

## Transcript of Interview with Bryan Gilbert by Shonda Nicole Gladden

**Interviewee:** Bryan Gilbert

**Interviewer:** Shonda Nicole Gladden

**Date:** 10/05/2020

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

**Location (Interviewer):**

**Abstract:** Indiana University – Purdue University Indianapolis student Shanda Nicole Gladden interviews Bryan Gilbert for the COVID 19 project in hopes of collecting stories about racial justice movements in the context of COVID 19. In this interview they discuss noticeable changes in his neighborhood and work place. The reputation of the Eastside of Indianapolis and personal concerns surrounding COVID. The interviewee spoke about his personal concerns surrounding COVID as well as politics, the importance of voting and rising racial tensions. They spoke about the Black Lives Matter movements, protests and demonstrations and art installations that have followed that. They also spoke about hopes for the future, predictions on how COVID will impact the future. How COVID might change relationships (family, friends, community and society as a whole). The interviewee also touched topics of the LGBT+ community, getting married during a pandemic and the hopes he has for the progression of the community in the future.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:01**

Good morning. Good morning. Good morning. Can you hear me?

**Bryan Gilbert 00:03**

Yes.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:04**

Outstanding. And do you see up in the corner that it says that we are recording?

**Bryan Gilbert 00:11**

Yes, I do.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:12**

And do I have your permission to record?

**Bryan Gilbert 00:14**

I do.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 00:15**

Outstanding. So today is Monday, October 5 2020. It is 10:04am. And I am Shonda Nicole Gladden. I am here?

**Bryan Gilbert** 00:31

That's me.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 00:34

I am here with please state your first and last name or your name how you'd like it to be presented for the recording.

**Bryan Gilbert** 00:41

Bryan Gilbert.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 00:43

I'm here with Bryan Gilbert. We are in, a Bryan, where are you located right now?

**Bryan Gilbert** 00:48

I am on the Near East Side of Indianapolis, Indiana. I'm near the community heights or Emerson heights area.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 00:57

Outstanding. And so I want to thank you for this time that you have set aside to do this oral history interview. We have done a bit of the pre interview. As part of our oral history module training, you have shared with me your demographic information, and just for the recording, if you will share it again, in terms of your race, your ethnicity, ethnicity, your gender, and your age.

**Bryan Gilbert** 01:24

Okay, I am an African American male. I am 36 years old, 36 and a half. And yes.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 01:38

And anything you care to tell me in terms of your gender identity or sexual orientation,

**Bryan Gilbert** 01:43

okay, I am a male identify as a male and I am a gay male that was previously bisexual. So

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 01:55

okay, thank you for sharing that demographic information. Want to briefly review the informed consent and the deed of gift document that you signed and returned. Thank you so much for doing that prior to our interview. Again, this interview as you read is for the COVID-19 Oral History Project, which is associated with the Journal of the Plague year, a COVID-19 archive. The 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 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 own histories to our open access and open source database. As well as myself along with another team member. We are collecting oral history interviews from those individuals who self identify as activists and artists who are willing to share with us who are in the Indianapolis, Indiana primarily area. This study will help us to collect narratives and understandings about

COVID-19 as well as help us to better understand the impacts of this pandemic. Over time. This recording demographic information and the verbatim transcript will be deposited in the Journal of the plague year a COVID-19 archives and the Indiana University Library System for the use of researchers and the general public. So you have any questions about the project that I can answer at this time?

**Bryan Gilbert** 03:41

No, no, not right now.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 03:43

Okay. So taking part in the study is voluntary, you may choose not to take part or you may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate in this study 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 this digital video formats and will be transcribed the recordings and the transcriptions of our interview copies of any supplementary documents or additional photos that you wish to share. And the informed consent and deed of gift will be deposited may be deposited in the Journal of the plague year, a COVID-19 archives and the Indiana University 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 on do not? In addition to your signed document, will you please offer verbal confirmation that you understand and agree to these terms?

