

## **Transcript of Interview with Kenita Placide by Kit Heintzman**

**Interviewee:** Kenita Placide

**Interviewer:** Kit Heintzman

**Date:** 01/27/2022

**Location (Interviewee):** St Lucia

**Location (Interviewer):**

**Transcribed By:** Angelica S Ramos

### **Some of the things we spoke about included:**

Work at the Eastern Caribbean Alliance of Diversity and Equity. The pandemic and its similarities to the consequences of climate change. The pandemic uprooting a year of planning. Caribbean economic dependence on tourism; LGBT persons in the Caribbean tourism industry losing their jobs. The pandemic's impact on LGBT people going back to live with family and on people living alone. Changing structures of services and meetings due to the pandemic, such as regular check-ins at multiple tiers: with the board, with the team, and with members; offering staff mental health break days; moving meetings online; weekly online activities; team building. Providing care packages, food, transportation support, and funding. Pandemics are nothing new in the Caribbean: the pandemics of HIV and climate change preceding this COVID pandemic, that there will be more pandemics to come. Similarities between COVID and HIV: misinformation, rumors, fear, uncertainty; similarities in contact tracing; learning to live with HIV and learning to live with COVID. Humans as social creatures. Inequitable consumption of COVID vaccines in the Global North in contrast to the Global South, and general lack of resources for health in the Global South—information, supplies. Global anti-Black racism; colorism. The history of slavery and colonization in the Caribbean and the legacy of colonial norms. The colonial influence of the Dutch, English, and French on the Caribbean in contrast to the contemporary influence of the USA on the Caribbean today. Unlearning colonial narratives as activists. How the collective of “Caribbean Islands” has had better success in persuading funders to support activism, than individual islands on their own. Hearing about the pandemic through an outbreak associated with a Chinese New Year celebration. Associating the pandemic with a “rich man’s disease” because it was impacting people who could afford international travel before people starting bringing the disease back with them from travel. Reduced access to goods and services; avoiding using any services other than groceries and banking; not going to a medical facility unless absolutely necessary. Businesses going online and digital infrastructure. Believing that reaction to BLM changed during the pandemic because of the slowing-down of time; needing a moment to pause and take it in. Implicit bias and overt racism’s impact on police behavior. Botham Shem Jean, a St. Lucian murdered by a police officer in the US, and the feeling of St. Lucians about the need for justice for him. Trump’s migration policies, sexism and its impact on international relations with the Caribbean; holding one’s own countries in the Caribbean accountable for their own side of international relations. Testing, masks. The transformation of information into knowledge; information literacy and messaging. Peace of mind, happiness, and health. Working from home. Uncertainty about the world being left to the youth; a dropping birth rate; youth dying young. Systemic changes and revolution. Gardening and exercising as selfcare. Being in a long distance relationship. Stigma and discrimination against people with COVID. Stories of survival

**Kit Heintzman** 00:02

Hello. Hello, would you please start by stating your full name, the date, the time and your location?

**Kenita Placide** 00:11

Okay, so my name is Vinita Placid. Today is the 27th of January 2022. It's currently 2:39. And I'm located in the cut the island of St. Lucia in the Caribbean.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:30

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**Kenita Placide** 00:44

Yes, I have given my consent.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:47

Would you please start by just introducing yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening to this? What would you want them to know about you in a place you're speaking from?

**Kenita Placide** 00:58

Well, I hope that in the Caribbean is located in between North and South America. We are small islands, while most of us would probably say we are countries to because equivalent to one vote at the UN. But we are dealing with the the remnants of the colonial era where in our country, we still have a Governor General, because the queen is still head of state, even if we are independent nations, nations, especially in the English speaking Caribbean. And so with our countries, we are still working to remove a lot of the colonial rhetoric that's still within our Constitution, such as buggery laws, and grace and decency laws restricting same sex individuals from being able to engage in love in relationships. And so as we continue that fight, we look at the safety and well being of LGBT persons. And, you know, although the islands are small, there are a number of, I would say very good economic factors, because I think the beaches, the sand, the seas, the warm that you get from the islands is something that I would invite everybody down to.

**Kit Heintzman** 02:31

I'm thinking about you as a person as an individual. Who are you who Who am I speaking with? Tell me a little bit of?

