because I've been out a lot more, and she's been quarantining herself, so she didn't get COVID, so when she goes into surgery, everything will be wrong, like not physically being around her as well. It's been difficult.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 21:09

So you have the two siblings, the sister and the brother?

**Rosie Bryant** 21:15

I have three, wait a minute, I have four. I have my brother, who's the oldest, and then three younger sisters.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 21:23

Okay, and during COVID-19 have you seen any of them in person?

**Rosie Bryant** 21:30

No, I'm not as close. I've saw my youngest one, once over at my dad's house, my stepdad's house. We're not as close as we should be. My, the youngest one is just now getting over an addiction issue, and so that played a huge roll into that. And so we're slowly integrating our lives back to one another. And then my other younger sibling, we're just not as close, but we do see each other still; she's done my hair, maybe once, and then I've given her rides to places. And then my other sister that's like, her and I are 11 months apart, we're the, we're closest in as far as our relationship. She's just been going through a lot medically with her medical issues. And so that is just created a strain in her life, and so it's been hard for us to connect and be around each other.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 22:31

So I want to shift away from the personal story and the community story and talk about racial justice movements and Black Lives Matter, unless there's anything else that you want to share about your personal your background. So would you please share any thoughts you have about current movements focused on racial justice, such as Black Lives Matter?

**Rosie Bryant** 22:58

Say that question one more time.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 23:00

Would you please share any thoughts you have about current movements focused on racial justice, such as Black Lives Matter?

**Rosie Bryant** 23:10

Well, there has been an uprising of youth, particularly in our community, around the racial justice issues, and just injustice issues in general, across the country that I've been seeing, which has been amazing to see. And it's been amazing to see a lot of these groups like Black Lives Matter's, and others, just kind of come together in this moment. Um, I, I've seen people come together, but what I haven't seen is like this organizing effort, I've seen more of this, this effort of like, a lot of these groups and individuals come together in a way that's been very bringing awareness to the issues, and very angry and upset for, for good reasons, but I haven't seen like this organizing effort of like, building relationships with people, building this power base of people, and sit down and negotiate with those in power. And it's been interesting to see, and the reasons even talking to my son has been interesting and valid in some ways is that like them not feeling like, pretty much they're tired, and they don't want to sit at this table anymore and negotiate because they don't... they're just tired. They're tired of the injustices, and they just want to fight, and I kind of understand where they're coming from because when, when someone came to me about doing this action that we had, our organization had downtown, I honestly didn't want to do it because I'm tired of protesting, and I was with the young people, like just burn it all down. And like, you know, that's the, the inner radical side of me, but then this other side of me is like, "Okay, I know that that's not gonna happen, I know that defunding the police is not going to happen if I'm just yelling from the top of my lungs for it to happen." The only way for that to happen is for me to sit down with the people in power and negotiate the terms of what we want to happen. And so that's actually been kind of difficult for me personally, because it's like, it's the radical side of me that does want to be out there in the streets and being like, "burn it all down, forget you guys, defund the police," all of that, but then it, I know, strategically, that doesn't make sense, and that's not what's gonna work to actually win.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 25:59

You said "they are tired." When you, who is, who is "they?"

**Rosie Bryant** 26:04

The community like, people of color, in general, we, we are tired of the nonsense and the constant brutality of black bodies. And people want to do something, so they show up to a protest, because that's the way to do something, and they're like, "let's just burn it all down and start a whole new system." Which would be great, in an ideal world, but that's not where we're at right now in this country.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 26:35

What changes have you seen since the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, or anyone else that you'd like to name?

**Rosie Bryant** 26:43

I think what you've seen, and what I've really liked, is more community members coming together than there has been before. I, I've been having conversations with people that I've been trying to have conversation with for years, but since the George Floyd incident, like it brought people together, I think more often. It brought people together to work on the same accord, like the local Black Lives Matter group, they did a lot of work with the Dreasjon Reed case, and really trying to bring about some changes around that case, and situations in Indy and just people collaborating more like, there's still gonna be some people who don't, but I've seen an uptick of people just wanting change and ready to act. And I've also seen more white people standing up for racial justice, maybe not always in the ways that I would like to see them, but in the current area that I live in, it's been humbling and more welcoming, to me, to drive and walk down the streets, to see Black Lives Matter signs all over the place



because it makes me feel welcome and makes me not fear, like, "Okay, do they want me in this neighborhood? Do they not want me in this neighborhood?" So that's been welcoming.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 28:07**

What do you think has driven that change?

