

Transcript of Interview with Kelly Cook by Liza Black

Interviewee: Kelly Cook

Interviewer: Liza Black

Date: 05/20/2020

Location (Interviewee): Indiana

Location (Interviewer): California

Transcriber: This transcript has been provided by Otter.AI with a 2nd pass for accuracy provided by Bryan Paintiff, HST580 intern, at ASU.

Abstract: The interview begins with the interviewee describing Indiana's reaction to the pandemic lockdown and how people there do not follow regulations. The interviewee then describes how they are self-isolating and elaborates on the reasons why, which are that they lost family members to COVID due to people not following lockdown rules. The interviewee describes their last moments with their relative over a facetime call and how the funeral experience was after. Then they discuss how they believe the Pentecostal practice caused the death of their relatives. Close out discussing how the focus on covid 19 has taken away from other marginalized issues, such as missing and murdered indigenous people, structural racism with the Navajo Nation and how these issues are still going on, just more marginalized with the pandemic and out of the media's eye.

Kelly Cook 00:00

I don't know what the questions are. I haven't I haven't seen them. I don't I don't see the data. I haven't looked at this at all. I'm working on a different grant right now. So,

Liza Black 00:09

okay.

Kelly Cook 00:10

You're getting a pure experience here.

Liza Black 00:12

Okay. Okay. Well, I think this is like my sixth or seventh one. So, um, you know, sometimes if I go through all the questions, it just, the interview just goes on and on and on. So I'll probably skip over a lot. Okay, so, um, you know, who I am an assistant professor at Indiana University of living to quarantine conversation on Facebook. And we started talking about my new project a little bit. So thank you for being willing to come out of your day off to chat with me. Can you sort of introduce yourself? And also, if you could save the date and time? That would be great.

Kelly Cook 01:00

I would have to open up my trusty map to find out what time it is. And oh, days, I don't even know what day it is. Today, I'm Kelly Kirk cook. Okay. Today's date is Wednesday, May 20. And it is currently 1:10pm. Eastern time.

Liza Black 01:21

And you're in Indianapolis. Right, Indiana.

Kelly Cook 01:24

Okay, I am.

Liza Black 01:24

Okay. Um, so you gave your name? What are the primary things you do on a day to day basis as in work or extra curricular activities? What do you normally do day to day? Pre pandemic,

Kelly Cook 01:40

during the pandemic,

Kelly Cook 01:42

Pre pandemic. Okay. So, as you know, I work for the IUPY Arts and Humanities Institute as an office manager. I am also a advocate for women's health justice. And I'm a writer and a film producer. So my child is I'm a I have an only child, as well as two stepchildren. But they are all out of the nest now. So mainly, I'm just a dog mom and just a regular, regular citizen.

Liza Black 01:42

pre pandemic?

Liza Black 02:18

Okay. You said you live in Indianapolis? What is it like where you live? And you can address that in any way you like in terms of the city or neighborhood or, or however you want to address?

Kelly Cook 02:29

Sure. So I live just northeast of the city, just over the county line in a little small town in Indiana called Portville. Indiana. I think there are probably there under 4000 People here I think I don't interact much in the community. I just kind of go to work in the city and come home. Most of my socializing and my family are in Chicago and my work as a film producer is also in Chicago. Yeah, so I don't spend a lot of time in my community. From what I can see during this pandemic. And from what I've heard, we have scored like a D minus or an F for compliance with social distancing quarantining.

Liza Black 03:20

So when you say we, do you mean, Portville? Or do you mean Indianapolis? Do you mean Indiana and Chicago?

Kelly Cook 03:28

So, Chicago is completely locked down still. And so I'm hearing stories from my friends. I haven't been home in six months. I haven't been home since Christmas. And what I understand I haven't seen any of my friends of course, I talked to them on FaceTime or zoom or you know, just checking in with folks, but for the most part, people are compliant there. If you look into just regular newspapers or anything related to Chicago, you'll see tons of videos of people showing empty city and all of the landmarks and tourist traps being completely empty. So from what I understand, folks in Chicago are complying. Here in Indianapolis Marion County comprises the entire city, and they have the worst of the COVID 19 and then my home county of Lake, Indiana Lake County, Indiana is the second worst. And then the third worst is Hamilton County which is just north of the city. That would be Carmel fishers, Noblesville, some of those places. We are just adjacent to the east of Indianapolis in Hancock County in Hancock County, not complying. It doesn't seem to have the level of disease and you know, COVID counts that the other counties do. But you know, the whole time kids have been playing in the neighborhood. I can hear them outside playing you I see neighbors walking around no masks, I'm the very few times that I've had to go to the store or whatever. No masks, no social distancing. So we have just decided, especially after what we went through as a family early on, we we just stay home. We're just quarantined in the house, you know?

Liza Black 05:24

Right. Well, thank you for explaining that. That's really helpful, especially when you first do remember when you first heard about COVID-19? You remember, your initial thoughts were about COVID-19. And also, how your thoughts have changed since then. And I know that's for you a big question.