**Bryan Gilbert** 04:57

I understand and I agree.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 04:59

I'm also asking that you verbally confirm that you have agreed that your interview will be made available under the Creative Commons Attribution non commercial Share Alike 4.0 International license as well as the COVID-19 Oral History project, the Journal of the Plague Year, a COVID-19. archives, 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 also agree that the oral history materials may be used by the COVID-19 oral history project and Indiana University, including its assigns and transferees for any purpose, including but not limited to marketing, advertising, publicity, or other promotional purposes. And you agree that Indiana University will have final editorial authority over the use of the oral history materials, and you waive any right to inspect or approve of any future use of the oral history materials. Moreover, you agree that the public has the right to use the materials under the terms of fair use, as explained in 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 this License? I agree. Finally, I want to ask you for verbal confirmation that you have agreed that your interview will be made available to the public immediately.

**Bryan Gilbert** 06:45

I agree.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 06:46

All right. Now that is over that is all of the confirmations. So thank you for indulging the process to get those verbal confirmations completed. So tell me a little bit about yourself. What are the primary things that you do on a day to day basis? For example, what is your job? What are your extracurricular activities? And how have they changed since the beginning of COVID-19?

**Bryan Gilbert** 07:12

Well, originally, my job title is case manager reentry case manager at the John Bonner Neighborhood Centers. And so my function of my job there is to offer case management services, internal external resources to the Near East Side community specifically, the 46201 zip code or the surrounding areas. So we do, excuse me, income support coaching. And we work on a three person team that consists of a case manager, slash income support coach, financial coach and career coaching. And so we work on like a two gen center working families approach that was developed by the United Way to make sure that we're helping individuals move forward for self sufficiency by tackling down with income supports, like the 12 life areas of income support, such as childcare, health coverage, transportation needs, any barriers that they're facing. And then the financial coaches work on financial net growth, credit consolidation, budgeting, and just healthier spending practices, because a lot of our clients do come in suffering from a lot of financial issues and impact, because of, you know, just different life circumstances or different decisions that they had to come across. And so, and we also do career coaching, to try to help people get connected to training, or resume writing or job leads. So its just a three part approach, and that person is at the center of the group. And so it has been a big shift, since the pandemic has happened. With my job, we have moved to be completely completely virtual online. And so that piece of having that face to face interaction has really changed to just be virtual through teams or other platforms that might, you know, be comfortable for the client. And so there is some options to meet in person, but it's very, it's very, you got to really be, make sure that you're able to practice that social distancing, and be mindful when if you do decide to meet with that client in person, but it's not a requirement, like it used to be anymore. It has really been kind of a challenge over the last few months, especially at the beginning in March, making sure that the platform is working well. And we had to change different workshops that we do. Family development workshops changed. Umm, different target areas that we want to discuss because some stuff that we were targeting before is not relevant right now. So we've been targeting mostly mental health areas domestic violence, mental health, coping mechanisms of being at home. And also healthy spending practice with big sums of money like those stimulus package, just making people more financially aware of what's going on, especially since there's a lot of eviction issues going on and people running behind on utilities due to you know, loss of jobs and decreasing hours, or income. So that that has been a struggle, being at home working from home 24/7 for the last few months.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 10:48

Thank you very much. Now, can you repeat, you've said you are you live where in Indianapolis, your neighborhood, your city, not your zip code, but your neighborhood or your city?

**Bryan Gilbert** 11:06

It's called a it's either Emerson Heights or Community Heights, because it's right there near communities hospital, but it's on the Near East Side of Indianapolis.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 11:09

Alright, so the Near East Side of Indianapolis, can you talk to me a little bit about what you are seeing in your neighborhood? What kinds of engagement on the street? And what have you noticed that has changed about your neighborhood and your neighbors' practices since the pandemic?

**Bryan Gilbert** 11:26

I what I have noticed is that the Near East side is really trying very hard to try to improve the area over here. The Bonner Center has, you know, purchased a lot of properties over the years, and re modeled a lot of homes to make them more energy efficient. And to try to clean up the neighborhood. I have noticed around that the neighborhood is becoming more diverse. And individuals are engaged with each other, there are certain areas of the Near East Side that are a little bit worse than others that have a little bit more crime, higher crime going on. But there are neighborhoods that are very engaged, family oriented, very diverse and quite, I guess you could say neighborly, so everybody pretty much watches out for each other, especially here on this street that I live on. The neighbors have been very kind and we, you know, watch out for each other's properties, to make sure that there's no activity going on that might you know, be any kind of criminal activity or theft or anything like that going on. So I've noticed a big shift over here on the east side is not as bad as what people have made it out to be over the years. And it might have been a few years ago. But I think from what I'm seeing it is getting better. But there still is more room for improvement, of course.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 12:56

So you said something, you said "what people have made it out to be?" Can you unpack that for researchers who may be unfamiliar with the east side of Indianapolis?