**Kenita Placide** 02:42

Well, for much long, I guess that's the question I always ran away from, but I think I was born to the native island of St. Lucia, I work across the eastern Caribbean. To my family, I am my mother's last child, I am the fifth born of the family. And I have been in activism for over 16 years. I don't particularly like labels. But I think the label that most recently, I felt a little more comfortable with somewhere along the lines of non binary, you know, gender non conforming kind of label, but only if and when necessary. I still prefer absolutely no neighbor labels if I can pass with it. And yeah, I think my work has been for the last 15 years predominantly working on the advancement and rights of LGBT persons. I have just reached currently I'm over 40 and still looking like 25. So I'm thankful for that. And I think I've created a group of family. So I could call almost in any country where there's somebody I would call a friend or chosen family over the last couple years of engagement in activism.

**Kit Heintzman** 04:13

Which you tell me a story about living in a pandemic.

**Kenita Placide** 04:19

I think the pandemic hit us, you know, almost like a climate change. One of the climate change systems. It wasn't expected we didn't see it coming. There was no preparation and it was here and I think one of the things that really hit was, you know, having a year of planning just swept under your, under your feet and trying to figure out how to how to get these things done or how to even reprogram it, but as an individual I found myself rethinking not just how to do these things, but how do you stay safe with something that you do not fully understand how it gets you. Because technically you get it from even doing nothing. Deliver deliberately. Our work, our work, took a pinch of self, mental health and self esteem, self confidence, those things took a hit. And so what I would say is that when the pandemic hit, we started looking out, if we often in this way, how are members feeling, and what's happening in the countries. And it was interesting, because the team that I work with, unlike most people saying, Oh, they are not working, because it's like we went into overdrive, overdrive of reaching people overdrive in checking in and making sure people will find although we were working remotely, we checked in everyday because we understood leaving alone, for some of us also carried very heavy, heavy sentences, especially for those who were social butterflies. And then even those who leave to family commonly was not necessarily accepting or comfortable. And then that also provided a different situation to deal with. So being creative, being strategic, coming out of this working through it, is something that we continuously do. We did, we are doing, we're not showing we're going to be stopping.

**Kit Heintzman** 06:45

Would you say a bit more about what those check ins look like? Sound like?

**Kenita Placide** 06:51

Alright, so I think we can look at three levels of checking one was with the board, one was with the team, and one was with membership. And so I think with the board, it was more strategic as to where the organization stand, where we are, do we, you know, what was the financial health at the time? Can we manage? Are we do we need to let go anybody or any of the projects going to be affected by what we do, and so on, and so forth. And those checks came in regularly for me with my chair, because we needed to make sure that you know, when, with all the loss of jobs, and with the shutdown of countries, it was something that we had to monitor, the Caribbean is one that is highly dependent on the tourism, industry, you know, flights, hotels, and even a lot of the services that are offered restaurants, and so on, are more highly designed for guests coming in. And so with COVID, that was a major shut down. And what we got was, when I spoke about loss of jobs, a number of our LGBT folks actually worked within the tourism industry. And so when hotels cut back or hotels closed, tat was a hit to the economy in many ways, but particularly to our LGBT persons who might be just going paycheck to paycheck and has no kind of savings to really help them to cover this time of no key. And the team got to check in in on a daily as we do so once a week when we're in office. But being away, we actually checked in every morning, to see how people were doing what they were working on how they were dealing with the day. Some days, we had to offer staff, mental health break these because, you know, I think there were at least four of these five of the staff, five of the staff members who actually leave alone. And so that meant different things to people, some of them mobile, and some of them not those who are not mobile taking public bus. And so had to think about if we had to have an in person interaction, for some reason, what's the risk of that? And so it really took a lot of rethinking every movement you make, where you go, how you go. And, you know, these were the kinds of discussions we had on our team

meeting apart from our actual work plan. There were some things we're able to move from in person to online, and it kind of flew our online presence from maybe a panel discussion at once a month to basis Having an activity almost every week, whether it was a training, a discussion, a seminar, a check in, even with our membership, so those things had to be now reworked in our work plans. And so with the team, we also realized that we started doing some exercises, same building exercises to just help people navigate the mental health, the energy, the focus the patients, because a lot of our work actually depended on our members responding to certain things or attending certain things. And so the next layer of check in came in, which was checking in with our membership, having one on ones having group sessions, checking in to see how they are meeting the needs of the community that they serve in. And what does that look like? How does that how does that affect them? Where where is the funding deficits? Where are the the human resource deficits, and then, with a lot of the Caribbean islands, particularly those we serve,

**Kenita Placide** 11:19

we were able to look at a lot of our organizations give them information, like when outright was doing the COVID response grants, looking at global giving funding platform and trying to raise some money on there to where we can continuously give partners to give money to their communities on the ground by providing care packages for persons who needed food by providing transporter now and so communication allowance for those who needed that. And so I felt like between the March of 2020, when our country's schools down to present this have been like the whole mobilizing structures, in terms of getting our people taken care of because we had to take care of our membership, which is the organization in order for the organizations to be able to take care of the people on the ground.