Kelly Cook 05:48

Yeah. Yeah. So like everybody else. I heard about this, you know, shortly after Christmas into January when it was spreading in China. Hard, but not terribly concerned. What happened to me was, so my last day at the Institute in the office, normal life was probably March 3 or 4. I was going to leave for the weekend to go celebrate my mom's 70th birthday in Florida, which I did. I was a little bit nervous about it. But at that time, you know, it just wasn't an issue. We just didn't think about it like that. Two months ago, three months ago. While I was there, I started noticing that it was being covered on the news. And there were two cases in Fort Myers. And my mom asked me if I would just stay there. And I said, No, I don't want to do that. Because I don't I can't be stuck here. I don't have my laptop. I'm gonna go ahead and go home. And that was March night, left out of the Fort Myers airport. And notice that during spring break, it was kind of sparse on the flight. But you know, there were empty seats. And that's very strange. By the time I got to Atlanta flights were being canceled. So this was Monday, March 9, flights were being canceled. The plane from Atlanta to Indianapolis was only half full, which was very, very strange. Got to Indianapolis, the airport was not crowded at all, just in the middle of the afternoon. It was it was

eerie. So I went ahead and went home and started worrying. And within, I never went back to the institute. I was supposed to go back on Tuesday, March 10. But it just so happened, I was sick. I had a cold or had picked something up along the way. And I didn't want to go to work. We have a very, we've always had a very strict don't come here if you're sick policy. So ended up going to the doctor on Thursday. No, it would have been Wednesday. And they gave me I thought maybe I had the flu. Who knows if I had this virus. I had all these symptoms. And they said they were going to test me for strep, the flu and mono. And it all came back negative. And the doctor came back and he didn't have a mask on. And everybody, everybody had a mask on the whole deal. The PPE, you know, just very different from the way they normally do things at my doctor's office. And he didn't have a mask on. He's like, you have some kind of virus or something. I'm going to give you antibiotics, which I thought was very strange. Just in case it gets bad over the weekend, you can have them and take them which I never did. And I said well, do you think this is the virus? He told me, It could be but we don't know, there's not a reliable test. And I just was like, Oh, my God is lying to me there either.

Liza Black 08:55

Is that what you said he's lying?

Kelly Cook 08:56

Yeah. Because, you know, there was a test for it. They just didn't want to waste it on some random broad, you know, some random housewife and you know, guys housewife, so I left there. And I was really, really nervous and scared. Turned out whatever it was, I had ran its course nobody else in my household got sick. It was fine. So I'm going to so that's that's basically what life was like leading up to the pandemic. My son was still at school at Ball State, didn't want to come home. He had his 21st birthday that week. You know, he was not interested in coming home at all. By the following Monday, Jason had close the Institute and said, you know, they're probably going to are closing campus. He's like, we're just not going to take the risk. So there was a question, you know, how it went through the university like, can everybody work from home? Who's work made the secure line do you need to secure into the VPN? Do you need to do that and everything else?

Liza Black 10:05

Right

Kelly Cook 10:06

So it was just like utter chaos, trying to get things together. And then that's when things got really weird here at my home.

Liza Black 10:16

So if I can just pause you for a second. So you were really careful with your timeline. It sounds like your last day physically at work face to face. You didn't know it was going to be your last day. It sounds like

you got sick. And because you already have a don't come to work policy, you never went back to work. But you didn't know that. The last year at work.

Kelly Cook 10:38

Right?

Liza Black 10:39

Many people are in this situation where they didn't know that was the last time they were going out. They didn't know that was the last time they were saying goodbye to their co workers. Okay, so, okay. thank you, continue.

Kelly Cook 10:49

Yeah, it was very strange. We have a postdoc, Jason Price, who actually is from Berkeley. And, you know, I had seen him before I left for Florida and never saw him again. And I won't see him again.

Liza Black 11:05

Because the end of his year.

Kelly Cook 11:07

Yeah, the contract his contracts up this summer. And he had gone back to his wife and child who live in Berkeley, and was immediately told to shelter in place, because they were about a week ahead of us. And are you in California now?

Liza Black 11:23

I am

Kelly Cook 11:24

lucky. So yeah, so. So I don't think I'm never going to see him in person. Again, which is unfortunate. He's my friend. He has a home here in [Inaudible] that he sold. And they're just going to pack it up and have their their, you know, their goods shed sent to them sell their car, whatever. Yeah, so that's weird.

Liza Black 11:50

Yeah.

Kelly Cook 11:51

for graduate students that graduated that, you know, if we ever get to go back to our office, which, of course we will, I won't be working with them anymore. So I didn't know when I left for that trip. I didn't know that that was going to be the last time that I was going to see some of my colleagues,

Liza Black 12:05

right.

Kelly Cook 12:06

People got here. Excuse me for one second. [Talking with another person, unreacted to the interview]
Okay. Sorry, Liza.

Liza Black 12:30

No, no problem. And if I could also just pause on that moment that you were at your doctor's office, which was your primary care physician's office, it sounded like, okay,

Kelly Cook 12:40

yeah, I was seeing another doctor in the practice. It wasn't my normal doctor. But yeah, it's

Liza Black 12:45

gone. Do you do work on women's healthcare? So your your you have an interest and intellectual interest in that? And it sounds like you view the moment through a sort of women's health care lens? Do you want to say more about that moment? And how you think he seen you? And why he didn't give you a particular a test?

Kelly Cook 13:07

Yeah, I'm sure it happens to women all the time. And I'm sure it was happening to a lot of people who are this guy's patients. Like I mentioned, this is not my normal physician, who is a woman. And I've seen her for 20 years. So she knows me, perhaps if I had seen her, she might have been willing to give a test. But we found out later that tests were kind of scant. And I don't have the kind of underlying conditions that would necessitate a test. Who knows. But for him to say to me, we don't have a reliable test for COVID 19. And this was probably March 11. You know, I guess that's the first time that I've ever felt like a doctor was not taking me seriously or not. Not tending to my needs are not telling me the truth. It was very patronizing. I will certainly never see that individual again. And I thought it was kind of reckless to. to, maybe it's true, they don't have a test. Maybe they don't have a physical test available to them right then and there. But there were reliable tests for COVID-19. So to say to me that there's no reliable test. I just thought that was very strange. And it kind of made me panic a little bit.

Liza Black 14:29

And did you feel like he was concerned about you? Did you feel like he wanted to know if you got worse would get help if you got worse?

Kelly Cook 14:37

Not at all. Not at all. If I had gotten worse, I probably would have called my regular physician that's in that practice, but I think she probably would have cared, but I don't think he cared at all. It was weird.