**Bryan Gilbert** 13:06

Well, when they when when a person said, Oh, I live on the east side, like oh, what do you know? What's that? Oh, that's a scary area, you know, you might get robbed over there, you might get shot over on the Near East Side. Or if they're on the news, you might hear a lot of news stories about on the east side, a shooting or hit and run, or different things like that. But when you actually live over here, yes, you are going to hear those things on the news. But when you're actually living over here and working in the neighborhood, it's it's it's not as, um, on an ongoing basis, every single day, like it's displayed on the media. It is you know, there are little areas that are a little bit tougher than others. But for the most part, it is trying to improve and try to lower the crime here in the area by you know, making sure that properties are cleaned up, either remodeling our getting rid of abandoned properties, just trying to utilize the buildings that are already in existence. And so there's a lot of small businesses around the east side that are really trying to help improve, especially in the Irvington area, as well, which sits which is only like 5-10 minutes away from where I live.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 14:23

Thank you. Um, so what issues have most concerned you about the covid 19 pandemic?

**Bryan Gilbert** 14:31

Is, I guess I should say, my career trajectory, and what is going to happen this coming year, earlier this year, you know, I was working on a master's degree, which I finally finished this summer in August, and graduation was canceled, so I was not able to walk and that was through Indiana Wesleyan University. And they had canceled the commencement. So it kind of it was hard to get some sort of closure. With that, and so it kind of put a pause on moving forward it forward with my career trying to move into more of a leadership role. And so I'm just a little,

my fear is what will life look like, you know, down the line. As far as my career as far as here in Indiana, Indianapolis, Indiana, will I remain here in the city and state? Or will I move abroad? So it has changed a lot. And it also has somewhat put a strain on, you know, my relationship early on, because it went from me being working at the office and being out, you know, in the community doing different workshops and networking, to being at home. And so I know, sometimes it puts a little bit of tension in the household because you can't close your, sometimes it's hard to separate your personal life from your work life, especially when you're working from home. And so I feel as though that, it is putting a strain on my mental health. And so I'm trying my best to try to look for coping mechanisms and to separate my work and life balance, because it has put a strain, and I did just get married a couple weeks ago. And that was one of the issues that was brought up after the ceremony, you know, once you get back home into the normal routine of things, again, after the whole wedding is passed. I'm having a hard time separating work and life, I can't shut it off. And so it's putting some tension out there. It's just kind of hard to get over that tension. And and so it takes a little bit of time for me to get over that hump in the evening time.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 16:48

So can you speak to the impact of racial justice issues, racial justice movements, racial justice events in the current events, landscape, the impact that that has had on you, in the midst of this pandemic?

**Bryan Gilbert** 17:05

I'm very nervous, to be honest with you, I really am. I'm not gonna, you know, try to say like, all things Oh, you know, I'm trying not to sugarcoat things, but I am very nervous, especially getting married as a, as a gay black male. I'm it I am very nervous. You know, I did watch the debate. And it was very alarming. I've never seen a debate like that, over the years. And so it does have me a little bit on eggshells. Right now what that looks like, you know. Am I, am I going to be even more impacted because I decided to get married, and be open about who I am. It was a big foot for me, especially as a black man to be open enough about, you know, my life to move forward. And so I'm just wondering, what will happen next? Will there be more discrimination going on, you know, to some, you know, in my mind, sometimes you think it's a double impact. I'm male, African American, and then, and then I'm, you know, identify as gay on top of that, and then I'm in a married relationship. So I'm just wondering what will be next with discrimination if things don't get better. I know, at the center, the John Bonner Center, they are really trying their best to try to do diversity and inclusion, they have a couple of consultants. One of them is the son of Dr. Andrew J. Brown. So he's Andrew J. BROWN, JR. And then so a couple of consultants are working with the center to try to help bridge that generational gap. And and to help, you know, improve with diversity from the organizational standpoint to help with the community of trying to make sure that everybody feels as though that they're a part and don't feel as though that they have to hide their selves or not speak about what they're feeling or their opinions. So I think the center is trying their best to try to make sure that they are reaching a diverse group, and we do but within the organization, though. So I know that's been a big push over the last few months.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 19:25

So you said that you are a bit, did you say anxious?