**Kit Heintzman** 12:23

Would you be willing to sort of briefly outline the structure of the organization. So who are your members who's on the board? What is the sort of core of what your organization does?

**Kenita Placide** 12:33

So for the Eastern Caribbean Alliance, we currently have nine, eight board members sorry, and they are located in different countries as our Chase from St. Maarten, our vice chair from Grenada. We have a treasurer from St. Croix, our treasurer from St. Lucia. We have other members of the board in St. Kitts, Barbados. Sen. Martin Sabir, I believe the structure of the Secretariat, which is based in St. Lucia. It has five, five staff that's currently based in St. Lucia, but we also have one that's based in Suriname. With our membership, we are actually we currently work across nine islands, having 26 organizations registered with us and our organizations. We have 15 organizations that serve in LGBTQ specific populations. And then we have another 11 that's serving women, girls, HIV, youth at risk and general human rights. So we work at those intersections of the issues that we will come with commonality being a lot around gender, human rights and climate change. And I think when we look at those organizations, we will see the organizations that are actually represented in Antigua and Barbuda, Commonwealth of Dominica, Barbados, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, St. Lucia, St. Croix, which is part of the US Virgin Islands, and sand martyrs and Martine, which is half Dutch half French. These are the islands that we currently serve. As part of aka

**Kit Heintzman** 14:58

what does the word pandemic mean to you?

**Kenita Placide** 15:04

I mean, when I heard, I think it's nothing new we have been living through from 1985 1983 to present with a pandemic around, you know, with the HIV pandemic. And so we have been living through one pandemic. And now having another added. I think it's nothing new. But what we definitely saw was a design that's totally different. And when I say design, I mean, when we watch HIV, HIV could only be transmitted through basically willful actions, in most situations. And with this pandemic, it felt like there was no running away from COVID. You know, if the wind blew in the wrong direction, it may come to you, which had less of a control mechanism of whether you're choosing to get it or not. And so, you know, I told people I felt for the Caribbean, we have had three pandemics for a lot of our lives, which is HIV, which is climate change, and now COVID, because every year, we have to think about the impact of climate change in the Caribbean, especially with the hurricane season, and what damages and what losses we get them. And so I don't think pandemic is like a new way to us. It's not a stranger. I think it just brought itself in a different fold that it's required to really rethinking how you navigate people. And as human beings, we, as soon as we were born, we were pretty much taught to socialize. So asking people to then distant brought brought a totally different challenge, which was basically against the nature of the people in question. So that was an interesting one. And it's still an interesting one to try to dissect.

**Kit Heintzman** 17:23

I would love to hear any and all thoughts on what working in HIV activism helps you see at sort of the early stages of COVID-19 wire, what comparisons make sense, which comparisons down like anything on that I would just be so happy to hear.

**Kenita Placide** 17:45

I mean, I felt so many things was similar to the response to this pandemic, and HIV, the not knowing the fear mongering, the rumors, the counter information that, you know, led to Whether people believe or not believe things can be done. And, you know, especially the whole 5g story that said that, you know, the virus is about governments trying to control people. Maybe later on, we might find out something different. But you know, right now, when I look at our response, medically, in more, in most of our countries, the same departments, which handle HIV is the same department that actually handle COVID. And there were a number of things that were actually put to the, to the table that are just so similar, you cannot take away. And one of I think one of the biggest examples I could give is just a contact Tristan, who have you been around? It's just like HIV asking you who have you been with? Who did you sleep with? Or who did you share a needle with, you know, then having to trace that step. We look at the response in terms of the care and treatment and the isolation that have taken place, I think even in terms of the protocols of trying to really address the issue without necessarily knowing enough about it. We have made some errors, but I think HIV really taught us a lot about protocols and measures, health and safety that was brought into dealing with the COVID setting up stations and I felt we were a little late in isolating the cases especially when we're bringing it into a hospital with other person who already had situations that may have compromised them and then didn't understand how it may have transmitted or where things may have gone wrong. So I do take that as one of the lessons learned, especially with a new, a new a new pandemic. We also saw responses in terms of countries. But one of the things that also hit me very hard was when vaccinations came around. And although they created a system to allow equal vaccine, you know, vaccination access, we did see where global north bought off more than needed, and left global south to think, to pedal for themselves in terms of when or how people are actually going to get vaccinated. So where global North countries were seeing me how millions of people vaccinated, there was still countries who had not seen not one vaccine, because it was not available to be bought for them. And then you had when they realize vaccines were going to be expiring, then

they try to donate off to countries to get try and get it used as quickly as possible. So again, we also saw that level of global North global south divide in terms of access of, of medical equipment, or vaccinations, and sometimes even information.