Liza Black 14:55

Okay, um, so we were answering the question Have when you first heard about it, your initial thoughts, and then how your thoughts changed since then, and kind of tied to that is what concerns you most, what issues have been the most concerning during the pandemic? And of course, there's probably many, and they're probably interconnected.

Kelly Cook 15:18

Yeah, I've tried to stay really robotic about it, I have a OCD that's contamination based, which is, I'm controlled by medication, but it's really easy for me to get carried away. So I've just tried to be very factual, only looking at the science being very mindful of, you know, what emotions might be behind my thinking. So I, my main concern is that I would catch it, and give it to somebody who can't survive it, or catch it, be asymptomatic, and then be spreading it. So that's kind of where I come from. I'm not terribly concerned about getting it myself for some reason. But I'm terribly, very concerned about possibly infecting one of my friends who's diabetic. I have a friend who's HIV positive, I can't go anywhere near him. Because what if I have it? So yeah, so that's why I haven't been seeing my friends at all, because I'm worried about them.

Kelly Cook 16:30

Okay, so that, that that issue, daily behavior, to self isolate as much as it sounds like,

Liza Black 16:40

yeah, yeah. And in the beginning, my husband took three weeks off from his job. And some of that ended up being bereavement time. But I've never felt like I have a proper quarantine because eventually, my son came home from Ball State when they close their campus. So that kind of broke my two weeks. And then when my husband started going back to work, you know, every day, he's very careful. But, you know, every day that breaks our social isolation, so I feel like the least I can do is just being home. If I go out and walk the dog, or I go to the store, you know, it's gloves, a mask. And I know some of that might be a little extra, but I just, I'm terrified that somehow I'll get it and give it to someone else. And then they will go through what my family went through.

Liza Black 17:34

Yeah. Do you feel ready to talk about that?

Kelly Cook 17:37

Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Yeah, I do. I do.

Liza Black 17:44

Okay. Okay. Um, so, do you think part of your being so careful comes from the losses that you've experienced?

Kelly Cook 17:55

Absolutely. And my husband made me a timeline of what happened.

Liza Black 17:59

Wow. Can you hold that up again? Detailed.

Kelly Cook 18:05

Oh, yeah. He's retired from the military. You know, totally opposite for me. organized, But yeah.

Liza Black 18:15

Do you want to follow that timeline? Do you have you got it right there. Do you want to go along that? Yeah.

Kelly Cook 18:21

Sure. Yeah. So are you ready for me to start that portion of

Liza Black 18:24

Yeah.

Kelly Cook 18:25

Okay. So, um, so, my husband has carry, these are these are the cast of characters here. So my husband has Kerry his brother, he had three brothers, the brand, Brandon is the youngest Kerry is the oldest brand and this the one who died. And then Beverly is their mom. And I am my husband, second wife. We've been married for almost eight years now. His entire family does not live in Indiana. We are both from the same hometown. we've reconnected later in adulthood. But his his entire nuclear family had moved to Kentucky. And his daughters live in Arkansas with their mother, which was his last place that he was at, that he was stationed at and they decided they all wanted to stay there and he decided he wanted to come here. So that's how that happened after he retired. So looking at Kerry's timeline, the first thing it's really interesting because this is not the way this unfolded in life, but his his timeline is chronological. So on 11 March 2020. He says that Governor Beshear asked Kentucky churches to cancel their services amid Coronavirus outbreaks. And I don't maybe it's more how what's the most have a way to go by his timeline or to tell you like, in my own words, what happened.

Liza Black 20:03

I think whatever feels best to you, I just, I want to acknowledge that you've, you know, your prepared prepared. So whatever feels right to you, if you want to just refer to that as necessary, or maybe look at it, however you want to do it, it's totally.

Kelly Cook 20:17

Okay. Let's do it that way. I'll tell you how this, I'll give you a synopsis. And then I'll tell you in detail what happened. So basically, what ended up happening was, so my mother in law is was a devout Pentecostal. And she lived in a very small community, in the middle of nowhere in Kentucky, it would have been very one would think that this would be a place that is so isolated that they wouldn't have the virus. Okay. So, as I mentioned before, I come home on March 9, and then on March 11, Governor Beshear of Kentucky said churches don't be meeting Don't be congregating. Don't, you know, don't do not a lawful order. But that's what he said. And he is from that area. He's actually from Dawson springs, Kentucky, I believe, and that's where she lives. So, okay. So I would say probably on March 11, he did that. And I had been home for about a week or two. We got a call on March 24. After we'd been home for a while, from my mother in law, Beverly, and she said that Brandon had been admitted to the hospital, diagnosed with COVID-19. Brandon had been living with her for about six months. And I think he was 37. And to the best of my knowledge, what happened was he had been sick, sick for a couple of weeks, and was getting really bad and had some kind of diabetic event. And my mother in law had diabetes, and the other brother has it. Nobody knew that Brandon had it. So he was basically in ketoacidosis. So by the time they had taken him and gotten him admitted to the hospital, he was already unconscious. So they put him in ICU right away. And Beverly said that the health department came by and wanted to know where they had been who they had been in contact with. You know what the situation was. asked her to quarantine. The other brother lives on the property. One of the other brothers lives on the property but not in the house. They were asked to quarantine. And my husband asked her where have you been? Oh, Nowhere. Nowhere. Nowhere. I haven't been anywhere. Okay. All right. You didn't go to church? Oh, no, no. Well, that was not the truth. So after this is now March 24. Two days later on March 26 according to my husband's timeline, Beverly was also admitted to the hospital. And they were saying that she had COVID 19 or suspected COVID-19. But we could still talk to her. She was talking on the phone. She was communicating with us. And we were finding out from one of the younger brothers that what was going on in the hospital. So she and Brandon were both in the same hospital. Brandon was in the ICU, totally unconscious, or hooked up to a ventilator immediately. But we were like, Okay, well, you know, he's 37. All right, you know, and I think that we were in denial that this was happening. And at the time, we didn't know. I mean, we knew what COVID-19 was, but we didn't know how [Inaudible] it was, you know, we we didn't know we're like everybody else. We don't know, I'm not an epidemiologist. We didn't know what we later found out was that on March 15 and 16th. My mother in law's church or Pentecostal Church, which is called the Star of Bethlehem. In Dawson springs, Kentucky, had a church revival with another church in the area, bringing in guests and a guest revivalist from Texas. So this is four days after the governor mentioned, we shouldn't be congregating. I have seen if you look in the news, if you look this up, if you look up Hopkins County, Kentucky you'll see I mean the governor has chastised them this is not a secret. But that's what they did. They had a revival. I don't quite I'm not quite clear on whether this revival happens every year at this time, or if the revival was done in, I guess, reaction to this. I don't know a lot about that. I'm not Pentecostal, I'm not even Christian. So I only know kind of ancillary information and anecdotal things about the way this goes in this church. So they were supposed to have a three day revival. But

