

2020924 AAMNC Horace Graydon

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00:20

Go This is Horace graden and he's going to be taking the seat here. Oh, good. Oh, hi, Horace. JOHN. Good. Okay, so I have your name, your first name is H O our AC E. Is that right?



00:35

Yes.



00:36

Perfect. Okay, so here's the way it works. I'm asking people about what what COVID has been like for them. So I have questions. So I asked each question, there's five questions. And then you can answer the question and we can take it, you know, in a little different direction if it goes that way. And so the first question is, before COVID By the way, my name is Julie. I didn't say that. I was talking to her. I said, and I get all wrapped up when I'm talking to Joe. I said, uh, you know, this. So before COVID, what would you say an average day was like for you? And then what's it like now?



01:12

What before COVID, I was working with community partnership program, CPP community partnership program, and other various organizations that I've worked with African

American Museum. And after school program, I had a very busy schedule. My schedule was very my work schedule was and then not talking about all of the work that I do. I don't drive but I walk a lot. I walk at least eight to nine miles a day through him stand through him stand free port all around through that. Plus my various jobs. I go to Hempstead, high school, Freeport high school. I go to a big school I do. I did a lot of work with my job. COVID came and we went into lock down mode. The first month, my whole schedule change was that I was working from home. And I was working from home and I'm not that good at the computer. And so I had to work from home, I had to make calls. I had to do intakes and I had to do various things from home. Plus, in doing the covert, I was cleaning out my sister's house. I was she had the house was sold and sold for about a year and a half. So I took the time to clean the house out so we could be out of the house. When the covert was over. The people told us when the covert over when they give them full clear that's when they wanted to move in. So we cleaned out, cleaned the house out. And that was very traumatic for me because my sister kept everything. I mean everything thing from I'm 75 years old. And I had to go through all that stuff, memories and so forth and so forth.



03:04

Yeah, yeah, that's hard. That's Yeah,



03:06

that's, that's not hard. That's very hard. And so what I did was we clean the house out. I still was working from home. And I was spending a lot of time at home. But I what I was doing is I was I was reading a lot I was reading, um, I spent 32 years in the federal penitentiary. And so I locked down really didn't mean that much to me again. My work schedule was messed up in my exercise schedule was missed. But yeah, but I did. I did started back reading I started reading some of them. Some of my old books that I've had for a long time that I always wanted to get back to read. I started reading James Baldwin, Richard Wright. contain McMullen a lot of old books and old poetry books. You're not in it. What it did was revised me and during this time we were doing the Black Lives Matters was happening. And I was doing the zoo, some zoo, some virtual resume with some young kids and some of the conversations we were having was about the Black Lives Matters about the covid virus. So it changed. It changed my schedule that my whole schedule was geared to the house. Yeah, yeah. You know, I did not go out. I did not get to do my exercise with my walking like I generally do. I didn't get to go to the gym. I didn't get to go around and meet a lot of people. So I lost contact with a lot of people. Like was everyone else, the COVID virus. It really hindered me from doing the work. I know I had friends that

were passing out food and stuff, but I did not take those chances of going out solo Now what we're doing now I find myself getting out more I'm out more I'm almost back on my schedule of working but i'm i'm still being very very safe. I'm laying my mask keeping my social distance and by me being a social being a person that gets out into the community the touching and stuff really, you know people you know, the element or people I mess with you know, they you know, they want to hit a no get down bow you know, you hit them get it they want this to fix and I said no. And, and I was seeing that some people were getting offended. Yeah, yeah. Some people were getting very offended and tos that change even in when you when you're going to some of the stores attitudes have changed. They asked for mass and some of them don't. Digital bodegas Did you know they did not run in nobody away? You have a mass going on? You don't you can still come in Moscow. That's it. That's that's the attitude.



06:10

Let me ask you this. With your walking because I'm a walker to Okay. Do not eight miles like you goodness, Horace, but I still walk. Do you find that now that you're able to get back into the walking that you feel a little bit better in your head? Like, walking for me is like a way to clear my mind. Like I do it for exercise. But I also walk because I need to like clear my thoughts and like, wipe the slate clean. Do you feel like now that you're able to pick back up with your walking you feel a little bit better up in your head a little bit?