**Kit Heintzman** 21:44

I don't know if this question will make sense. But could you say something about what that what that feels like to be living that inequity and watching it?

**Kenita Placide** 21:58

I mean, to connect some of this, you know, I think this is why there is a, there is a look that, you know, the Caribbean is still a country, we part of the global south part of the divide, we also have a higher ratio of black people, or brown skin people here in this region, then there is white. And so when I think about it, I think this is why a lot of our our calling and concerns are also along the lines of Black Lives Matter. But we also have to take that back into our history of slavery, our history of colonial colonization, because these things are so deep rooted, it's not just 20 years ago, it is years of carrying into and then now it is still informally, they are still snippets of it, because the culture, the cultural norms, you know, the societal norms have been developed around a colonial history. So it takes a lot of breaking, rethinking, re educating, and even the even I as an individual who challenged the norms, many times I have to challenge myself to rethink why I'm thinking a particular way because we have been socialized in it. And so we also have to check ourselves as leaders that we are actually breaking free from that some of the old narrative around colonialism that we still tend to carry, it is not easy to navigate. Even when we are looking for funding for this region. It's the least funded one of the least funded regions. And even if it's considered to be, like even for HIV, the Caribbean was the second highest, you know, rate of infection, we still found that the investment in the region because the islands are so small, until the actually unified form original body, very little attention was or is actually paid to them. And even with the LGBT organizing EKG is a number of that organization, simply because, again, we recognize that a lot of our members were not necessarily getting call support or have access to funding, because the populations they're going to reach are so small, that it's not necessarily striking on the radar of the funders that we need to fund them. So it's continuous and it's not in one day of work. But to say that, when we speak about, you know, racial, racial disparities, we still have to look at even in the Caribbean, even if they may not be right Racism, there is still colored colorism, because different shades of dark will still get you in problems. Those who are lighter shade, or can pass as White would still have more privilege. And it is something that is still existent when expatriates from the UK, US, Europe come to these pots, they may be still paid a higher salary than a manager who has been here managing for years. And you know, but nobody is going to call that out because they come from they come from the global north with more experience. That is what that is indicated. So we still have a number of things that we still have to work on in terms of how our people see and appreciate themselves and continuously bring others up, create space for others, and not just close it out to who we think looks right or who we think has the money of influence.

**Kit Heintzman** 26:09

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

**Kenita Placide** 26:14

Yes. China's when the people will people attend the China's birthday or something or Chinese New Year? And then there was this speak about having an outbreak?

**Kit Heintzman** 26:29

What were your initial reactions?

**Kenita Placide** 26:35

Well, to be quite honest, at first, I didn't have an initial reaction, because

**Kenita Placide** 26:45

I think when we heard about the outbreak was just wondering whether it was going to stay in China only. It's when it started popping up different places, especially for people who had traveled, then there was an opinion that it's a Richmond's disease, because it's only those who could afford to travel, that's going to get affected. But as people came back home infected, they passed it on to their workers, whether it was the gardeners or the cleaners, and then those quickly got into community faster than the government's gonna blink. And so I think at that point when countries started shutting down in March, because, you know, we heard of it since the was it November, December of 2019. But it's when people really, when the big fuss started being made between January and March, and countries started shutting down. It really became a worry. And when the number of deaths started climbing, it was wow, we are losing people. And we are losing all kinds of people. We are we as a world have not even done and this is where my mind started going. When those deaths started climbing, I was pretty worried, because I was saying that we have not even done an assessment of important I mean, every life matters, don't get me wrong, but those persons who will key persons at the front of research, the lead engineer on a particular project, that technician in this under who might have been the best in the field, we have not even done an assessment to understand who we have lost and how that's going to affect productivity. And so, coming into end of last year into this year, where certain products you cannot get it because the the production line is slow or reduced, we have not taken a deep look at the true impact of COVID which is going to cause on which has caused inflation of prices. Demand and availability of goods are on two different levels. And so all of those things are impacting what we get how we get it, what quality we get it, you know, and that's in goods and services. And that's in goods and services. We have lost some good people and enough have not even we cannot even when we look at a couple of billion people lost to the world matter of two years and that does not even account for other diseases that still taking people in all the road accidents. And, and useless murders that people are committing. We have lost a lot of people in our lifetime that we have not really, truly understood the impact beyond where we are now. And I think that's where my thoughts went, when I did take it serious is the people we are losing the people we are losing.

**Kit Heintzman** 30:28

How have you been accessing services throughout the pandemic?