Liza Black 25:44

[Audible laughter]

Kelly Cook 25:48

I know, I know. This is Liza this gets so crazy. You're not even going to believe this. It's metaphorical snake handling is what it is.

Liza Black 25:58

Oh, my gosh, yeah. Keep going.

Kelly Cook 26:00

Okay, so um, so these people, who knows how many, several 100, I would assume, kept meeting 15th, 16th. Well, on the 17th, on St. Patrick's Day, Governor Beshear was like, no bars or to be open, no restaurant, no more. This is lawful order. Nobody's going anywhere. So they canceled their third day of the revival. And this pastor, he leaves and takes off and goes to, I believe Louisiana, is when I saw on some news appointments or news items. So off he went. So he was like, he probably brought this in to the community. Because by the time this happened, by the time Brandon was admitted to the hospital, another guy had already died. And actually two people, and they were saying that he worked at GE Aviation, which I think is maybe like a government contractor, like a factory or whatever. And he was an old guy. You know, he was he was like, near retirement. And turns out, he was a member of the church. So contact tracing has figured this out. The news has figured this out. Okay, so we found out from one of the brothers that, yes, they had been at the revival, both of them. And that's very dangerous for my mother in law, because she has diabetes. And she's elderly. She was elderly. She was only 69. I don't know if we consider that elderly anymore. But, you know, she's older. She has underlying health conditions, not the greatest health. But Brandon, we didn't expect that from him, because, you know, he was only 37. So, they're in the hospital, and people start dying. So on March 26, Beverley was admitted to the hospital. And then on March 30, Brandon actually died in the ICU. And they would not allow her, even though they had both had COVID-19 They wouldn't allow her into the ICU to be with him. I don't know why. I don't know if they didn't have the space for that. I don't know if they didn't know enough about, you know, who knows why. She on March- on March the 30th. She was able to tell us, she was able to call us and tell us that Brandon had died. And we knew that his organs were shutting down overnight. We knew that it did not look good. She was able to spend a moment and call us. And she was obviously very distraught. And we both spoke to her for a moment. And then she said that they were going to sedate her. And that she would talk to us when she woke up. And that never happened the next day.

Liza Black 29:14

Oh, Kelly, I'm so sorry.

Kelly Cook 29:16

Thank you. Yeah, it was really it was really hard. It was really obviously very hard on my husband.

Liza Black 29:24

Yeah.

Kelly Cook 29:25

And very, very hard on his children. They were very close with our grandmother. And she was a very sweet lady. Very nice woman. And he didn't deserve this. You know, nobody deserves it, but it was really sad. So

Liza Black 29:41

confusing, it sounds like too very confusing

Kelly Cook 29:44

very confusing. Just I don't know, how much knowledge she had about what was going on in the community. Right. I know that I her son, Brandon, the youngest was he was the third person to die from COVID in their county. And obviously, everybody was infected, you know, the same place. So, at this point, we knew that they had been at this revival. And we were really upset about it. When Brandon died, we were talking to my husband's brother Mike, who was kind of, there's another brother. Just family dynamics. There's another brother, the second oldest, my husband doesn't speak with. So the third brother Mike is kind of he's kind of the liaison for the entire family. Everybody loves Mikey. So you know, he's kind of giving out the information. And he did tell us that they had been at the revival. But I mentioned to him in a message that I was I was like, does anybody know? Who is responsible for scheduling this after the governor said no. And he very politely, but very strongly shut me down. Because it turns out that he works for the guy. Right, so sorry, my allergies are so bad today

Liza Black 31:21

actually same so you're fine.

Kelly Cook 31:24

Yeah. Hideous. So um, he, you know, this is a very small community. And people have very close knit relations. I know that this particular brother was not at the revival per se. But he knows the people in this community. And his, his partner, later in the day made a very vague statement on her own personal Facebook page about nobody better be pointing the finger at this church. They've lost people and they should be compassionate. And I think that that was a very she knew I was going to see that. My husband and I are the only people who don't share the faith. So okay. I was like, I'm just going to my my own business here. I had no idea how this was gonna turn out at the time. So my mother in law, my my brother in law has died. It is now, March 30, he has died. And the 31st my mother in law was put on a ventilator, and they moved her up to ICU. They wouldn't move her would say goodbye to her son. But, you know, once she was on the ventilator, they moved her up there. So for nine days, we thought she

