

Interviews with Black Scholars in Transportation, Public Health, and Land Use

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Interviews with Black Scholars

Introduction

As part of the Society for Public Health Education (SOPHE) cooperative agreement with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO), Equitable Cities conducted qualitative interviews with nine (9) Black scholars and thought leaders around the United States to better understand their expert discussions around the historical context and consequence of inequities that have discouraged physical activity among Black individuals and communities. The interviews were conducted to better understand the barriers, racial inequities, and factors related to activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations that influence physical activity among Black individuals and communities. The findings from the interviews will be used to identify opportunities for CDC to embed equitable access to physical activity opportunities for Black communities into its activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations strategy.

These interviews with Black scholars come at a very critical and important time in American history. The nation is currently grappling with civil and social unrest, COVID-19, traffic fatalities—despite reductions in vehicle miles traveled (VMT)—and the very public and horrific murders of a countless number of Black Americans including George Floyd by the Minneapolis Police Department and Ahmaud Arbery by self-deputized White citizens in Georgia, to name a few. Additionally, Charles T. Brown, the report’s author, has raised awareness on the issue of [“Arrested Mobility”](#)—which “asserts that Black people [and other minorities] have been historically and presently denied by legal and illegal authority, the inalienable right to move, to be moved, or to simply exist in public space. This results in adverse social, political, economic, environmental and health effects that are widespread, preventable, and intergenerational.” Given these and other challenges it was imperative to hear from these Black scholars to create more equitable and inclusive communities, particularly for Black Americans.

Methodology

Equitable Cities conducted one-hour, one-on-one (with one exception), structured audio- and video-recorded interviews via Zoom between the researcher and nine Black scholars and thought leaders in transportation, public health, and land use in the United States. The Paperwork Reduction Act requires a review process for any surveys that collect information on more than 10 people that takes some time. So, to meet immediate needs in this field, this review interviewed nine Black scholars and thought leaders from an initial sample of nearly 80 identified by CDC and its partners. The criteria to select the final nine participants included race, gender/sexual orientation, nationality, region, and availability, with availability weighing heavily as time went on.

Participants were recruited via email, LinkedIn, and one-on-one phone calls to gauge their interest and availability to participate in the interviews. Each participant gave his/her verbal and written consent to be interviewed and was offered a \$125 incentive for participation. The interviews were scheduled and conducted from late May 2021 to late June 2021. The Zoom interview recordings were downloaded and transcribed separately using Otter.ai software. Final unedited transcripts have been included in the Appendix.

Using the NVivo broad-brush approach, word frequency and text search queries were conducted. The word frequency query was used to identify the top 100 words in the transcripts. Such words that appear in the word frequency search included: “people;” “think;” “blackness;” and “community.” The top 100 words mentioned by interview participants are displayed in Figure 1. The word cloud is used to illustrate what was top of mind for the participants during the interview.