**Kenita Placide** 30:37

I have not had to. Well, to be quite honest, during this pandemic, I think the services that are probably access most is banking and supermarket. And, you know, for some of our services in the Caribbean, they are not all electronic. And so still had to think about that. Even for supermarket with the restriction of number of people in the supermarket, we had to divide Some people, when finally, we'll do we'll want people one or two people doing online orders and stuff, but something that was not very popular in my island before. And so there were some real adjustments in terms of long lines or services. And so if a service was not absolutely necessary, it was struck off my book as not needed now. Because, you know, some of those lines were really long. So except for supermarket and banking, there was nothing else urgent on my this. So my restrictions came very early for me, in terms of where I was going, and where I was not. The other restriction for me was probably because as a activist,

especially we can sub originally, we did a lot of travel. And that became quick, quickly to new travel. So I think back in back in 2020, I probably had two trips before our lockdown, the last being a case in Barbados, I traveled for the day before, which was the 10th. And then countries locked down like maybe two or three days after that, you know, so I think it has changed the world of travel and all the expectations in terms of access to health care, you really had to assess unless it was something urgent, do you really want to put yourself at risk, go into an institution where somebody else might not be as careful as you come in to access it. So it made me rethink all the things that would say, Oh, I have to do this today. And that to the end? Like, do I really, is there another form, I can do this in a lot of the institutions, I reached out to find out whether they were apps, whether they were online services that I could have access without necessarily having to go into the institution.

**Kit Heintzman** 33:17

What kinds of responses that you get?

**Kenita Placide** 33:20

Well, some of the organizations have set up online, online services, bank transfers, they really tried to it was hustle and bustle, some was already in process of doing it. So they just hastened the piece. And others really tried to create that with the banks where they say like you could have only removed \$100 A day they increase that to allow more free flow of transactions online or through ATMs rather than inside. You know, even the utilities company gave online options for payments. So there were things that were done to make things easier. And you know, they have continued it so far. And for one or two things that other things like insurance and stuff at the time did not have that option, or they were not in that space yet. We had to then create a conversation around. Can I you know, like can you do payments for two free months, and so that you don't have to go in every month kind of thing. So those like there were a lot of conversations, particularly for St. Lucia some of the smaller islands in all of the islands. They were movements towards that. And then so our team had a conversation around the populations we serve and how things needed to be done wire transfers to them to make sure they get it and we had to be working a lot with Our banking officer to make sure we will still execute in some of our projects and support to our members without delay.

**Kit Heintzman** 35:16

This goes back to something you had mentioned earlier, but you had talked about Black Lives Matter. And I'd like to just ask you to say anything more about that.

**Kenita Placide** 35:28

I think sometimes in the fast paced life, where things are happening on a daily things are going on, you are distracted with a number of different things. They have some headlines that will pass you. But I think what we would have seen during the COVID, people would see there's an increase in gender based violence, there is an increase in violence against black people, and so on and so forth. I think, in this world, in this 2022 2022, there was something that was vastly different. These incidents happened, they were documented, they were reported, social media was on a bus, because everybody kept connected, because they wanted to know what was happening out there. What. And so the online community took note, you know, not that they didn't take note before. But for those who didn't, they had a minute to pause, because they will not enough like they will not in a train, they will add this system where either the children, the partner, somebody in the house was bringing attention, or they themselves passed it on social media, and up rage about these things still happening, whether it is police brutality, whether the justice system failure of our black lives, whether it is even our neighbors, who are not necessarily



doing what's appropriate, you know, so I think that when we look at what was happening in the Caribbean, even with Black Lives, there is a sense that even if most of us are black, there is still that mentality around who is more of a criminal, a black man or a white man that still registers had because of the element of power of the white skin. And so that impact is still here. And so we could have married some of the issues and the injustices that the US the UK, Canada, Europe was then rising up above, but mostly UK and US where we actually because even for us here, say in St. Lucia, we actually had a St. Lucian, who was actually killed by a police officer in the US. And that case went on for a very long time. We consider for justice to be served, you know, something about mistaken apartments. And so even then we have to consider that the practice here. But we also have citizens that may be residing in that global north, where other issues are taking place, just because of how dark you are. Your level of education, whether somebody like how you smile, don't smile, or how bright, how knowledgeable you may be, you may be getting yourself in trouble for no reason, or somebody may be abusing their position of power to keep you on the moon. So it's something that is continuous. And we are always seeing that we have to continue understanding what's happening up there. But also look at our realities and our reality sometimes much, even if cultural and social context might be different. But at this point, I could tell you that the Caribbean as a Caribbean, even if our legacy sits with the Dutch, with the French with the English as colonial masters of the past, the most influential country on the things that we do and how we do it is actually the US at this point. And so we continuously have to look at the the narratives of what's happening in those other countries and keep looking at how our people are interpreting it and reading it and navigating around it as we push for, for for the changes in policies and protections.