was going to get better. They said that they had put her on the ventilator kind of prophylactically. I don't know. You know, I don't know how much she was struggling breathing. But I know that her oxygen was dropping. But they only had this ventilator at one point, they were able to turn it down to like 50% then 40%. And we had every indication that she was going to recover. Everything looked good. Everything looked good until it didn't. So on the morning of April 8, I got up and my husband was home. And he said, Hey, I got a message from my brother. And I don't think my mom's gonna make it. And I was just gobsmacked. I was like, what, like yesterday, it was improving the turn the settings down, she was doing so much better. He's like, overnight, she just crashed. And this is about 10 o'clock in the morning. And about 30 minutes later, my brother in law called and wanted to know if we wanted to say goodbye to her. And I was like, well, she's not conscious. How are we going to do? Like, I wasn't even putting it together in my head. And he said, Well, if you'd like, the nurse can call you on FaceTime. And you can see her and you can say goodbye if you want to Well, of course we wanted to. We didn't even think about it. So we did that. And we spent about five minutes. And I said well, I know that you have other people to call. So she said Well, we're going to take her off the ventilator. When everybody's finished. And I said she said do you want me to call you back? And I said, Yeah, of course. And by this time my husband was just just devastated. And just, I mean, just the lights were on, but nobody was home. And he just doesn't have as a person he doesn't have. He's not good at showing emotion or experiencing emotion. It's, you know, he's a combat veteran. He's already got issues with that. So he was I was just like, Oh, my God, what do I do? You know? So an hour passed, and I thought, well, maybe she didn't make it off the ventilator. And then the nurse called back and she said, Okay, we have we have unconnected, you know, we've disconnected the ventilator. And she's still with us. But, you know, if there's anything you'd like to say, or if you would like to sit with her, you can do that. So I'm getting a FaceTime from an unknown number, who turns out to be an ICU nurse. And it was like, she kind of showed me her face. And I mean, I've never seen, I've seen doctors and PPE before. But this was like, remember, in E T, when they set up the tent. That's what it looked like. It was scary. So I sat with her for about 45 minutes while on FaceTime, while she died. And it was surreal.

Kelly Cook 36:28

So this wasn't the first time that I've sat with a dying person. My first father in law, I helped with his hospice. So I knew kind of what to expect. But it was really weird. And this was a hospital setting rather than a home setting. So that was weird. And what was surreal about it was, I think the nurse might have been trying to help by turning up this really loud, contemporary Christian music. And I and my husband wouldn't look at the camera. He was sitting right there, but he didn't want to look. Right, then, you know, for 45 minutes. He just sat there. And he was like, I was like, Do you want me to ask them to turn that music down? Because it was on Spotify. And it kept breaking in with Spotify commercials, which just, I mean, I was just I felt like I was like, leaving my body. I just couldn't stand the racket of this music, this awful music, and then the Spotify commercials, and then you've got the hospital noises and, you know, all the noises that come along with that. So she my husband said, I know why they're doing that. I was like, I'd rather not. But I didn't say anything. I think that, you know, maybe it was her wish, you know, maybe she told, who knows. I don't know what they were doing. It was really weird. So we

we watched her, we watched her pass and the nurse was the ICU nurse, she just kept the camera turned on my mother in law the entire time. And she had a mask on. So I could only you know, kind of see her her eyes which were closed and her hair. And she passed really peacefully in some ways, I think that she probably had been gone for a while, you know? So that's what happened there. And then it was just kind of like the nurse was like, Okay, we're going to disconnect everything and do everything. And you know, I thanked the nurse for giving us the time because she didn't. She said that's the first time we've done this. Ya know, it's such a weird thing. And I'm sure she's done it dozens of times since then. She didn't know what to do. That was I mean, she's obviously I'm sure she was very familiar with the death process and stuff like that. But I'm sure she you know, she's not a producer. She doesn't know how to put the camera angles and you know, get the sound right. And so it was it was surreal. It was very strange. So we ended up talking with the funeral director in the town, and she knew my mother in law, she didn't know my brother in law, but she knew my mother in law really well. And it was bizarre, because it took like two weeks to get them buried. We ended up doing having a double service. But there was no there was no service really. Some guy some kid who had never preached a funeral before. said some words And they fac-. The only way they could do it was over Facebook Live, because at that time, only 10 People could be gathered for anything. So pallbearers, clergy, a couple of people from the funeral home. And then that was it. So we couldn't attend the funeral because the family is so large that the people who live right there that comprise 10 people, we didn't want my husband's daughters to travel. And at this point, the whole county was just lit up. With COVID-19, it was not a safe place to travel to. So we made the decision that we weren't going to attend that and the begged the girls not to go either. And one of them is a nursing student who works in a nursing home and she understood. She understood. So I think for the family, it's not really final, you know, because they haven't, you know, my husband and his girls haven't had a chance to visit her grave site. And they are also not members of that faith. But I think that they would want to do their own thing, you know? So in some ways, yes, they're gone, but it's not real.

Kelly Cook 41:23

And the funeral home did not have a lot of experience in doing double funerals or you know, I mean, sure, it happens sometimes. But we had to wait for like two weeks because the bodies had to be they weren't equipped with everything and the protocols and the equipment to embalm bodies that are contaminated. So they had to go to a special morgue in I think, Louisville, which is two hours away from there. And they had to be processed differently. Because at this point, they're not sure if, you know, contaminate body bodies are contaminated or not. And after, you know, the people who live in them die from COVID. They don't know. So had to wait a long time for the funeral. And then it was just like, really bizarre. And it's just like, really, I it again, very surreal to watch something like that for a family member. It was just really weird. It's really weird. And not good coverage at all. They were far away. The wind was whipping through there. There were no, there were some flowers. We sent a bunch of flowers down there. But we couldn't they had the casket closed for my brother in law, but they had it open at the gravesite, which I've never seen that done before. But what else are they gonna do? But we couldn't see they didn't get near very poor production quality. You know, that's kind of what I'm focusing on, to kind of cope with it. We couldn't really hear what he was saying. Doesn't matter to us. It

was weird. It was really weird. And then the funeral feed, it just cut off. And that was what struck me. Like, somebody decided that's the end of the funeral or I'm finished being here or my battery's dying on my phone that I'm taping this on. And so it was like, we sat there for about 10 minutes. And then it was over. It was like when you when somebody clicks the meeting on Zoom and meeting and then you're done. Very strange to have a funeral situation like that. So that's what happened. We found out as we did our research after my brother in law died between his death and my mother in law's death. These churches have scrubbed their Facebook's. So there's no mention of the revival. One of the news outlets down there has a copy of has a screenshot of the ad for it. That church lawyered up within two days. Their pastor did not preach my mother in law's funeral their funerals. He had somebody else doing it, which I thought was strange. One of them completely took their, their social media down. So the news is aware of it. The governor is aware of it, he has chastised them. My husband has had words with this pastor. It's very strange [Inaudible]. It's really strange.