**Bryan Gilbert** 19:32

Yeah.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 19:33

Yeah. And what what would you say is is at the root of that anxiety in this in this moment, in addition to you talked about your identity, you talked about discrimination? Is the pandemic itself part of that? Are the protests a part of that? Is there any what what can you talk a little bit more about the landscape that we're currently in and you also mentioned debates. For the historians that are researching this, perhaps not in this current moment, can you talk about what those debates are?

**Bryan Gilbert** 20:08

Oh, well, you know, the presidential debates when I when I was referring to, and also it started off originally the pandemic had me a bit fearful. But I've kind of moved past that that fearful stage of the pandemic, and just been, you know, mindful, doing the social distancing. And being sure that, you know, I'm, you know, taking care of myself physically, health wise. But what I'm most fearful about is, I'm just going looking back on history, you know, over the years with discrimination going on with that from the Native Americans all the way through, you know, the civil rights movement. And now here we are, in this political climate where there's a lot of disunity going on. And so I'm just thinking to myself, what is the fear going to be, you know, what is, I guess, what the impact is going to be with, you know, my relationship and my interaction as an African American male, as far as you know, in the community here, you know, I'm just a little concerned about, you know, hate related crime, since that has been a lot of stuff going on. And I'm just a little bit nervous. And, you know, me and my partner talked about this, you know, who knows what might happen if things don't start getting better? Who knows, you know, we could be discriminated against or something like that, or, you know, even you know, with women too, you know, we were, you know, watching you know, that movie *The Handmaid's Tale* that that series. And so I'm just wondering, like, what would this look like down the line if things don't start getting better, and we start to start getting unified? And there was an incident that happened. About a month ago, I was in Ohio. And I was there for my partner's family's birthday, one of his nephews had a birthday. And we were actually it was not a birthday, it was Labor Day. And we were going to hardware stores trying to find like, little games cornhole, uh, if you have you heard of that. And so we went to called Rural King. It's like a little small rural, hardware store. Well, when I was going outside, there was a group of, you know, Caucasian, young men look like teenagers. And I heard them say the word nigger in the car. And so that kind of caught me by so that's the first time I ever heard you know, somebody say that in that particular town of Ohio. And so it kind of caught me by surprise. So that really kind of made me like, wonder, you know, what is going to happen next? So it's just the fear of the unknown, I guess.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 23:00

Sorry about that. I couldn't hit the unmute button. So how does this pandemic and the things that you are experiencing? How do they compare to other big events that have happened in your lifetime?

**Bryan Gilbert** 23:12

This is very different for me. Uh, the last big event that I remember, that really had a huge impact was the 911 when the Twin Towers fell, and I remember that as clear as day, but over the years since and then, um, but over the years, since then, nothing is compared to what is going on right now. Um, and so I don't think that there's anything compared to in over the last year, a few years, like this, that we're dealing with now, I don't think anything is really compared to that in my lifetime, that I experienced that has come close to this really, except for the 911, when the Twin Towers fell. And so that's, that's why, you know, I think everybody is very hype because individuals who are in their mid late 30s or mid or early 30s this is probably very different for them, you know, the whole pandemic, you know, a outbreak going on pandemic, you see it in the movies, but then it hits home,

you know what I mean? Like, wow, this is actually going on in real life. So, uh, you never would have thought it would have happened, but here it is.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 24:32

Yeah, so could you speak a little bit to any thoughts you have about current movements focused on racial justice, such as black lives matter?

**Bryan Gilbert** 24:44

Um, yes. With the Black Lives Matter. Um, I do. You know, I am a supportive of the Black Lives Matter movement, of course. And I would hope that it's all lives matter as well. You No, with Black Lives Matter, you know, everybody. And so I don't exactly agree with the violence that's going on with some of the movements. But when you look at it from another side, I you do kind of see why there is some violence because you know, some people have a lot of tension built up with them over the, you know, being locked in on this pandemic. And then it's a snowball butterfly effect. And so individuals are enraged about what was what is going on, that keeps happening repeatedly with law enforcement, and just those subtle racial issues that go on in the workplace as well in organizations. And so I think that people are getting really fed up and feel as though that they're not being heard they're being overlooked. And they're, they're to the point where they're, they're trying to force change. But also, on the other hand, I don't agree with, you know, destroying cities and different things like that, because that really doesn't solve anything in the end. Especially, you know, just like little, you know, businesses in the area are, you know, CVS, pharmacies, and different business like that, I don't think that that will help anything, because I mean, destroying a business is really not going to help anything, it really needs to be a little bit more focused about what kind of protest it should be not so much destruction, because all because it's really hurting ourselves and then having kind of a negative a negative view on us, you know, of us, you know, being destructive, and things like that, but I do understand where they iri.. the frustration is coming from and the rage.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 26:52

So, have you attended any of the protests?