**Kit Heintzman** 39:53

Would you give a few examples of things that were being watched happening in the US and and how those were being interpreted?

**Kenita Placide** 40:03

Well, I mean, for one with the whole Trump administration and some of the rules on migration and immigration and immigrants that spoke for itself, the his behavior around women and sexism and the patriarchy that he pushed out around the narratives that we use that people then believe that coming out and talking bashing black people who accepted the service to black people, I mean, that spoke for itself. We certainly saw a difference in I mean, when we look at the Bush administration, to the Clinton administration, Obama administration, and then Trump that was like, Oh, that was the trashes of all, you know, the impact of his rules, probably a maybe in the era that it came, hit hard. And now we're looking to see how Biden is trying to clean that up, or if that even if that is, but we still have to monitor not because they look good, it means that it's all good, still have to keep looking at the administration. So some of those things actually had impact for our own countries in terms of how we speak to the US. We also had some issues with the US even in terms of even during COVID, where we had shipments that was held back by the US because they transferred through the US. And they took years to come down to the Caribbean because they were held by the Trump administration. Because it was COVID supplies. And they felt that they could have kept what they wanted. So there were major arguments between the Caribbean and the US administration. And I think things are only now beginning to get good again. So I think that we can see definite strains of different rhetoric, conversations from Trump, his tweets that the new center have carried every day, carried into our news, in terms of the president of the US this and that, and this and that, and it's just like, Oh, my God, it's not happening. But it was. And so we too, had to then turn around and hold our governments accountable. In terms of engagements and looking at how those things impact the populations we

**Kit Heintzman** 42:41

how has access to things like testing been?

**Kenita Placide** 42:47

I think the government have done a pretty good job in terms of testing however, when they are the waves. We have seen some large numbers go up and down around the testing. So it's it's one that from the very, from in the beginning of testing, a lot of our tests had to go to Trinidad, or Barbados for confirmations. But I think then we got the right equipment, and things have been done, been done internally. And so that makes getting off test results much quicker. You can get test results with a turnaround of 2424 to 48 hours, whether PCR or anti Gen. And so that has become they have gotten much better.

**Kit Heintzman** 43:47

What's the word health mean to you? Health? Yes.

**Kenita Placide** 43:53

Well, I think when I think about health, I break it down into general health and mental health because more often than not mental health is not taken into consideration, which is different from medical health. And so when I think about health, I tend to break it down and look at the different aspects. Health well being comes hand in hand, thinking about the overall feel, look and understanding of the individual's or subject.

**Kit Heintzman** 44:35

What are some of the things you want for your own health?

**Kenita Placide** 44:43

I think the biggest thing for health is peace of mind. Stress Free, a good exercise routine. And when you ask that question is very broad for me so I can take it in many directions. You know, but I think be unhealthy as part of the health concept, which means that in good medical condition, you know, my liver, kidney and so on works. My body parts works. And then there's the mental aspect that looks at how I breathe, how I sleep, how I think, what's my routine of peace of mind? And then we just look at the everyday understanding of the individual in terms of social interactions and behaviors have, how are you at peace? And how are you happy part of health checks. What does the word safety mean to you? Safety. For me, safety means secure. It means that when I think about safety, I think about a roof over my head. food availability to some level economic livelihood, which means that you work in or doing something that gives you some level of funding to maintain yourself. And I think about being in being in a place where no harm can come to me, whether it be physically, psychologically or cyber.

**Kit Heintzman** 46:48

Thinking about the sort of small, narrow world that has discussed safety, and what are some of the things that make you feel safer, if anything,

**Kenita Placide** 47:01

safer drink open? Yes. Safer during COVID The ability to work from home and not having to go out. I think, knowing that more so now than in the beginning. Masca actually available, because I know in the in the very early days when they started and it wasn't expected. There was shortages of masks at times, which mask is safe enough knowledge is also important to me understanding the information given that it transfers from information to

knowledge. And I think having people that you can talk and work with that you are able to create strategies around well being Safety, Health is the other aspect, I think about comfort.

**Kit Heintzman** 48:09

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

**Kenita Placide** 48:12

How I feel about

**Kit Heintzman** 48:16

the immediate future?