Liza Black 44:45

How did how did that conversation go?

Kelly Cook 44:47

You know, he was polite to him during the first they've had two conversations and that's a whole separate issue. Apparently. He was allegedly named as the executor of my mother in law's will. So the conversation about that did not go well. And I didn't hear that conversation because the guy called my husband while he was at work, so, but the first conversation was

Liza Black 45:15

just transcript reflect my shock, which is on my face. [Transcript reflects shock on Liza's face]

Kelly Cook 45:20

Right? Let the record show

Liza Black 45:23

record show that I am shocked.

Kelly Cook 45:26

It was. It's very,

Liza Black 45:28

it's a shock upon shock.

Kelly Cook 45:31

Yeah, yeah, it gets really weird. The whole thing gets really weird. But that first conversation, he spoke with the guy and the guy kept saying to my husband, I wish we had recorded the conversation because

he kept saying, I feel relieved talking to you, because my husband was very polite to him. And thank you very much for whatever, you know, services you provided. And he was like, Yeah, I was really worried about talking to you. And I was like, Well, you know, my husband is about 6' 3" weighs about 250 pounds. He's a veteran, he's got a very deep booming voice is kind of scary. So I don't know if this guy was I don't know what he had heard about my husband. But he seemed very nervous to talk to him. I don't know if that's because we're the ones that don't share the faith. I don't know if he knew he was going to be blamed, because we do blame him.

Liza Black 46:31

Okay.

Kelly Cook 46:32

Yeah, we do. The, the rest of the family doesn't seem to but we absolutely blame him for negligence. We think that they were telling people about the revival with on Facebook, and this is what has been scrubbed, according to the media reports out of there, but they were telling people, oh, no, you can still come to church, if you're sick, you should definitely come to the revival. They just have the flu. You know, your family members, just, you know, come on down. Come on down.

Liza Black 47:03

And do you think there's there's a correlation between the rejection of Christianity and for willingness to blame him and the rest of the family's acceptance of Christianity, perhaps. And so their acceptance of the pastor and his explanation of the event?

Kelly Cook 47:21

Maybe? Yeah, yeah. But that has crossed my mind. The thought has crossed my mind. I don't want to inject my my own judgment about the religious aspects of this, because I know that you know, I mean, I was never Pentecostal, my family, all my family members are Presbyterians. And you know, that's very different. Very, very, different.

Liza Black 47:57

But you reject Christianity altogether. Right. Is that what you meant earlier?

Kelly Cook 48:01

Yeah, yeah. Yeah, I'm just a run of the mill, atheist Buddhist. I actually did go undergo conversion to Buddhism. But that's more of a that's more of a practiceism. I don't really consider religion. But

Liza Black 48:16

so you see, have you seen these reports about, in addition to revivals that were going on, not just in Kentucky, but everywhere, there were invitations specifically put out by pastors, asking people, [Inaudible] the flu will any type of symptoms, any type of sickness to come to church to get healed.

They were saying heal COVID-19 We do? Do group? I mean, do you see this as part of a larger phenomenon? Because I do.

Kelly Cook 48:44

I do.

Liza Black 48:46

Okay.

Kelly Cook 48:47

I do. Um, I don't know how familiar you are with the Pentecostals in general. Yeah. Okay. So, um, it is my opinion, in my Sum- In my summary, judgment. I think that they operate a small cult. It's very cultish. I think I mentioned to you earlier that I see this entire unfolding of the revival and whatever it was all about, I see it as metaphorical snake handling. It's a test of faith. Yeah, I think that they are complicit. I think that in the same way that I think that people that went ahead and went on spring break in Florida are complicit, you know, but definitely, I think I think that's definitely part of it. And I think that, you know, dear leader said that it was okay. And dear leaders number two, and still is and still is, and I mean, you know, why would you listen to me when you can listen to Donald Trump? Why would you listen to scientists or doctors, or anybody When your pastor's telling you that your personal presence in a certain building crammed in with a bunch of people, you know, and I mean, and this is not, you know, Pentecostal worship, it must have just been spraying COVID everywhere because there's singing, there's dancing, there's shouting, there's, I mean, I just, I can't, I can't even imagine. Of course, this was going to happen. You know? It's just, I don't know. And then you've got, I don't know what my family members very deeply held, personal views are. But you know, some of these people are basically members of a death cult who want the end to come. They can get raptured.

Liza Black 50:49

Right, because of their belief in the rapture,

Kelly Cook 50:52

because of their belief in the rapture. And this, that and the other thing, you know, they feel like they are ushering in what is supposed to happen. So, so, yeah, so it's really hard for me to reconcile all that, because I think it's really reckless and dangerous.

Liza Black 51:11

Right.

Kelly Cook 51:12

I don't want to offend these family members who already think I'm the devil.

Liza Black 51:17

And that's fascinating. That's really fascinating. And thank you for being willing to share about this. You know, you talked about that the area you're in rejecting recommendations in social distancing. Are you seeing that division in your family as well?