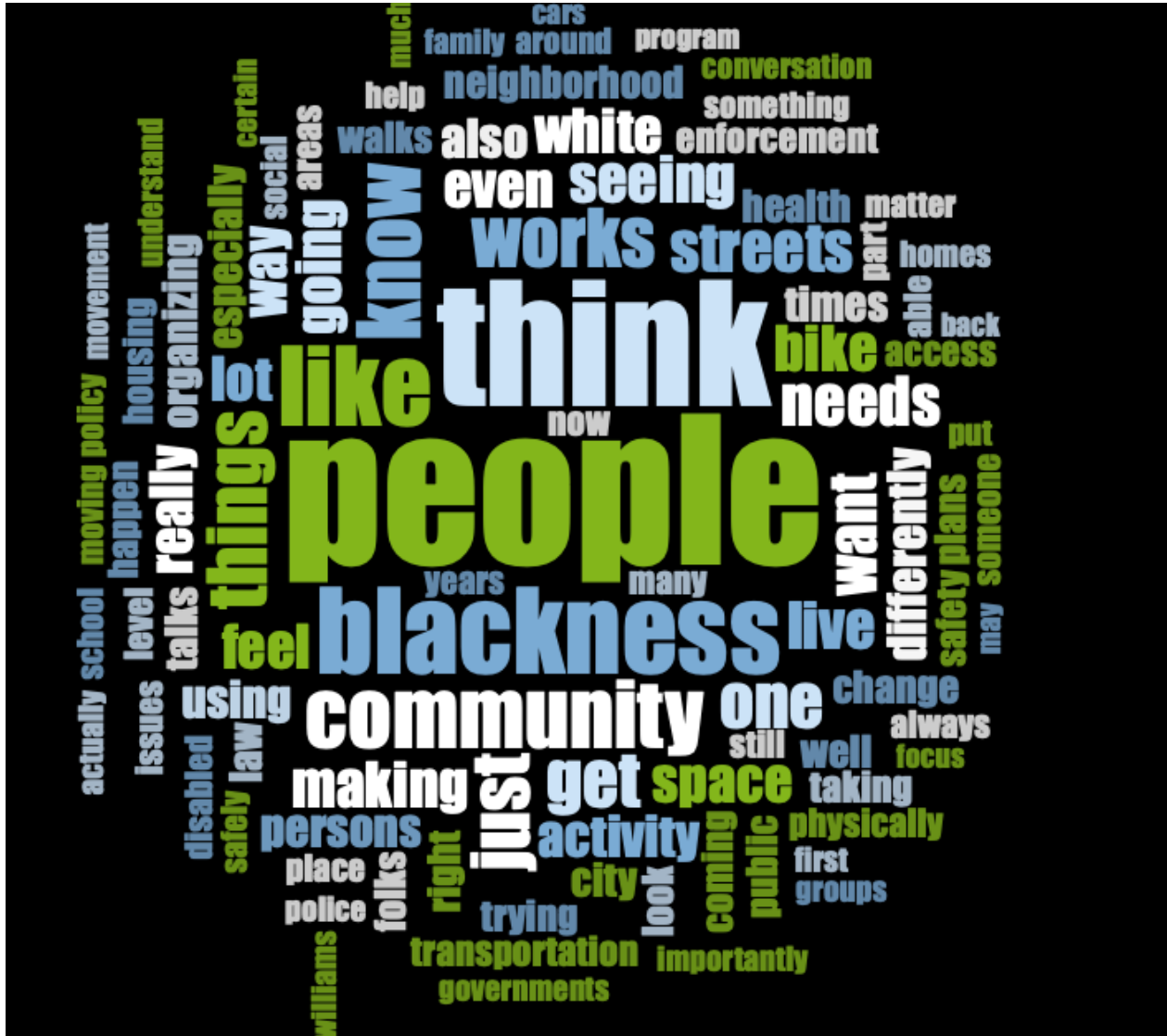


Figure 1. Word cloud display of the top 100 words used by interview participants

Participant Characteristics

All nine participants identified as Black American; with one participant noting that she was also bi-racial. Of the nine participants, five identified as females, three identified as males, and one identified as transgender. Three of the participants also identified as members of the LGBTQ community. It is unknown as to how many of the participants are married; however, at least four of them mentioned a “partner” during or after their recorded interviews. All participants have obtained at least a master’s degree, with four having obtained doctoral degrees (including one JD) and two being licensed professional engineers (PE). Participants’ state of current residence includes California (n=2), Texas (n=1), New York (n=1), North Carolina (n=1), Washington DC (n=2), Virginia (n=1) and

South Carolina (n=1). All the participants were familiar with the CDC and its efforts to increase safe, equitable, and inclusive access to activity friendly routes to everyday destinations.

Findings from Interviews with Black Scholars

This section includes the overall findings from video interviews with nine Black scholars and thought leaders from across the country. The section is organized topically in the same chronological order as the focus guide that was used during the actual interviews. It is important to note, however, that unlike the focus group guide, some topics are combined due to the nature of the conversation with participants. The final list of topics included below are career path/journey; white dominated spaces; the COVID-19 pandemic and physical activity; the COVID-19 pandemic and recent interventions; routes to destinations, plans and policies; the Black Lives Matter movement and organization; law enforcement; traffic and personal safety; institutional and systemic racism, gentrification, and displacement; experts' top priorities, partnerships, and government's role; and outreach and communication.

Career Path

While the reasons for choosing their specific career paths or journeys varied among participants, it was clear from the beginning that they all shared a deep love and commitment to eradicating the institutional and systemic harm inflicted on all Black people as well as other marginalized and oppressed people and identities (i.e., low-income, LGBTQIA+, women, and Black men) throughout the United States. Though most of them had no direct exposure to their field prior to entering it, they all shared an unexplainable feeling or a divine “calling” of being “chosen by the profession” instead of consciously choosing it. Similarly, they shared being “pushed/guided into the profession” based on direct and indirect social, cultural, economic, and environmental influences and experiences. Through exposure during volunteerism, activism, and in academic settings, participants honed their skills and ultimately selected careers that were fueled by their passion to make a difference (i.e., “impact”) in their communities within the public health or planning related fields.

“Sometimes they tell you, you don't choose, it's chosen for you.”