**Kenita Placide** 48:21

I think the only I mean, when we look at life, the only constant in life. And it's something that my grandmother always told me from time harmonica, I was an equal person growing up is that the only constant in life is change. And so as we look at change, and we look at what is changing and how things are changing, we have no choice as a people but to adapt. So human beings, one of their unique qualities is adaptability. And so I think that as change continue to happen, people will continue to adapt, and to move forward with the immediate future. Like the HIV pandemic, we have been living with it. And very soon we will be living with the COVID pandemic as well. Maybe with more more understanding of how to continue taking care of ourselves. It will be interesting that in a way masking a lot of public places was illegal before and now it will be the legal thing to do. So I'm in terms of how I feel. I mean, as long as we are alive and may have breath of life, it means that we are going to be doing something to continue existing on this world. And so that's where I see us going just continuing to leave and exist and adapting.

**Kit Heintzman** 49:52

I'd love to hear about the shift from having been illegal in spaces to it become

**Kenita Placide** 50:00

Well, I think for a very long time, China probably with their pollution, I realize a lot of Chinese when they travel would always have Oh, should I see people from that part of the world because it may not just be Chinese could be Japanese Koreans as well, Asians would normally have the mask on for different reasons. But particularly for the air. Even in parts of India, they have masks on wearing all the time as a protection, but I think that when we look at COVID, you know, I said that mask would be a thing of today, because I think that with the measures, knowing that it is still going to be around for a while, we still will have some people that will not wear masks, or will stop wearing it. But we have some people who are concerned about it. And so whenever so often, we'll have to continue drawing that line between those that want to continue wearing it and those that don't. But I think that it may become a way of life, in terms of things that are going to continue popping up that we will need to continue at different intervals having to mask up one mask or another

**Kit Heintzman** 51:28

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

**Kenita Placide** 51:39

You know, truth be told, I don't know. I think the world is developing, it's moving is evolving. We are hoping to see more out of our youth, we are trying to see that it's the world today is actually the youth of tomorrow. But I'm not sure what we are leaving for the youth to actually build on. I'm not even sure the youth is taking on their responsibilities seriously enough. And they may have one or two. But then what does that mean for the majority, we certainly have seen a difference in how people have children. And so the number of new births a year, certainly have dropped. You know, when we look at our grandmother, our grandparents who had 11 and 15 children to their children only having maybe three or four themselves, that's already break down the death and youth ratio. And at one point, I mean, even for the Caribbean, it was one where that pyramid was absolutely wrong, where we had a whole set of adults and not enough youth to actually take care of them. But we also have to face the reality that some of our youth also die in much younger. Where people where we still have people get into the 1780s and 90s. Somehow you are not even making it to 30 they still die in the youth. And so I think that's a little problematic in terms of our maths of the world that exists beyond us. But I think in terms of hopes and real hopes, is thinking through how we can change systems, how we can improve systems that allow for more out of the box thinking and revolution of of theories and practices that better people's lives and not just money in the riches pocket.

**Kit Heintzman** 53:51

What are some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself over the last few years?

**Kenita Placide** 53:56

Over the last few years, I have the two main things that I have actually done. I still work a lot but I tend to try to have an exercise routine. So if the gyms are close, I'm walking on the road. I'm going for walks I'm taking a dip to the beach. If the gyms are open, I have a trainer that I work with once a day for five days a week and then the weekend I'd still go for some long walks. Other than that, I now have a beautiful collection of cactus that I groom and love in my garden. I think that's the two things gardening and personal exercise in that also comes with proper eating. For me, over the particularly over the last two years

**Kit Heintzman** 55:01

Can I ask how your relationship to touch has changed over the course of the pandemic?

**Kenita Placide** 55:08

What is that?

**Kit Heintzman** 55:11

relationship with touch?

**Kenita Placide** 55:13

Yeah, I was about to ask you what is touch again?

**Kit Heintzman** 55:17

Right?

**Kenita Placide** 55:18

No, I think I don't think I've been around a lot of people to see that I know, I have tested this. But it does feel like being around two people drains my energy quickly now. And, you know, being home, getting some work done on my laptop, watching a movie on Netflix, I, you know, I still keep my out my office hours from 930, from nine to four o'clock, I'm at my desk doing stuff. Some days, there we go early, or bit later, depending on what I have to deliver on. But I think that, thinking about those bigger spaces where we would hug people and deal with people, it feels like it's just gonna be a nod of the head, or a bump of the feasts. And that should be good enough. I don't know how it's gonna be because really, I have not been in a space with too many people for me to figure it. But the last place I was in, I think there was a meeting with probably 15 persons. well spaced out, we said hello, but they will know how. So my, my, my relationship to touch, I guess, is exclusively just to my partner at the moment, and not anybody else.

**Kit Heintzman** 56:49

What's the partnership and like during the pandemic for you?

**Kenita Placide** 56:55

Well, partnership, general partnership or personal partnership?