Kelly Cook 51:37

Um, I don't know. Because, you know, I don't know what they're doing day to day. I know that my own family, you know, my parents. They're both staying inside their homes. My aunt is staying inside her home, you know, I know that they're cooperating in Florida, up in the region, but I don't know. I don't know.

Liza Black 52:05

Yeah, I thought maybe that the people who don't blame the pastor, for your mother in law, passing, maybe don't want to wear a mask?

Kelly Cook 52:17

Yeah, I'm not really sure. My husband and I have kind of distanced ourselves from the entire family just because of the way it's unfolding with the pastor being the executor of her will. And she didn't leave a will that had been it was a handwritten, will, I, I just feel like, especially as a second wife, I feel like this is not my business. So I just, you know, I'm not checking on them and making sure they have masks, like I would be my own parents, you know?

Liza Black 52:52

Right. Right. So I mean, because this, you know, can be viewed by the researcher, you know, we're living in this moment. And the mask mask or not mask has become political.

Kelly Cook 53:04

Yes.

Liza Black 53:06

It's now being coded as if you're out, you know, grocery shopping, and you're the one wearing a mask, you're a Democrat, out grocery shopping, and you're not wearing a mask, you're a Republican. There's all sorts of animosity now in public space. I mean, this is obvious, us, but it won't be. I don't know, I just want it to be in the record, you know, that that's how this has unfolded. And in this moment, at least for me, even though I'm in a liberal state, I'm in California, and even in Southern California. There's definitely open animosity between mask wearers and non mask wearers.

Kelly Cook 53:44

I feel like because I've shut those people out of my life, the non mask wearers, I've shut them, so I've tried to encapsulate myself over the last four years in such an echo chamber bubble. Yeah, I know, it's a

dog whistle. You know, when you see Mike Pence rolling up into the Mayo Clinic with no mask on, you know,

Liza Black 54:07

it sends a clear message, it sends a very clear message.

Kelly Cook 54:11

It does. It absolutely does. And, you know, now over the last few days, we've all learned and realize that these people are being tested every day. Well, that doesn't mean you can't wear a mask. You know, they don't care about us. They don't care about anybody but themselves.

Liza Black 54:29

Couldnt agree more

Kelly Cook 54:31

Yeah, I mean, a lot of the advocacy work that I do is specifically anti Pence, because he's so crazy.

Liza Black 54:43

Do you want to talk about that work a little bit and and then maybe also how that's changed because COVID-19 And what you see the future?

Kelly Cook 54:53

Yeah, yeah. So I'm going to decline to say in The Record who I work with and for

Liza Black 55:04

oh, okay, good. And I don't know if I won't accidentally say it

Kelly Cook 55:09

Okay, you I don't know if you you've heard of this, this particular movement I would say right now I think the last time I looked, we had over 104,000 members. And I know most of the work is disseminated on Facebook. But it is, specifically it began in the state of Indiana to protest Mike Pence. So and it's it's very satirical, it's very tongue in cheek, it's very nasty mean, very mean girls oriented

Liza Black 55:47

Thats you favorite word nasty,

Kelly Cook 55:48

nasty a bunch of nasty women. So there, there are several of us who work on this endeavor. And you know, some of them are out there doing comedy shows every day with their memes and, and rude

remarks. A friend, a very close friend of mine works with me. And she's a lawyer, so she'll weigh in and lie she's

Kelly Cook 56:33

Oh, excuse me my cable. [Talking with someone unrelated to interview] Sorry, Liza.

Liza Black 56:39

No, no problem. And also, I've kept you for over an hour. So whenever you know, we need to wrap up. I totally understand of course.

56:47

Oh, I'm just Well, you know, I'm off from Jason today. So I have all day for all your questions. So. So the work that we do, we organize grassroots campaigns to do stuff, my role is usually to actually be the person who has the megaphone or the microphone at the Statehouse. And I'll get up and I'll speak on behalf usually on behalf of Planned Parenthood, but really, any organization for choice, I'll speak for them. And just talking about health justice, so I'm more of like the the loudmouth. They're the comedians. And you know, my friend, my one friend is, is an attorney. So she advises us on, on stuff like that, but I'm more serious. Normally, I will contribute. I used to be a journalist. So you know, it's like, I might contribute a piece, something legislative or whatever. I'm the more serious one of the bunch. But I'm the meanest one.

Liza Black 57:48

nasty, nasty, nasty, nasty, nasty woman with nasty questions.

Kelly Cook 57:58

That's how I got interested in your work, though. Because I'm very interested in how COVID-19 is affecting indigenous populations, especially women, especially Indigenous women. And then I've always been interested in missing and murdered indigenous women the movement.

Liza Black 58:18

Yeah, I mean, um, you know, it's, I'm pretty interested in how COVID is impacting different communities. But I'm also really interested in how issues that some of us were engaged in prior to COVID-19 are getting ignored now, or, or ignored more. So I always follow all sorts of social media around murdered indigenous people.

Kelly Cook 58:47

That has continued.

Liza Black 58:48

I mean, every day, I'm getting another notice of another missing native person. And this very rarely gets picked up by anybody outside of indigenous community into the social media sort of Outlook. Very rarely, if I post something about somebody who's missing as they get reshared, or even commented on or liked. So now, it's just that much more so that these issues are being totally ignored. I mean, there were several police killings in Canada, indigenous people that got some attention in Canada, but much zero attention here. There was even a tri- two spirit woman, just teenager who was shot and killed by police like in late March. If that I think that week, the last week of March there's three killings of indigenous people by Canadian police in Winnipeg, just in that one week, right as their, their insights self isolation as well. So it's interesting that people are people do seem to be interested in the Navajo Nation as well. Yeah, that COVID-19 is just unfortunately affecting the Navajo Nation, some people seem willing to talk about structural racism, and how this is the reason why it's disproportionately impacting Navajo Nation. But I'm seeing the certain honestly and murdered indigenous women, that issue has already been marginalized. It feels like it's even more marginalized right now.