“I chose this path, because I feel that transportation and built environment is directly related to one’s quality of life, especially in the case of Black communities, who have been historically marginalized.”

“This matters to me, and specifically with Black men, because we are an important part of this country's fabric. And on a more commonplace level, we're members of families, we are coworkers, we are leaders, we are community participants. And the lack of focus on this particular population has also resulted in issues as it relates to life expectancy and quality of life, which have intergenerational consequences.”

“I feel like this career path found me. My dad was a civil engineer, an urban planner, and worked in the transportation field. And then my mom also worked for New York City Transit Authority.”

“Ultimately, it was for me, the desire to prevent disease versus treat disease, that really gravitated [me] towards public health.”

“What brought me maybe not to this specific seat, but to the work that I do, is a love for people. I love connecting with people. I love understanding what their challenges are, and then, trying to unstick those challenges.”

“But ultimately, in my first semester of grad school in my Urban Policy class, I looked into my textbook, and I realized this doesn't reflect the full Black experience.”

White-Dominated Spaces

When asked to describe their thoughts or feelings related to identifying as Black within a historically White-dominated field or space, participants described it as “interesting,” “tough,” and “eye-opening.” They shared how family members had prepared them since childhood to navigate the harsh reality of working in a White-dominated space. For many, being the only Black person or one of the few Black people in their field had become familiar territory to them, and therefore, they had grown more comfortable and not “intimidated” by being the only one or one of few

Black people. Participants also shared the challenges associated with having to represent all Black Americans; having to always prove themselves despite their professional experiences and academic achievements; having to be held to a higher standard than their White counterparts; and having to deal with the reality that their other intersecting identities (i.e., gender, sexual orientation, disabilities, and “southerner”) often make navigating the White-dominated space more difficult.

While two of the participants shared that dealing with the discrimination and microaggressions in childhood and adulthood had led to mental health challenges, overall participants expressed that they were raised to be proud of their Blackness and were prepared by their parents to be vigilant in increasing representation (i.e., Black, brown, LGBTQ, and people with disabilities) in spaces that were dominated by White people, especially White males.

“Oh, dear, it's, it's tough.”

“Personally, I would say that my experience has been eye-opening.”

It's just one of those things as a Black person, you already know that you're going to go into essentially a space of potential insincerity is really what White-dominated space in the bike world is symbolic of to me.”

“Black people don't get to be bad at their jobs, right?”

“You have to have those credentials behind your name in order to validate you in certain spaces and give you a platform.”

“It [Disability community] is dominated by White people.”

“What I think has changed is how White people perceive Black people being in White-dominated spaces. And I think especially over the last year, now we are everybody's favorite friend, right, and I think it's so interesting to see this change that has happened, and in many ways on a surface level. And so now everybody

wants us in the room; everybody wants to set the table. Everybody wants us on the project, but I don't know if there has been that true shift of power.”

“...But when the space is dominated by White people, you get that variation, right, and you get the perspective of someone who grew up in a rural area, and someone who grew up in an urban area, within the White space. But within the Black space, when you're one of two, you have to represent all of Blackness.”

“I will say that I feel that being Black gives me a special voice to contribute to this conversation. And the more that I feel like I'm speaking up, the more that these issues are starting to come to the forefront. I see being unique as an opportunity to bring out these issues and reports.”

“I've noticed that when something as, I guess, trivial as using Zoom, if I put doctor in front of my name, I get a certain response versus when I just have my name with no credentials.”

“I also think that being in certain spaces, you're not comfortable or allowed to share some of your thoughts, and your insights [are] minimized based on it, at least from my perception, based on my race, ethnicity, but then also my gender. And so there have been instances in which I've been in meetings that are predominantly White male-dominated, and have really been overlooked, or my comments haven't been taken to heart...”

“Public health is historically White; it is historically White women who were leading and operating a lot of its initiatives. And so, as a Black man, being often seen as opposite or different from those attributes, it becomes very difficult and even challenging, since I have to exert a great amount of caution, and sensitivity when talking about concepts of equity, or inclusion, disparities or injustice.”

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Physical Activity

When asked if the pandemic had affected their own physical activity opportunities or views on being physically active in general, most participants shared that the abrupt

halt to life as they knew it and impending social isolation, witnessing of illness and death of family members, and toll of the virus on Black and brown communities caused by the global pandemic had an overall negative impact on their physical, mental, and social/emotional health.

Prior to the pandemic, the participants shared that they used physical activity, be it at a local park or indoor gym, to stay physically fit, socialize with their neighbors, and maintain positive mental health. Furthermore, participants shared that mental health issues such as anxiety and depression were further exacerbated by the constant barrage of information received via social and news media as well as seemingly contradictory information from government and health officials.