06:43

Yes, I Well, I feel good. I never did have any any. Oh boy, but any negative stuff coming out. But I found that I found in walking. Ah, I found a difference in the neighborhoods I would go through. Okay, I found a real I went through Garden City right here in gardens in a rich neighborhood. But I found that they were speaking to me. You know, when I come by and say hello there What? You know how you doing? I had my mask on? Did you need some water? And I found all people will. Oh, people were a little more sociable than I've seen them in a long time. I mean, in some of the neighborhoods, you know, someone in what net when I first started back walking, it wasn't a suspicion of you coming through a neighborhood that you didn't come through. But that change and and and I change I think the political climate change. And I found that all I've just done a day. I went through wingrove walking out that way. And I found that a lot of people were staring. I was being in fact I got stopped one time. And no people want to know what I was doing in this particular neighborhood. Yeah, it was that out too. I'm just walking. doing your thing. I'm just doing me man. Yeah. Well, I engaged him in conversation and asked me you know, I mean, I wasn't hostile, but they came on very aggressive. What are you doing through

here? You know, well, you know, one guy said What is this a Black Lives Matters thing. I said, I'm just walking, you know, so but I but it changed. I had been through there I had never been harassed in the area. And it changed during the during the colon. I think it changed because of the political environment. The environment change. I first started back walking with the covert and everything you could see people are giving you companionship, comradeship, wanting to know is you all right. You know, what? Oh, the Black Lives Matters in the vote covered virus in the political field change greatly.



09:08

Yeah, yeah. That's, yeah, that's interesting. And it's, it's sad because



09:14

yeah, you haven't changed? No, I haven't. I think I've gotten No, I think I've gotten or I've gotten a lot of new insight, or a lot of new insight, a lot of new things that I'm that I'm trying out. I do a lot of stuff. But covert I see right now, that is going to cut a lot of a lot of activities now. Mm hmm.



09:39

So what you started to answer this so the next question is you said about what you're doing to occupy your time but the one so that's number three. Number four is how has it affected any groups you're with and I think you talked about that with the work and you were just touching on it there. But is there any other group like church or with joy Zetas group or anything Is there any other group that you feel like it's different with Now,



10:03

of course, I work with I work on 100 chairs in or after school program from 330 to 630. I work up there, I'm about to run on council up there. And we can't, we used to have 3040 kids, we only can have 10 Kids 15 kids, because we have to practice safe, safe, safe distance. So we had to make the choice between letting the robotics club we had a robotics club, I guess that that started three years ago. And they they've been placing each year getting better and better. And so what we're doing, so we had to make the choice of dealing with the robotics club. And what would be best. So we started dealing with the robotics clubs, and we started doing the virtual, we do virtual school. And we help the kids to app to school kids with the kids, they go to the charter school and ABG in

Hempstead. We do the virtual on the zoom, and we help them with their homework from 330 to 630. Well,



11:09

let me ask you, what subject Do you like helping the kids with? Like, what's your because I always used to like helping with math, but not anymore. I like helping with breeding. But what's the thing you like?



11:18

Well, I don't I do a little math. But what I do is or is to other teachers that are very good at math. But what I generally do is they read I teach him to read and now they're reading Oh, they're reading books. They one of the young girls was reading a book of Kobe giroir. She was the lady that was that was before Rosa Parks with the busboy crocs around, and one of the little young girls, and so I begin to give them and then I'm a history person. You know, I know I know a lot. I know a lot of history. I know a lot of my history, African history, a number of history about the countries. And so I always give them a or tell them about how to be safe. I had a group, I have a group called the kings. And I teach them if they are approached by our law enforcement, what to say what to do, how to act, and make sure they have the school ID and the first thing I tell them is let them know that you're 12 years old, and this is your school ID and you're going home.



12:23

Yeah, yeah. Good. That's good. Yeah, thing with the the history. I love history, too. I I teach history and history. So my, my period of history is American history, and I research monuments and memorials from like 1850s 1920s. And so it's American history. And I teach classes on that. And I love history, but I read history from any period. I love it. I absolutely love history. So I'm in your bio,



12:54

we know that you said about the memorials. I've lived in Washington, DC for about 50 years. Oh, goodness. And I knew and I always in Washington is full of statues of people that you wouldn't even believe, you know, that have that have a statue and a lot of mall like soldiers. A lot of the Civil War soldiers a lot of civil war generals, and I often asked myself, why was this and then I remember that. Washington was the capital after

Philadelphia in the region, Washington became so pro black, was that it was the capital into soldiers were that it was safe for the blacks to be there.