**Bryan Gilbert** 26:55

No, I have not. No, I have not, I have not attended in person, I just been, you know, kind of a supportive of behind the scenes, but I have not been in the midst of it. Frontline.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 27:03

So, what was it about the protests? Have you attended protests ever in life?

**Bryan Gilbert** 27:08

A little bit, a little bit as a teenager, but not a whole lot, not a whole lot. Uh, I just pretty much, you know, try to do what I can, you know, the best I can in my community, as far as you know, and in my role as a case manager working at a not for profit community center. So I have not attended the protest, I guess it's just a issue of safety.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 27:46

When you say issue of safety, what do you mean?

**Bryan Gilbert** 27:50



Well, um, you know, in protest, when it gets very heated, um, you know, you you might run a risk of, you know, your safety being threatened in the midst of that, especially when, you know, you have a collision of different sides coming together. And so that was my fear. So, I just tend to kind of stay back away from that and try to do what I can behind the scenes to be a little bit more peaceful, how I go about things.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 28:24**

So you mentioned that you support the Black Lives Matter movement? Are you a member of the organized Black Lives Matter movement? Or are you aware of an organized Black Lives Matter movement in Indianapolis?

**Bryan Gilbert 28:39**

Well, I am part of Faith in Indiana. Um, but as far as you know, other groups I have not, you know, like immediately gotten involved in anything in any you know, other groups as of right now. Um, and I've always felt that I should be you know, the work the demands of work has been kind of very hard on me lately, with all the stuff that's going on with you know, housing and different needs like that.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 29:03**

Please, can you say more about Faith in Indiana, what is that for historians who may not be aware of or have heard of the organization?

**Bryan Gilbert 29:22**

Okay. Faith in Indiana is an activist group here in the Indianapolis area, and they are nationwide. I became a member of a little bit about a year and a half ago, a little bit and I've been a part of a different movements like the gun violence initiative program to try to decrease the gun violence on the street and so I was involved in that and then did go to that, that rally at the church about making sure we're holding accountable the political party about you know, making sure that the funds that are for that movement are going in the right way to try to decrease the gun violence. And also now it's a big push about helping people, you know, getting people to vote, that really need to be voting, because they were saying that a lot of individuals, African Americans who is does impact have not voted over the years. And so they're just trying to get more people out there to vote, who really should be voting. And so that that group really focuses on injustices and trying to help remove those injustices. And so I'm still kind of new to the group, but I'm getting better with, you know, learning more about what they do and still trying to be involved.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 30:53**

So, you mentioned that you are new to the Faith in Indiana group, can you talk to me a little bit about how long you've been a participating in Faith in Indiana? What motivates you to participate with Faith in Indiana? Anything else you want to share about any movements for racial justice that Faith in Indiana is involved with?

**Bryan Gilbert 31:16**

Um, well, yeah, I was involved with strengthening, off and on about a little over a year and a half. And I first got involved through my brother, Edward Ball, who was a big member of the group, and still he is, and so I, you know, I participated in a few meetings, and then you know, the gun violence. That's what really got me going and getting involved in the group because it has impacted my family, it has impacted me personally, you know, being robbed at gunpoint, in front of my own house, not this home that I'm currently in, but my last house that I was renting a few years ago. And so and of course, having a brother that was impacted, you know, with the gun

violence, so that just really pushed me to really get involved. So it's been a slow, but surely involvement that I'm getting into the group. And I'm just trying to get more and more involved in slowly but surely, probably not the pace I would like, but I'm getting better. And so right now, the big push is to try to change the narrative, and also to encourage people to vote and have those conversations around, you know, why is it important to vote? What things will impact you if you do not vote, what things are important to you? in your in your life, that you might want to see change? So that's what they are. They've been doing a lot of conversation lately on, in this climate they we're in right now.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 32:56**

So thank you, what can you tell me, tell us, about the role of art in the racial justice movements and Faith in Indiana, and any of the ways that you are seeing activism and engagement on the ground in Indianapolis right now?