While COVID-19 resulted in a decline in physical activity in most participants and weight gain in at least two scholars, those that did not report a decline in activity found ways to stay physically active. Three participants noted that because they spent more time at home, it allowed them the flexibility to engage in walking in their neighborhood and revisiting old hobbies like roller skating. All participants, including those whose physical activity efforts were not impacted by COVID-19, shared that their views on the importance of physical activity had been affected positively—that is, they now recognize how important it is to be physically active as well as the importance of having safe and high-quality active transportation infrastructure in all communities. It also made them aware of the challenges that both their personal environments and the environments of Black and brown communities posed on access to opportunities to engage in physical activity and access to resources such as healthcare providers, grocery stores, and recreational opportunities.

“It wasn't just a pandemic. It was a pandemic layered with Black death upon Black death upon Black death.”

“In my own personal life, it has taken a toll. I am heavier [now] than I've ever imagined that I would be in life.”

“The first time I started doing some trail walking, during this pandemic, was in June of 2020.”

“I would personally say that the pandemic has helped me to actually become more physically active. And I will say that I am blessed to be in an area where I have very easy access to physical activity like parks and gyms, but I do know that that's not the case for a lot of our community.”

“I realized living in my neighborhood that I wanted to visit parks and realizing that even though I come from a certain place of privilege, my educational background, my income, my neighborhood is not designed for people who don't have motorized transportation, like a car or truck, in order to get to these places. And so realizing and wanting to participate in physical activity and not use a vehicle to get there, there are many barriers, physical barriers, safety barriers, that don't allow for that to happen.”

“I definitely have increased my outside physical activity because of the pandemic.”

“I mean, I'm a person who eats my feelings. And so, I think it has negatively impacted my physical activity. I think I've always been someone who struggles with anxiety, and like a little bit of depression, especially weather related. And so just being inside all the time has been really hard.”

The COVID-19 Pandemic and Recent Interventions

When asked to share what thoughts come to mind when discussing recent or COVID-19 inspired built environment and programmatic activities in cities throughout the United States, participants viewed several of the interventions (i.e., 15-minute cities) with a high degree of skepticism.¹ Most participants noted the importance of

¹ The “15-minute city” may be defined as an ideal geography where most human needs and many desires are located within a travel distance of 15 minutes.

centering racial equity and inclusion early in 15-minute cities, calm streets², slow streets³, and open streets programs⁴ given their concern for which groups historically have greater access (i.e., predominantly wealthier and White communities) and which groups do not (i.e., racial minorities, persons with disabilities, and low-income communities). Thus, it is important to note that the participants are not opposed to these programs. Instead, their concerns are that these programs are often conceptualized, marketed, and implemented without much input and insights from the Black community. This has unfortunately led to programs with strong law enforcement presence or locations and corridors that have traditionally been unwelcoming to Black residents.

“There's potential but there are ways I think we need to be mindful of equity and we're not always ready for 15-minute cities.”

“15-minute cities are typically areas where we have left out Black and brown communities.”

“Re: Slow streets, calm streets, etc. Yes, again, [they are] blocking off streets for us [disability community].”

“There's no physical activity program in the country that's accessible [to disabled people].”

“I'm sure I just had the word for that one [15-minute cities]: a gimmick.”

² The Institute of Transportation Engineers defines “Calm Streets” or traffic calming as the combination of measures that reduce the negative effects of motor vehicle use, alter driver behavior, and improve conditions for non-motorized street users. Traffic calming consists of physical design and other measures put in place on existing roads to reduce vehicle speeds and improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists.

³ “[Slow Streets](#) reduce traffic volume and speed to a minimum so that people can walk, bike, and run safely.”

⁴ “[Open Streets](#) are programs that temporarily open streets to people by closing them to cars.”

“Open streets were the things that the White people glommed on to in their urban vision to dine Alfresco.”

Routes to Destinations, Plans and Policies

Participants were asked to give a one-word response to the following interventions and movements: Complete Streets, Vision Zero, comprehensive/master plan, Safe Routes to School, single-family zoning, inclusionary zoning, and accessory dwelling units. **Of those that were intimately familiar with each of the interventions and movements, Safe Routes to School and Complete Streets were viewed more favorably, whereas Vision Zero⁵ was not viewed as favorably due to racialized and discriminatory enforcement concerns, particularly against Black Americans.** Another participant from the disability community did note, however, that Complete Streets are “not accessible” for the disability community. By deeming it “not accessible” for persons with disability, the participant was speaking more to the fact that even though Complete Streets are designed with all modes and all abilities in mind, there are many streets throughout the nation that have been deemed “complete” but still do not properly or safely accommodate persons with disability. As discussed above, this participant’s concerns has more to do with the inequitable implementation of Complete Streets instead of the concept of Complete Streets.