**Kit Heintzman** 57:02

either that you'd be willing to answer I was thinking context of the last answer about patch.

**Kenita Placide** 57:08

Right. I think that it's partnerships during last, I think what, for me, when we look at partnerships, generally, I think we, you know, there was a, there was a number of touch base with people that probably would have seen at conferences didn't and so there were one or two calls, like, Hey, how are you? Good. You know, there are some people I couldn't really say checked in on me and I checked in on them. There are a number of people that we have not touched based in a while. And so, you know, DC, I found myself like just sending out a few taxes and just checking in with people and making sure they good checking in with families, them and their families. Personal partnership, I think, for me has been interesting. It's a long distance relationship. And so that already has a distance in its nature. And so COVID I think what COVID tried it on was us not being able to make practical plans of when we would see each other again, with different protocols and different shut down. And I think that was the struggle. But overall, we ended up with more zoom meetings and stuff, I guess we went into more of a fast forward of online meetings, which kept us both busy, and just navigating that and still being able to connect with each other. I think that's where that was and is happy to see that we can plan again, just knowing the protocols at least, that the risk is not as high as before, I think.

**Kit Heintzman** 59:07

This is my second last question. So we know we know that all the scientific research is happening right? There are scientists working on vaccines, there are virologist studying the virus. But there's also a very human social part of the COVID experience. I'm wondering what you think people in the humanities and the social sciences could be doing to help us understand that human side of the moment we're going through

**Kenita Placide** 59:35

I think what can be done is probably just more of the stories to really understand. Because, you know, there's like a little bit of a discrimination against somebody who I've had COVID Or people say oh, like oh you have COVID

But you know, knowing somebody have COVID actually tells you okay, I'm dealing with you your mask is on my mask is on has what to do than to think that you're talking to somebody without a mask because They vaccinated, and they have no COVID. So I think they're missing a lot of the human stories around, you know, not just the scary stuff about the impact of how you felt when you had it. But what was your recovery? Like? How did your friends and family respond and support you? I think these aspects are missing, in terms of making it a human story instead of a disease story, a virus story. Everything is around the virus at the moment, what you felt how you felt under the, but what about how I survived it, and what my life or how I've been living, what I've done differently to change, or to help boost my immune system, you know, those kinds of things, I think, are things that are missing out. You know, when someone has a fever, we think about taking a fever reducer, but how about, you know, a 510 minute walk at high energy that would allow you to just sweat your body out and let it, you know, do its own. So there are also things to help boost your system without all the medication that we also could highlight in terms of things one can do to help other than just stay inside or wash your hands, I think we we have to send out a few more messages. Because we as human beings tend to be we have an automatic reaction to being told what we should do. And so we tend to do the opposite. And we also have to look at what is it that we can recommend for different people, different parts of the world, the message might be the same, but some might also be, you know, would also be made specifically to that, to that country, depending on whether they are First Nations, whether they are indigenous people sorry, or whether they are, you know, have a certain social background, certain things create spaces where you can make tailored messages. But generally I think the humanities need to bring the humanity of the disease which of the virus which is beyond the virus, how people really are affected and how lives continue with an without it.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:02:44

This is my last question. I want you to imagine speaking to a historian in the future, so someone listening to this, who never lived through COVID? They don't they don't know what this was like? What would you tell them? They need to remember about this moment, what stories would you tell them cannot be forgotten?

**Kenita Placide** 1:03:12

I would probably see that when COVID started. The information that was coming out was very medical, and not everybody understood it. So always remember that we are speaking to people who are not necessarily have a medical background when we are putting messages out. Also remember that they are lessons learned from the past. And so dig the archives as quickly as possible and understand some of this, to marry the information and some of the practices that are needed. But more so it's it's always easy to come from the head from the top to the bottom. But sometimes we also have to understand people as people that you mean, the humanity and everyone is different. Understand that a pandemic of any nature affects all people. But remember that those below the poverty line more often than not would be hit harder, especially with less access to resources. COVID-19 is not the only pandemic has not been the only pandemic and will not be the only one. But how we remember to be human in the process of a pandemic is going to go a long way in terms of people jumping on board, being part of the process and being part of the change.

**Kit Heintzman** 1:04:45

I want to thank you so much for the generosity of your time and the gift of your answers. And those are all of my questions. But please, if there's anything more that you would like to say about your experiences of COVID-19 are the last few years in general, please take the space to do so.

**Kenita Placide** 1:05:08

Yeah, and I mean if when subscribing there's anything that is unclear you need to come back to me. You have me on WhatsApp. It's kind of easier to get me to respond than email. So keep me abreast perfect I'll reach out.

Alrighty, thank you