**Bryan Gilbert 33:14**

Oh, well, um, as far as art goes, the art area? Well, um, a lot of you know, with with the music industry, you know, there's a lot of genres of music that are coming together, you know, like the country coming in with the hip hop merging. And then also in the area, just having a different areas of having open for you know, artists in locally in Indianapolis, I know that John Bonner has really been pushing for the art district, they did by the old and I hope I pronounced this right Rivoli theatre with they're going to be trying to remodel. And so with the graffiti, the different paintings that they had done down on the different buildings, I'm glad to see that they're going to be moving those things and putting them actually as a display for the Black Lives Matter movement. And so I'm not you know, quite clear on you know, as far as Faith in Indiana, about what the whole art piece of that but I do know that there is a lot of you know, different things going on around town as far as trying to incorporate the art with the Black Lives Matter. I'm glad that they're not destroying those drawings downtown and instead moving them to a designated spot. And as far as those monuments that kind of make it like are the civil rights, or Civil War history make it glorified. You know, they shouldn't really destroy it, but just tell the full story about you know, what that whole monument means and those different, you know, historical monuments, the full story to get the full picture, not just the picture from one side of it, but the whole story about what really happened, you know, if that makes sense.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 35:16**

So historical monuments? Where do you mean? Which historical monuments? Or if you can give the kind of example of what exactly you mean?

**Bryan Gilbert 35:27**

okay, um, I can't think off the top of my head, but there's just been a few monuments? Um, I really can't think of a, you know, pacifically one, but I just know that there was a lot of stories switched on 60 Minutes about, you know, should these monuments stay upright, or should they be destroyed. But, you know, some people say just destroy them. But they were saying, put them into a museum and then tell that full story about what went on with that. Not just making it glorify, but also tell about the struggle about, you know, the negative impact that happened, you know, as far as you know, African Americans in the country over the years. So that's what I would like to see. And so I am a big supporter of that.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 36:20**

Well, thank you, I'm going to shift now, we have about 20 minutes remaining in the time that we set aside for today's interview. So far, we have talked about your personal and community context, in light of COVID-19. We talked about racial justice movements and Black Lives Matter movement. Is there anything else that you want to say about those previous two topics before we shift to the last couple?

**Bryan Gilbert** 36:45

Um, no, not right now.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 36:47

Okay, so let's talk about leadership and future, how has your experience transformed how you think about your family, your friends, your community and society, thinking about this COVID-19 experience? How has your experience transformed how you think about your family, your friends, community and society?

**Bryan Gilbert** 37:09

Well, during this last few months, it I have had a lot of thinking to do, about what really is important in life, you know, we sometimes get so caught up with, you know, looking at the little things, our little we trying to, you know, build a good life, or we get so caught up in the worldly needs that we need or the earthly needs that we have. But during this pandemic, it really has shown started to really have me appreciate family more, and interacting with people. Especially even closer with my coworkers. I think, you know, even though we don't see each other in person, that often, I think it has brought a lot of people closer together and really started be more mindful about how people are feeling their, where their mental status is trying to be encouraging even more. So we did lose one of our career coaches during this pandemic, she did pass away, back Labor Day weekend, Treva Tunstall, she was, you know, 46 years old and passed away. And so it has made me more mindful about other people's views, making sure I'm being positive and supportive during this time, not always dwelling on negative, the negative all the time, trying to steer and redirect, and just look at the small things and be thankful for, you know, for family, and then also, you know, in my own relationship, you know, being thankful that, you know, during this whole pandemic, that I'm able to, you know, walk along some side, someone who is going through this as well, you know, because my partner's part Hispanic, and part Irish, so there has been, you know, a lot of thought about, you know, just being supportive of other people and then also reaching out to people even more so, you know, a simple phone call, taking the initiative to try to see how someone else is doing and doing more fellowship, you know, my family has had a lot of little small gatherings since the whole pandemic happened, just coming together and just, you know, sharing each other's views, same thing with work, having, you know, different conversate peer support. And also, I still work as a direct support professional within a residential youth setting, and also being encouraged to the youth to keep them going. I know they have, you know, have had a hard impact with the pandemic being, you know, contained inside of their facility for so many months. So just being supportive of them and encouraging. And so this is being a servant leader. You know, trying to be a help to somebody while being a leader. So that's what I've always strived to do is to keep servitude going.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 40:17

I have a couple of follow up questions. One, in this immediate set of commentary, you mentioned you lost a co worker, did this coworker pass away due to COVID-19? Or do you not know?