“The ideal, it's the ideal thing, it's what should happen. I stand by it as a practice: a Complete Streets plan.”

“Re: SRTS: Excellent. I wish they could. Kids should be counted about amongst the most vulnerable in cities.”

“I would love a Complete Street, give me a green bike lane, a red bus lane.”

⁵ Vision Zero is a strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all.

“Re: Vision Zero. Over it. I really believe that we should try to get [to] a place where people walking and biking and kids and older adults, and all of these vulnerable street users are safe”

“We know where the unsafe streets are; however, that money is not getting to those unsafe streets. And the savvy ones have said, ‘Oh, well, Vision Zero, you need to fix my street’. And it's like, could every street be safer? Absolutely. But we're still not putting the investment where the need is.”

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) Movement

Overall, participants viewed the BLM movement favorably. Participants agreed that the movement was needed, particularly at a time in which there were few organized efforts in existence aimed at addressing the social issues that plague Black and brown communities and was a “continuation of Black people’s struggle for freedom and justice” that erupted during the Civil Rights era. At least three participants had been actively engaged in BLM movements and activities in varying capacities. Participants that were not directly involved with BLM still supported the movement but did not see the need to constantly shout “Black Lives Matter.” They shared that they were actively supporting the movement’s efforts through their work and personal lives.

A few participants stated that while not perfect, BLM was viewed as an “important” and “transformative” movement. One participant stated that BLM at the core was an abolitionist movement that pushed for more than police reform. Another participant added that BLM is a “new iteration of the overall Civil Rights Movement that's broadened, that's more articulate in what it is asking for in terms of anti-oppression.” Participants shared concerns of the BLM movement becoming a catch phrase and its overall aim being watered down and co-opted by other not equally intentioned groups.

Additionally, participants feared that internal strife and personal attacks on leadership may have undermined the positive impact that the movement has had and can have overall. However, because the BLM Movement opened the eyes of so many and shed a “spotlight on the policing” and “vulnerability of Black bodies” and gave a “voice to the voiceless,” participants noted how it has held entities accountable to their

commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and pushed legislators to address police reform (see recommendations at the end of the Law Enforcement section) and legislation such as the George Floyd Justice in Policing and Emmett Till Anti-lynching Acts.

When asked to explain how the BLM movement has impacted their attitudes, perceptions, or vision for equitable and inclusive active living in this country, many participants stated that it had not impacted them directly, but it had impacted them indirectly by raising awareness around enforcement, discrimination, and many of the issues that were already being discussed in their communities. BLM efforts also revealed to them how uninformed many Americans are as it relates to the racialized violence and discriminatory policing practices.

Lastly, in addition to BLM, participants noted several national, regional, and local organizations that have influenced their attitudes, perceptions, and views on active living. The organizations listed include the Congress for New Urbanism, Urban Land Institute, American Planning Association, American Institute of Architects, American Society of Landscape Architects, Transportation Equity Caucus, Policy Link, Equiticity, and a plethora of local activists, bike-walk groups, and non-profits.

“I think Black Lives Matters is important to health and I would like to see that link be made more explicitly clear because individuals are really thinking about the ways that place and racism coincide to result in health outcomes.”

“The movement [BLM] itself, I don't know that really changed anything. It's the reporting and the reaction to the movement that has changed my perception.”

“My concern is that again, especially in this last year or two, it's become a catchphrase that folks use to virtue signal.”

“...sometimes BLM feels like a hashtag. And that's not as impactful.”

“It is one of the few groups [BLM] who actually did embrace Disability Justice and gave a space to Black disabled people like Carrie Gray and Justice Shorter; and they created the hashtag ‘Black disabled lives matter’ because they centered Disability Justice. So, I think they’re doing great work.”

“Black Lives Matter movement is my life.”

“Positive, definitely necessary, definitely needed. And I’m looking forward to continuing the [BLM] events, the conversation around Black liberation, and our needs.”

“Absolutely necessary and misunderstood at times by people who are racist, I guess.”

“I think when it comes to the BLM movement, it’s long overdue.”

“I think the Black Lives Matter movement could really help us to leverage the ways that we do research, the questions that we most importantly ask, and even the data sources that we draw.”