**Rosie Bryant 28:09**

I think the George Floyd incident, woke a lot of people up. Black people have always been woke, and so it didn't wake us up. We've always knew that there was an issue, and that we wanted change. I think it just ignited some people to want to act more, but we've always been woke. I think for white people, what I've seen, is them that open up their eyes, that some of them were blind to what was really going on and watching the, where there was no, there was nothing anyone could say, although I would argue in other situations there was nothing anyone could say, the George Floyd incident was different as we lay, we watched this man call for his mother. And that was disheartening and sad and very, very difficult for a lot of people to watch, and I think that was the incident that ignited white people to start acting and be like, "Okay, oh, yeah, there really is an issue."

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 29:14**

And so have you, well, you mentioned organizing a protest, did you not?

**Rosie Bryant 29:21**

Yeah.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 29:22**

So have you attended any of the protests other than the one you organized? Can you tell me a little bit about what protests have looked like during this COVID-19 experience?

**Rosie Bryant 29:35**

There's been tons, I mean, tons of protests. I have not seen our city protest that much. I know since my lifetime anyway, I haven't noticed it anyway, and so, and people are still protesting maybe in smaller groups of people. And they have been very well attended, too. The protests we organized was 1200 people, who organized with us in that moment, and that was really great to see all those people. I only attended ours. However, we've had lots of leaders and younger people that I organize with to attend the others, and then I got some of my clergy to attend some of those as well to just provide like a, not their, I encourage them, if you go to these, please don't go preaching to them, please don't go tell them that you guys are doing it wrong. Don't do that because that's not going to... but just be there as support. And that was really great to see. Um, but the protests have been like, just constant and has not... there was some, some of the protests, I don't believe, I personally do not believe it was the actual organizers of the protests, but there's been some outside people coming from out of town, like actually damaging property downtown and in other places. But in reality, even if it was the organizers, and the people leading the movement, like all of that is as a result of anger, like if you and your community are continuing to lose the ones that you love, I don't know what else results that you would expect out of that situation.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 31:31**

Were you concerned about exposure to COVID-19?

**Rosie Bryant 31:35**

Absolutely I was, and I was concerned with organizing an event so large and having someone there contract COVID-19, knowing that I organized an event, and also with me, again, my daughter's dad, he lives in Atlanta, and so anywhere I go, she goes, and so that was another concern. And so, I again, try to limit as much as possible, the places of where I went and being strategic about where I'm going and having, because my theory is, is whenever I go to an event or someone else's event, like what's the change I'm gonna see after going? What's the power that they're building, and are they like organizing some kind of effort, like strategy team that's going to sit down with the public officials? Other than me just going to a protest because I'm mad, and so, and because I'm a mom, and I don't have a lot of time on my hands, so I'm a little strategic about where and when I attend. If I can't attend something, oftentimes what I do to show support is I'll turn a few other people out to the event, and, and or both, I'll give to the organization or the organizer that's giving the thing or doing, organizing it.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 32:59**

And did any of the protesters that you connected with or any of the other organizers that you work with, did any of them say anything about exposure to COVID-19?

**Rosie Bryant 33:12**

I didn't hear anyone say anything, however they did, when they organized the event, they required everyone to wear a mask, and they had hand sanitizers, and I think there's some, some of our clergy that we worked with showed up with masks and hand sanitizers. I gave out free masks to clergy to give out to people, however they see fit.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 33:37**

So how would you describe your relationship to the Black Lives Matter movement?

**Rosie Bryant 33:42**

I would say there's not a strong relationship there for me personally, and I don't believe our organization ever had one, and if they did, it was prior to me working here. I'm a little unclear about the structure of the local Black Lives Matter group here and like who runs it, who's your base, like who are the people that you're developing? Do you have a 501(c)(3)? However, recently, at our city county meeting, I did connect to one of the young ladies that are a part of this. I believe she identifies as female, so I'm assuming what her gender is, but I connected with her, and her and I are gonna sit down because like I said, this movement has brought an opportunity to build and bridge across those relationships. There was an incident that happened within the organization where one of the people who identify as "they" was found out to be acting as black but was really white. And I believe, I feel personally that was part of the string because when I have tried to interact with the group before, this particular individual made it very difficult for me to interact, gave me a very difficult time, was kind of disruptive in one of my meetings, even told me that I was trying to co-op the movement. And as a black woman, that's actually laughable now, given that this individual is not even black, they're white. And so it was a... so that has been some issue. I'm not sure internally, how that has messed... or, or maybe not, has hurt their organizing efforts in the city.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 35:34**

So have you then found, how have you then found the Black Lives Matter movement to be received across the city?