**Bryan Gilbert** 40:30

I don't think it was due to COVID issues, it was other health related issues. But it was not related to that. But I know she was very stressed due to the pandemic, with with, you know, having struggles with childcare, and then trying to balance her life, you know, demands of work at home as a career coach, and also being a single mother. And so I was always trying to be there as a support for her as a peer. And just trying to be on a positive note. So that's what really, what made me really think about, you know, things even more like we really got to start being very more supportive of each other, and just reaching out. It doesn't have to be every day, but just reaching out just to let somebody know that they are appreciated, that they do count, and that they do have support.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 41:29

So you also mentioned that a few weeks ago, you married in the midst of COVID-19, can you talk to us about what that marriage experience, the wedding look like in the midst of COVID-19? Did you do anything different than you then you would have done if you were not in a pandemic,

**Bryan Gilbert** 41:50

I'm probably so it probably would have been a little bit more in the traditional way. But I guess it got me to think outside the box and how to bring, you know, a diverse group of people together. It was very diverse, you know, um, since it is an interracial marriage, and so it was outside. It was, you know, respectful of social distancing. And, you know, proper hygiene, you know, with hand washing hand sanitizer. And so I guess what the whole ceremony experience, it really got us to appreciate life and nature and and outside. But you know, the joy that nature can bring that you might not focus in on your everyday life, it was it was not here in Indianapolis was at Derby, Indiana, overlooking the Ohio River. So it really got people to really think and look outside the box and appreciate the good thing that life has to offer you get away from you get away from that whole, everyday struggle of life. And so when people did come together, it was a lot of joy. And interaction from people from a whole diverse and that's what we really weren't trying to target is bringing people together from different backgrounds and diversity and come together and just interact and have a good time with each other when all the tension, because we know was Caucasian there were, you know, Hispanic, there were other interracial couples, there were heterosexual couples, you know, and so everybody was able to come together and put aside those differences. There were people from different political parties, you know, Republicans and Democrats. And so it was a nice experience to have. And that's what we were striving for. We were trying to not make it about a wedding, but having a gathering of people and a fellowship. That was the main target.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 43:57

Thank you for that. So just a few more questions. How have municipal leaders and government officials in your community responded to the pandemic?

**Bryan Gilbert** 44:08

I think they have responded very well. Um, I know my supervisor, Dean John's, she's over the Indy Rent program at the different community centers that the Indy Rent program, keeping people you know, how's that might be facing eviction or overdoing Ran? And so I think they have been there responding of the pandemic, making sure that, you know, the food commodities we you know, we have food boxes that we've been doing ever since March and even before that, but they have really ramped it up. They have been very proactive in their response to, to this, this whole pandemic, making sure that we're helping the community helping individuals that might be at higher risk, and they've also been very responsive you know, with with staff as well, you know, looking at staff needs, you know, the Bonner Center, a lot of our staff is minority. And so you know, we are kind of at higher risk for

different elements. And so just being respectful of, you know, those needs, and also parents of children that are doing elearning. So just just they're very open and have an open door policy about some of the concerns and needs. So from my opinion, I think they've been very responsive in the midst of this pandemic. And I think, Mayor Hoggsett has done a good job, in my opinion, of making sure that we're trying to be very cautious of the steps that we're taking, instead of just saying, oh, we're reopening again. So I'm glad to see that.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 45:56

Wonderful, so thank you for that. What do you imagine your life being like, in a year?

**Bryan Gilbert** 46:07

I'm hoping that it will be even more a year, my life is stable now, but I hope that it will be even more stable. And I hope that there will be more doors open for me as far as in leadership. And as far as you know, getting past this, this whole isolation thing, so I'm hoping that in the future, there will be, you know, in fact, seen next year that we're able to get back to normal, somewhat, the new normal, I guess, you can say, and just able to move forward and progress. Um, so that that is what what I hope to see by the end of next year, a year from now, and also seeing that I've grown as an individual, and learned, learned from this experience with the pandemic and, and the whole political climate that we're in, and just grow as a person and take this and just become a stronger person. And, and, and know that I can make it through any challenges. And also just keep encouraging other people, you know, who are our, you know, young going through this, as well.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 47:26

So, knowing what, you know, now, what do you think that individuals, communities, or governments needs to keep in mind for the future?