Law Enforcement

Most of the participants did not view law enforcement favorably when asked to share their views on law enforcement in the context of active living, and how enforcement might impact their perception of safety and desire to be active outdoors. Participants’ perceptions of law enforcement were influenced by the historical trauma that has been experienced for generations in Black communities. Two participants specifically noted that law enforcement began during slavery, and its challenges are deeply rooted in a problem that has long existed due to the racial biases and prejudices that the system itself is built upon. Participants have either personally experienced, witnessed, or heard of several examples of encounters with police that have left them emotionally scarred and fearful of police. One female participant shared that she was more fearful of the police than of someone sexually assaulting or harassing her as she navigated public spaces such as public transit or walking down the street. Another female participant expressed concerns of not being protected by

police: “I wonder if the police and law enforcement will protect me in a non-traditional space...not even concerned that they're going to hurt me, but will they show up for me.”

Over-policing and perceptions of harassment by law enforcement, as compared to their White counterparts, discouraged interview participants from interacting with public spaces to access physical activity, social engagement, recreation, and more, for fear of physical harm or being stopped for a minor offense such as jaywalking as a pretext to be searched and arrested. Some participants mentioned that they were taught at an early age about how to interact with law enforcement or precautions to take while interacting with their environments (e.g., not having more than two Black teen males in a vehicle at a time). They discussed how perceptions of threats by their White counterparts are often dependent upon the hue of their skin (i.e., “darker” skins Black people can be perceived as more of a threat as compared to “lighter” skinned Black people) and gender (i.e., males are perceived as more of a threat as compared to females). Participants also shared that their fear of simply existing and moving in public spaces has been further exacerbated by self-deputized citizens or the “Karens” (e.g., Central Park birdwatching incident) of the world. It is important to note that the term “Karen” may refer to a female or male, though the terms “Kens and Kevins” (e.g., Ahmaud Arbery’s murders) have also been used for men.

Six of the nine interview participants stated that police reform, defunding, or abolishment was needed. One participant stated that enforcement should not be a means to create safer streets, but unfortunately, law and order are the American way. Recommendations from those that spoke to the need to reform law enforcement, and not including those that called for defunding and abolishing the police departments, included:

- developing strong relationships between law enforcement and the neighborhood as partnership creates safe spaces for young people;
- more use of social workers trained as violence interrupters; and
- eliminating laws such as jaywalking

“I don't know of any Black male that I know that hasn't had a negative encounter with law enforcement.”

“I think it's law enforcement [that] can be a hindrance, depending upon what you look like and where you live. And some people aren't able to move as freely as they would like to; their emotions and existence are questioned in certain spaces. So I think that's all due to engagement in historical trauma brought on by law enforcement.”

“I like bicycling, but the few times I've jogged I have felt very uncomfortable [as a Black man].”

“I will say law enforcement can be a two-way street depending on how they interact with the community.”

“I think it's a system that doesn't work.”

“Law enforcement started with slavery; they are slave patrols. And so, they are not [put there] to protect Black, indigenous, [or] people of color, specifically Black bodies; they are there to control them.”

Personal Safety

The overwhelming majority of the personal safety discussion focused on concerns related to race and gender-based violence against women in public space and on **public transportation**. These views were specifically stated by participants who identified as female or transgender. Unsurprisingly, those that identified as male and/or gay men did not express similar personal safety concerns outside of their concerns for law enforcement. I say unsurprisingly, because as someone who has conducted focus groups with Black and minority men across the United States, minority men do not usually discuss personal safety concerns without being prompted or asked directly. Even still, many appear to downplay their personal safety concerns when the topic is discussed. Of the six female participants, three stated that they behaved or dressed in a specific manner as to not bring attention to themselves. They

were also mindful of the time of day or night that they were interacting with their environment and which routes to take to ensure a greater sense of safety. Personal safety concerns also ranked below law enforcement concerns but above traffic safety concerns. For instance, a few female participants stated that there existed among them a greater sense of fear of sexual assault, harassment, or other violent crime from males (including males in law enforcement) than being struck and injured or killed by a vehicle. One LGBTQI+ participant stated that she felt “more unsafe as a Black female in the Black communities.” That participant went on to say that she felt as though “male bodied individuals or male presenting individuals of certain types feel more empowered to say things to me [as a Black woman] that they wouldn't say to White individuals because that would cause them more trouble.” This has a lot to do with the belief that, given the fragile relationship between law enforcement and the Black community, Black females are less likely to report Black males to law enforcement than White females, and Black females feel as if society, including law enforcement, is less concerned about what happens to Black females versus White females. Therefore, there is a belief that the aggressive behavior of Black males against Black females is less likely to be penalized or enforced in the same way it would be if the victim was a White female.