Kelly Cook 1:00:27

Yeah, it concerns me. I wonder if it's do you feel like it's like, why is it the the issue with the Navajo? Is it just because there's such a high profile, reservation with so many members? Or is it because just because Navajo people have kind of a higher profile in popular culture? And maybe people can relate like, why is that?

Liza Black 1:00:56

I mean, I think it's all of those reasons. You know, they're the largest tribe in the country. And they are the largest land base in the country. So yeah, I think it's, it's, it's a sort of question of numbers, they've got the numbers to sort of had a bigger impact. I think probably outside outside of our liberal social circle, there's probably not much attention. It's probably just in our cultivated and curating. Like you said, we've created a bubble. It probably feels like it's getting more attention than it has probably if you pan out, it's probably not in mainstream media. I would guess. So yeah. I think that that's probably why. Yeah, and because it's speaking to what is currently a mainstream issue. Just COVID-19 If if the conversation veered away from that, and towards the missing and murdered crisis, it would just totally lose traction.

Kelly Cook 1:01:58

Yeah. Yeah. And I'm just, I worry about these folks. You know, already to be so marginalized, you know, I worry about people that don't have access to resources, or, you know, if this is the way that a position in my own practice in my relatively, you know, just normal, basic. I can't imagine how more marginalized people are, are treated. And I mean, obviously, I knew about marginalization. I just had never really had been, I've had a very privileged life. And I recognize that I have access to everything I need, you know, I'm working with a doctor that I've known for 20 years, you know, so what is it like, for more marginalized women and indigenous women, these populations that are already suffering, a dearth of services to begin with? You know, I cant imagine,

Liza Black 1:03:01

right? There's been a bundling of resources to where the resources that were promised never came through. I haven't followed the super closely, but it's definitely come through my feed a lot. About some kind of corruption went on. And nepotism where someone was hired in Alaska, and they were diverting it to someone they were related to or something like that. I was hearing things about still not getting funds that were promised. Then you have the issue in South Dakota, where the tribe has shut down highways that go through their land. And the governor, who's just a [Inaudible] is saying you have to open them. So, so yes, it's about marginalization. It's about, you know, a lack of resources about a lack of resources. It's also about just the refusal, Americans recognize private sovereignty. Yeah, that tribe, that tribe has a right. To those to those highways on their own land.

Kelly Cook 1:04:01

Yes.

Liza Black 1:04:02

From what I understand, they're the ones that maintain those highways, state maintains those highways, and they happen to be on reservations. Those portions, I believe, are maintained by the nation. And they're trying to protect their tribe and especially elders. Who are the ones who have the cultural knowledge and anguish. Yeah. So thank you for coming to my Ted Talk.

Kelly Cook 1:04:31

[Inaudible] Yeah,

Liza Black 1:04:34

I was just talking with a colleague about one of our graduate students who's African American and she was sick for two months. Really, really bad. went to the doctor numerous times in Bloomington. No family in Bloomington, it was only when my colleague intervened for this student on behalf of her said, I think you are not treating her and testing for you She is black and demanded that she get tested. She got tested and she had it. But, I mean, I don't know exactly what her symptoms were, but my friend said she was really sad for two months and was given nothing. Nothing.

Kelly Cook 1:05:21

Yeah. Yeah, it's terrifying.

Liza Black 1:05:24

And that's a grad student living in a college town.

Kelly Cook 1:05:28

Yeah.

Liza Black 1:05:29

Like, like a prestigious college town with a somewhat prestigious medical facility.

Kelly Cook 1:05:35

I would like to, I would like to imagine that, in addition to it being a prestigious college town, and it's also a progressive place, but I don't feel

Liza Black 1:05:44

progressive than the rest of the state.

Kelly Cook 1:05:48

Yeah, you gotta get out of here, Liza. I'm gonna I'm just I gotta get out of here. I can't do this anymore.

Liza Black 1:05:55

Are you being serious? Are you thinking about relocating?

Kelly Cook 1:05:58

Oh, I'm always thinking about relocating.

Liza Black 1:06:01

Not to Arkansas though?

Kelly Cook 1:06:02

No, no, no, there's no, no, no, I would like to go home to Chicago. Go home to the region probably actually live in the city, though. I grew up about a half an hour outside of there. In Lake County. Yeah, I would I would either like to go there or possibly Santa Fe. I really liked Santa Fe a lot. A lot.

Liza Black 1:06:28

Does it feel like your futures on hold? Because of covid 19?

Kelly Cook 1:06:32

Well, yeah, the reason that I've always stayed here is that my son's family is here. And he's at Ball State. I did have the opportunity. When I divorced his dad, about 10 years ago, I had the opportunity to go home then. And I thought that it was best for him. At the time. He was so young, I thought it would be best for him to actually stay here in the area. So I did. But yeah, as soon as he's finished, depending on where he goes to graduate school. I'm out of here.

Liza Black 1:07:03

Oh, you're close.

Kelly Cook 1:07:05

We're close. Yeah, he'll be a senior this year. He's at Ball State. So he's very close to home. So yeah, we'll see. We'll see. But I, you know, one thing that does also keep me here is that I really like my job at the institute. So that's a plus. But I would like to go back to my office as soon as I can. When its safe.

Liza Black 1:07:30

Yeah, well, I would love to chat with you without recording. But while we're recording, is there anything that you want to address for the record? Or just you know, about this, to make sure you [Inaudible]

Kelly Cook 1:07:48

know, I think I told you everything? I mean, I think that the thing about this this story is that is the fact that it was a virtual death. You know, if I had to if I had to write this up, I would type that up as the title of that, because, you know, I think that's probably that's everything for the record.

Liza Black 1:08:11

Okay, okay, let me stop recording.

Kelly Cook 1:08:15

Okay.