13:45

Yep. Now let me



13:46

ask you this, that that when you were in DC, did you ever see the work? It's by Ed Hamilton, who's a black sculptor from Louisville. I used to live in Kentucky. I'm from the deep south. I'm from Atlanta, but I lived in Kentucky. And Ed Hamilton is a sculptor from Kentucky. He did a piece in DC it's called that I'm not sure the exact name but it's the US Colored Troops memorial and it's up there on K Street Avenue. I've seen that circle piece. And it's got the Colored Troops. It's not it's pretty big. But it's just it is my one of my favorite pieces of all time because my model,



14:23

Malcolm X's Paul,



14:25

yep, yep. That's, that's a good and that when I teach that one in my class, I have a class on monuments and memorials, and we focus on America. Just because there's too many. It's not like I don't like other countries. It's just it's much in my head. Right? When when we talk about that piece, the students well, first of all, most of them don't know it. And second of all, they don't know about the Colored Troops, right? Because it's Civil War history and they only know north and south. They don't know about the Colored Troops. They just like but they love it. They love that piece. So I'm so glad you brought The Washington DC like that is, uh oh my gosh. Oh my gosh. So okay, so let me ask you what word so what we talked about groups. Number five is? What word would you use to describe your feeling at the beginning of COVID? So what were you feeling like them? And what word would you describe the way you feel now?



15:24

Well, I would say I was



15:30

energized in passion.



15:33

I was



15:36

deeply committed.



15:39

I, before and after covert and even now as I'm beginning to move around, I find that my passion has grown. My passion for my work has grown tremendously. I have a passion because I took so much out of the out of black communities by when I was in prison for things I went to prison for I went, you know what the prison for armored car robbery and bank robbery. And so I took so much out of the community that I'm energized even more now because I see what's going on right here. The African American Museum is right here in the heart of one of the biggest drugs of St. St. Is and so I look around and I watch and I still see the crackhead is still out there. never moved. He never came on in the homeless never came in. The kids that are out here with a parents or stuff they don't get along with their parents. They still out industry is still gang violence has has stepped up a lot. There's been several shootings and killings just in Hempstead alone. Domestic Violence I'm talking with I do a lot of counseling with adults, there's domestic violence has hit a record number in the black community. And you will find a lot a lot of lot of men and women out on the street due to domestic violence. And so I'm even doing now I'm, I'm energized even more, I have a more deeper passion for my work now than I ever had. And I have no problem at all now about I'm really focused on the work that I do. And I try to remain as positive as I possibly can. In everything that I do. But I'm happy and I have more passes I have a seemed like my, my my deep down in my spirit. I have this passion that that there's going to be some changes in the community. There's going to be some changes or just in people's lives. You know if I can make a change in their lives, too, because I go around I do speaking engagements I speak about the prison the pipeline, I speak about that which is which is prevalent in our in our community, young black men and black kids. time they get out of middle school, they head straight to the juvenile facilities and stuff that they do. Okay.



18:31

Screen one



18:35

9am. You good? I guess



18:46

that's because this data if you can leave it there, but just let them know. Okay. Yeah. What was that again? Was the this was the question about the feeling then and the feeling now. Okay. Well, my Yeah, well, yeah, my feelings all that data. Now. I'm on or I'm on a different plane now. I'm on a higher plane. I'm just as energized. I'm just as healthy. I have no really heavy or health issue for my age. I'm still moving around good people. People are listening more. I think people are listening more to what we have to say.



19:29

That's good. I understand that. I do. Yeah. And the last question is, is there anything else about this whole COVID thing that you think other people need to know or that you want to share?



19:43

Well, I think one of the things about this COVID thing is that they haven't really looked they don't think even with the deficit they would look around and look at some of the some of these guys that have a lot of people have died and they said oh especially the Deep on the franchise, they your drug addict and stuff. It's been a lot of oldies that they just that that that came from COVID. But they say is already there is not counting in that in that particular or is not counting in their day when counted. But these did not count these people. I found that I think our country is in, you know, in a state in a political state that that, that we have divided. And I don't want I don't want to see us in such a divided like we are I think we have to fight decisively I think our leader, the leaders that we have in the presence and so I think they are fueling the racial divide. And then that's, that's my own. And I think that all white people, brown people, black people, I think that we should know that, that you are not my enemy. I'm not holding slavery against you, though slavery happened. I'm not holding slavery against you. I'm not holding on because George Floyd got killed. I'm not saying all none groups on white folks or whatever, are mad. But I think

that people should know that. I want to live peacefully with you politically, socially. And I want to know that this this thing, this knowing this book, the political atmosphere, our country right now. It's gone. It has to change, you know, it has to change. Because if it doesn't change, I think that we'd be heading into errors that we have no business well back into slavery time. And



21:45

I understand that. And I and I, I'm a I pray. So I pray that things get better because I can't I can't have them get worse, like, Yeah, that would be that would be bad. Well for us, I thank you so much for your time. It was so nice to meet you. I am so



22:03

I know. Maybe sometimes you



22:05

come by the museum and you say



22:06

Oh, Joyce said I already told her I'm coming over I have to come visit joy. So when I come visit joy Seta I'll see you too. There's



22:13

my favorite person.



22:15

Can't be your favorite and my favorite at the same time, or can she?



22:21

Do we have one more? We do? Okay, okay. Yeah, Chris.