**Bryan Gilbert** 47:35

To make sure that, you know, everybody is heard, and also to get everyone is heard, and also they get, you know, a fair opportunity with things, that they're able to have a well rounded life that's fulfilling. You know, it is helpful, you know, I know, that's not always important, but, you know, individuals to progress forward and also to learn from this is to, also to see that there are still people that are, you know, struggling, that that will need, I guess, more of a helping hand, and just to be more mindful of, you know, with with, you know, the the income of people and also helping, you know, try to, you know, not raise the bar so high, but, you know, help individuals too, that are that are constantly struggling, try to get up to level so they can have a good life, too. So, you know, the lower middle class are the individuals who are facing poverty, give them a chance, you know, to, you know, improve their lives. That's why I'm hoping that we that we gain from this that don't have those resources available to them.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 48:56

Yeah. So we have about seven minutes remaining. And so we're at our closing questions. So is there anything else that you would like us to talk about?

**Bryan Gilbert** 49:13

I guess, and there's another thing too, you know, as far as you know, in the GLBTQ+ community, I guess. I would like to see also more open movements about, you know, African American males that do identify in the gay community as well. I don't hear a whole lot about those kind of groups, like I do with other cultures are other individuals and but from ethnic backgrounds, but I think I would like to see more, you know, groups that help

support, you know, African American men in in in the GLBTQ+ community. I think that would be a real help because it is very hard to be open about your sexuality as a gay black male, because you know, there is a, a, a, I guess, a certain standard, a characteristic that has been kind of in our community about, you know, you know, African American men need to be, you know, the traditional way. And so I feel that you can still, you know, be a traditional male are, you know, identify as male and still have that component in your life and still be professional, and still, you know, carry yourself in a respectful way. And so I just wish there were more groups like that to have that support.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 50:51**

So, um, no go ahead please.

**Bryan Gilbert 50:54**

so it won't be such a taboo to discuss it aloud. They feel as though they have to hide who they are, because of maybe some impact or backlash.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 51:08**

So I'm curious, do you feel this is important specifically for Indiana? Do you mean the United States? Or do you mean, globally?

**Bryan Gilbert 51:19**

I think for the United States as a whole. Um, I feel across the board, not just saying in Indianapolis, Indiana, but across the board in the African American community. And you know, maybe there are some other communities that are a little bit more accepting are open about that, but it's for the African American males, but I think there could be more of them. And maybe they're out there, you just don't hear a lot about them. But I think there could be more here in Indianapolis as well, to try to you know, get more unity in that in that particular culture, as well.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 52:00**

Well, all right, um, four minutes remaining. Who else should we be interviewing? Any people or groups or organizations that come to mind, now that you have experienced a full oral history interview from this COVID-19/Black Livers Matter oral history experience.

**Bryan Gilbert 52:20**

I think another group that would be good to interview would be maybe Diversity Church of Indianapolis. That is on the south east side. They have the main campus on the southeast side, and they have a smaller campus over there on 62nd or 71st and Keystone on the north side, they would be good to interview. Another one is I-town church. That's up north they have three campuses, one in Noblesville, fishers. And I think another one may be in Carmel, but they're mostly up north. And then maybe all of the different 14 community centers, those leaders at the different community centers, you know, outside the John Bonner Center, you know, Mary Wiggs, Edna Martin, Hawthorne Community Center, SE, so maybe even interviewing those leaders at those different organizations as well. That's what I, you know, suggest as well.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden 53:22**

Well, thank you very much. Those are very helpful recommendations, and I will add those to our list. Is there anything else that we should cover before I close the interview and turn off the recording?

**Bryan Gilbert** 53:37

No.

**Shonda Nicole Gladden** 53:39

Well, it is 10:58am. On Monday, October 5 2020. I again, I'm Shonda Nicole Gladden and I have interviewed with Bryan Gilbert for the COVID-19 Oral History Project interview. I'm turning off the recording now. Thank you so much.