One female participant stated that her number one concern is law enforcement followed by verbal and physical harassment and assault by men. Other female participants also shared their concern with potentially being harassed and assaulted by men. Another female participant, however, shared how she feels her “femaleness” protects her while traversing the city because “people tend to believe that women are less capable—thus allowing her more space and being less likely to be aggressive than if she were the male version of herself.”

“One law enforcement, and that is my number one fear is law enforcement, and two is, as a woman, the safety of my body.”

“I know I have friends who won't go many places in the dark, right, because they have been raped. They have been assaulted many times.”

“People are affronted with individuals with either real or perceived authority that make them feel unwelcome and unsafe in certain spaces.”

Traffic Safety

When asked to discuss the emotions they feel when walking, bicycling, waiting for and taking public transportation, or hopping on an e-scooter in their community, many participants’ first words were happiness, joy, free, and freedom. Therefore, traffic safety, while a minor concern, did not weigh as heavily given the fact that most of the participants reside in bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly communities and are not reliant on public transportation. Two participants did note significant differences in active transportation infrastructure in their more affluent communities versus their counterparts. For example, one female participant stated that “I would say walking would probably be the best example. It's anxiety provoking. Going back to the example of a local park that's a quarter of a mile away, which isn't a long distance, and there are literally no sidewalks, and you have traffic in both directions...and there's a goat path that has been created.”

How Their Enforcement, Personal and Traffic Safety Concerns Differ from White Counterparts

When asked to explain how their experiences might differ from their White counterparts, participants felt that their White counterparts are not as concerned about law enforcement, personal safety, and traffic safety as they are. One queer participant noted that she believes that she is more of a target of verbal and physical harassment than her White counterparts because Black men fear the potential repercussions for engaging with a White woman versus interacting with her. However, another female participant felt differently, stating that she would receive the same level of harassment even if she were a White female. The difference she noted is the perceived lack of fear that White people have towards law enforcement. Others noted how they are more likely than their White counterparts to be victims of vehicle and pedestrian-related crashes or potentially being at a higher risk of being victims of a crime. Another participant shared the potential benefit(s) of being a dark-skinned woman married to an ethnically ambiguous man. She stated, “I mean, I think for me, well, so I'll say this, my husband is ethnically ambiguous. And so, I think having an ethnically ambiguous husband and a ‘whatever looking’ child, it probably changes my

perception of safety versus if my husband was “blackity, black,” and my child was chocolate, I do want to contextualize that I would have a different perception of safety. And different concern for safety. Because of a spouse.”

“Because I do recognize even my husband, he is Black, but the world doesn't perceive him as Black. And so, it allows him to move in the world differently. He's very conscious of it. But interestingly enough for him, it doesn't take away his fear, but I can't speak for him about us with me. But it does, it doesn't take away.”

“I think that White folks are not particularly concerned with law enforcement.”

“I feel more unsafe on a gender-based level in Black communities, because I think that people are afraid to say certain things to White individuals that they would [sic] they're happy to say to me because they assumed the benefit of the doubt.”

“I also think that I might have greater fears as well as relates to the ways that I even present myself and how that will be received. And I do feel as a tall black man, I feel that I'm always fighting against this inertia or this notion to make myself smaller, to make myself smaller for my environment.”

Institutional and Systemic Racism

All the participants noted their frustration and displeasure with institutional and systemic racism, particularly in the context of active living. One participant noted how institutional and systemic racism creates a racially homogenous culture that centers Whiteness in a way that is advantageous to White Americans while detrimental to others. Another participant shared how her concern for “symbolic victories,” noting that these victories do very little to change the reality of life in Black communities, specifically when you consider how transportation funding is not being allocated equitably.

Digging deeper into the discussion of deep-seated issues, participants expressed frustration with systems that were created to perpetuate the stereotype of the “big Black boogie man” while mainstream America superficially or symbolically took a stand

against institutional and systemic racism. The systems of oppression, according to the participants, are not well understood by their White counterparts and there remains the “elephant” in the room, a buzzword for organizations, politicians, and even celebrities, because the actions needed to dismantle these systems have not been discussed or acted upon in a meaningful way. One participant stated that in their experience of discussing institutional and systemic racism with their White counterparts, they assert that White people can see how things are racist, but they do not understand the various layers and interconnectedness of it all. One participant stated that they have attempted to have conversations with their White counterparts about systemic racism only to be met with opposition and disbelief that it exists. Such systems still give rise to over-policing, punitive systems, and devaluing of Black and brown communities and residents.