**Rosie Bryant** 35:50

Hmm, it's just been really interesting because to be honest, like, it wasn't until I started organizing, as an organizer with Faith in Indiana until I started hearing things about the local chapter, I didn't realize, I didn't, again, the Black Lives Matter movement when I was in school had just started coming out, and again, I wasn't really familiar about who it was that started it, the structure, and that there were these individual chapters and cities. When I started organizing, it's like, in my opinion, and from what I was hearing, it was like you had these group of people that were in relationship with one another, and they were really, really close. And it was really hard to get into that local movement, particularly because I felt like there was one individual that purposely did that on purpose, that made it difficult to, to engage them in that way. And then a lot of people on the outside felt like, and this is just the thoughts that they were too aggressive, that they made it difficult to engage with them, they weren't willing to, and this is the feedback that I'm hearing from other people, that they didn't want to meet or work with other people in other groups, and they had their way of doing things. And so that was what I was hearing. I also have heard, especially particularly from black men, feeling like the Black Lives Matter group, like eliminates them from the movement. I've heard a lot of black community feeling like the Black Lives Matter group doesn't focus, only focuses on their main issues are LGBTQ issues. So there's like this divide, I think, in the black community around not just locally, but nationally as well around like, what it is that Black Lives Matter does, like there's been some questions about their funding, where they get their funding from, and where they're spinning it to. So it's like all of these issues, and I don't think anyone really understands it. I really have had taken the chance to sit down to talk it through and figure out where we can align on some stuff, so I don't fully know all of the dynamics, but that's what I've been hearing.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 38:22

So what can you tell me about the role of art in the movement for racial justice and/or Black Lives Matter?

**Rosie Bryant** 38:30

Say that question one more time.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 38:32

What can you tell me about the role of art and the movement for racial justice and/or the Black Lives Matter movement?

**Rosie Bryant** 38:39

Hmm, that's a good question. I don't have an answer for that because I don't know. I don't know the role of art. I know there's, I am... Yeah, I'm not artistic, and I never have been so, and I've never really gotten into art and stuff like that before, so I don't know.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 38:57

Have you heard of or seen any art related to the racial justice movements?

**Rosie Bryant** 39:03

Yeah, absolutely. Like there was a mural done down, I think it was on. What's the street that the Madam Walker Theater sits on? There was a mural done on the street. I've been to Gary, Indiana during COVID, and I saw a beautiful mural on someone's home off the beach in Gary, that was beautiful. So I've seen some of that, but actually not a lot here. Maybe I just didn't notice it.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 39:38

So I want to transition away. Unless there's anything else that you'd like to share about movements for racial justice, the Black Lives Matter movement. I want to transition into another set of questions about leadership and the future.

**Rosie Bryant** 39:53

Okay, no, I'm good.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 39:55

Has your experience transformed how you think about your family, your friends and your community and society? And if so, in what ways?

**Rosie Bryant** 40:07

My experience with COVID?

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 40:10

Please interpret the question however you interpret it.

**Rosie Bryant** 40:12

Okay. What's my experience.... I would say, if we're talking about COVID, yes. Like I said earlier, my change in health and the way that I look at food changed. And my experience as an organizer has changed in what we're able to do when we come together, like prior to me organizing, I didn't think change was possible, and I was okay with accepting things that the way that they are. And just being like, "well, this is just the way things are, so you have to kind of just deal with them." And so that changed, and actually, when I started organizing, I didn't want to organize with clergy. I found it difficult to organize with clergy. I found some of the comments made by clergy, frustrating at times, particularly black, male clergy. I found it difficult on some of the things that they thought and viewed of the leadership of women sometimes was difficult, but what I found was, was like earlier this year, I made a choice to organize them anyway. And the fruits of my labor of doing that proved to be amazing, and that, and to work through my own biases and how I view clergy and understanding myself that I actually have something to offer because like, I grew up in thinking, like clergy, were these powerful people and smart, intelligent people, and only certain people had access to them, and that I wasn't one of those people, and that I couldn't have access to them, so that was just like my own confidence issue that I had to work through. So yeah.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 42:09

How have municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded to the COVID-19 outbreak?

**Rosie Bryant** 42:19

Locally in Indianapolis, they responded in a great way. They listened to us, they created a fund for rental assistance that also open to undocumented immigrants, you didn't see that in any other city in Indiana, so that was great. They released a lot of people from jail, and they were like below 50% capacity because of our organizing work. They put testing sites in communities of color. I would say locally, at the municipal level, they did a great job; at our state level, not so much. They didn't do the best of job, and in some other cities, they did some of the things that we did here, but again, it wasn't like in Gary, I think they put one testing site, and it wasn't compar-

talking to people that are from Gary, they were like it wasn't in a convenient space, and so that was interesting. They were like Gary is not that small. We're small, but we're not that small, and so that was interesting. Um, but I think it just varies depending on what city you're in.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 43:29

What would you like to see from leaders?

**Rosie Bryant** 43:33

I would like to see more transparency of like, why did it take so long to get testing? Why, like focusing more on the health impact, particularly for black people, like the food deserts and making sure black people not only have access to food, but actually healthy food. Like why aren't we talking about that? Why aren't we talking about that actually, sugar is really extremely bad for you right now during COVID given that it suppresses your immune system? And you need your immune system to be healthy. Like, why aren't we doing that? And having some of these food pantries, giving them access to healthy food and not a lot of these sugary, processed foods that they're giving out. I would like to see more of that. I would like them to see to give money just, honestly, in people's pockets. And to honestly, for those that are not working right now, figuring out a way to just waive their rent but also supporting the business owners who have to pay their bills as well. Like I don't want to just see them, but just not with anything. I'm trying not to cuss... um, or with them because a lot of the people that are doing the rental services, those are small businesses or individuals trying to supplement their income, so I don't want to say waive the rent and just screw them over as well. So I think just more resources, more money in people's pockets, having a way to like really help people who are struggling paying their rent and mortgage, and helping small businesses as well, is really important.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 45:27

So, um, let me see, I would like to know how has the COVID-19 outbreak affected other communities, you may be apart of school, or church, fraternity, sorority, or any other kinds of community groups that you may be part of. How has COVID-19 affected your participation with them, your engagement with them, and those communities overall?

**Rosie Bryant** 45:54

Yeah, some of those, like the, I was a part of this group, who were helping people who are interested in running for office, I was a part of that leadership group; that meeting just stopped. We took a long time for the leadership to reply to us, and when they did, they scheduled like this meeting for an all day event, that was difficult, and I just could not attend an all day event virtually like that. And so I missed the last session, another organization that I was with that does a lot of stuff on education, a leadership program that I was doing with them, they went virtual. They instead split it up in a few days, which made it a little, a little more easier, but difficult to connect with the people in the leadership group, so it just like, the training just wasn't, you just get a different type of training, when you're in person versus virtual. But, um, so that was part of it. And then, um, school has been really difficult because I'm, well, we are the type of parents that like to be able to go visit our child's classroom, because that's what's been most successful for her. It's not just to visit to check, like her knowing that we can pop up at any time, got her behavior into an order, and also build a better relationship with the teacher, and then also allowed us to see like, how's the teacher managing the classroom, what are some things that we can work together to make this either better, or for me to be even supportive to the teacher. And so that was really difficult, um, getting the school back on board that just because this is COVID, like, we can do some things, but I still don't want to not be

engaged in my daughter's school. So that was difficult to manage and to get over. Um, so schools, just, it's been interesting that schools have all of these precautions, like, it was hard for me to go visit my daughter's school, however, you guys have football games, and sports still going, like it was no problem with that, so that was really interesting to navigate. And just the reasoning around people doing things that just did not make sense to me; you're going to do this, but you're not going to do that, so that is interesting to watch and really rationalize that doesn't make any sense. My daughter's doctor has been difficult to deal with, the doctor's office, like I needed to get a physical form filled out, but they wouldn't let me come in and drop off the form. I had to mail it in and then wait for them to mail it back. They were unwilling to like do fax like other doctor's offices, like just very limiting and very, like not flexible on what this could look like, in some organizations and some entities has been, they haven't been flexible in anything. And even when you as the parent offer alternative routes that still keep people safe, they're unwilling to like budge, and so that's been interesting to, to navigate. Um, yeah. A lot of organizations, church, like watching churches, go virtual, has been interesting, like some churches struggling with going virtual because they didn't have the stuff that they needed, particularly the church that I belong to. I've seen them do a fairly good job, but I haven't seen them on YouTube as much; the service is live on YouTube, which is what is on my TV. So I have to watch it on my laptop instead of on my TV with a bigger screen, it makes it easier to watch because they're not doing live stream on YouTube because I don't have the other apps to do anything else. So yeah.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 49:58

So we are in our last 14 minutes or so of the interview, so I would like to know, what concerns do you have about employment and the economy more broadly, in the midst of COVID-19?

**Rosie Bryant** 50:14

It's concerning because not a lot of people have jobs right now, and those that are, that do, maybe their hours are reduced. I'm also concerned about like, what this is going to do for people financially, and being able to afford and live their bills, like, not just currently, but long term because once you get yourself in that rabbit hole of trying to catch up, it's like, a downward spiral, and it's really hard to get out of. So those are some of my concerns. I know, like people that I know, that have invested into the stock market. That's been really concerning. For some, for some people, I'm just worried about as a whole, like, what does this mean? Like, I just bought a house like, am I gonna like? Like, I don't know what this means for me either. Um, so just concerns about overall.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 51:20

So what do you imagine your life would be like, will be like, in a year from now?

**Rosie Bryant** 51:33

Honestly, I don't know because there's so much uncertainty, I have no idea. Literally that's all I got because I really don't know.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 51:45

So you have no idea for a year from now, any idea of five years from now?

**Rosie Bryant** 51:53

I can tell you what I'm hopeful to happen because there's so much uncertainty around COVID, and our administration has sent out, it's hard to figure out what it's going to look like when your administration is not clear

with clarity about what's really going on with COVID. Like, you're like scratching your brain like, is this really this? Is this like, you have literally no idea. They've been talking about passing another stimulus package, haven't seen that yet. So you don't know what the presidency is going to look like, so you have no idea. I would say my hope is for a year for now is that COVID would have passed and deaths would have stopped being lost. And that people, there's an uprising of black people now that are continuing to think about ways to start their own businesses and that they're continuing to do that so. And that there are businesses, black businesses that are trying to figure out a strategic plan, like what do we do in case this ever happens again, so that we can be prepared for this. I'm hopeful that financially, that we remain stable, like we have been able to, and that black people really start thinking about, okay, I can no longer continue to worry about having the best outfit on, or having the best shoes on because I need to save and/or both invest in ways that with this happened again, that my family will be okay. My hope is that my family will follow suit and some of the financial things and decisions that I've made for the longest time, like I lived in a cheap apartment that was raggedy and wasn't the, wasn't the best at the eye, but I made it work. And I did that for a very reason, and I'm, for reasons so that we can get to the place that we are now, and that right now in the house that I live in, I don't have any furniture; we don't have anything. And that's okay because I want to be able to empower people that the things that we think that are important are not because when you turn 60, what's not fun, is 60, 70 you're working at Walmart because you have to, or you're trying to figure out how you're going to pay your bills and now you're in line for food stamps because you have to, right, and so like that's what I'm hopeful is that this COVID-19 has awakened people into, particularly I'm talking about the black community, about like what, just like I said with a change of health, that the change of like wealth and finances has changed for people as well.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 54:51

Last few questions knowing what you know now, what do you think that individuals, communities, or governments need to keep in mind for the future?

**Rosie Bryant** 55:03

They need to keep in mind that people, real people, are suffering. While you're arguing with public officials about whether they're lying or not, you're still living very comfortably with your, with your life, including Biden and his Vice President pick that while you guys are arguing with these public officials, people are losing their lives, people are losing their homes, children are going hungry, people are going, stressing out, people are mentally just at their breaking point. And that we need to keep in mind these individuals not just like this, yeah, we know this is happening, that this is really happening like that there are real lives that are at stake, because of the decisions of us to act or not to act, or to be silenced in the matter, that people's lives are at stake.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 56:07

Is there anything else that you would like us to talk about?

**Rosie Bryant** 56:11

No, not unless you have another question.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 56:15

Last question is who else should I be interviewing? Any people that come to mind, any groups, any organizations now that you have completed the oral history interview? Anyone else that you think has a compelling story or whose narrative might be helpful for the future of the archive?

**Rosie Bryant** 56:34

I think it would be great to like interview college students, young people, even some people from the Black Lives Matter group. It would be interesting to hear from them, their thoughts on this movement, that would be actually, I would listen to that interview. Um, like people like my son, who's, he's 23, I talked to him about this movement and what it means to him to vote; is he voting? Yeah, it would be interesting to hear their feedback, and even some young, some kids under 18, it would be kind of interesting to hear their feedback.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 57:10

Well, if you would be willing to connect me with any of those people you've just mentioned, especially your son, your 23 year-old, I think he would be one of the younger people that I will have interviewed if I do have a chance to interview him, so please feel free to share the information with him that he may participate. But if there are no other questions, and there are no other names or organizations that come to mind, I am going to end the recording. Is that okay?

**Rosie Bryant** 57:39

Yeah, that's fine.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 57:40

Well, again, I am Shannon Nicole Gladden. It is Monday, October 19th, 2020. It is just before 11am Eastern Daylight Saving Time, and I have interviewed with Rosie Bryant in Indianapolis, Indiana for the COVID-19 Journal of the Plague Year Archive. This is the end of our recording.