“It also makes it perplexing to me, when there are people who care about active living, health, or transportation like we do, and they're not thinking about systemic racism. They're not thinking about White supremacy. They're not thinking about not just what is the infrastructure change I need to make, but also what is the institutional change I need to make whenever people don't have both sides of that coin.”

“Ultimately, what it is, is when you have majority White people putting together a program, by default, you have centered Whiteness in your recommendations, period.”

“I think it's [institutional and systemic racism] built into our built environments.”

Gentrification and Displacement

Participants shared their perceptions on what they deem as two of the most harmful forms of institutional and systemic racism that have impacted generations of Black and brown communities’ ability to be healthy, resilient, and thriving: gentrification and displacement. **Overwhelmingly, participants expressed feelings of anger, disappointment, and fear when asked questions related to this topic.** It was also clear from the participants that, like the concerns mentioned in response to institutional and

systemic racism, the implications of gentrification and displacement have left participants and communities with unaddressed mental and physical health issues.

Recommendations provided by participants to mitigate the residual effects of gentrification and displacement included:

- focusing on revitalization (“revitalization is gentrification with the community in mind”);
- educating residents on the importance and impact of community improvements;
- reducing social displacement by engaging the community in decision-making;
- encouraging and making homeownership a possibility for current residents;
- investing in local business;
- increasing minimum wage; and
- increasing access to affordable housing

Experts’ Top Priorities

Participants were asked to provide their recommendations for improvements across three topical areas in relation to active living: top priorities if they had unlimited powers and resources; partners to engage to advance the top priorities identified; and specific actions that the federal government can take to address the issues identified. The complete list of scholar recommendations can be found in Tables 1 and 2.

Recommendations for top priorities fell into seven categories: community engagement, economic, education, infrastructure and environmental, political, professional/staffing, and societal.

“If I had unlimited resources, I would pick up all the cars and they would have to go somewhere else.”

“I would try to change some of our bureaucratic structures to make it easier to pay actual community members, community-based organizations, as the experts that they are; I would try to flip that paradigm of who’s an expert and who gets those big paychecks to do the work.”

“Dedicated federal funding for sidewalks and for bicycle infrastructure. That's number one. Number two, direct funding to cities. I think that we have misaligned philosophies with our state partners who want to build highways and spend billions to build highways, when we see that billions could be used to create better walkable neighborhoods for our residents, so that direct funding to localities so that we [sic] can actually put the investment where we need to.”

“I think that procurement piece is huge. I think so much work around equity gets slowed down, based on governmental red tape.”

Table 1. Expert Top Priorities for Active Living

Priority Area	Examples for Implementation
Community engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make work around the built environment and transportation a topic for public discourse • Let members of the community decide what happens in and to their communities • Shift priorities towards interventions that focus on what people need rather than other priorities like reducing traffic delay or increasing property/business tax revenue
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure financial capacity for basic living expenses. Raise minimum wage/pay community members a living wage/provide a universal income for all • Improve investments in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure in BIPOC communities • Direct resources to cities to support active living improvements • Provide resources for more affordable homes
Educational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create programs to educate children and adults on bicycle and pedestrian safety • Shift priorities for departments of motor vehicles to include bicycle education
Infrastructure and Environmental	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build affordable housing • Create and restore greenspaces and parks • Create aging and mobility friendly roadways and side walks • Increase sidewalk and crosswalk installation

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce the number of cars on the roadways by encouraging and providing bicycles • Beautify and revitalize spaces without displacing current residents
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change bureaucratic structures to make it easier to compensate community members and community-based organizations for their expertise • Eliminate or mitigate the harmful impacts of gerrymandering
Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hire staff that reflect the communities they serve • Adequately staff facilities such as community centers, parks, and recreation centers
Societal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate racism through action and accountability

Preferred Partnerships

When asked who they would partner with to help advance their top priorities for active living, participants listed several entities, including advocacy, business, community-based organizations and non-profits, government agencies, health, learning collaboratives, professional/member organizations, and academia (See Table 2).

To enact the top priorities displayed in Table 2, the participants recommended that the government’s role be expanded to:

1. build trust and engage the community through genuine engagement;
2. focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion by hiring more BIPOC to serve within the federal administration;
3. increase funding for infrastructure such as trails, rails, and sidewalks, housing, parks, greenspaces, broadband service, and basic services such as water and energy;
4. provide incentives for sustainable modes of transportation;
5. allocate more resources to local governments;

6. collaborate across Departments (HUD, EPA, DOT, DHHS);
7. review and enact policy and programs that reduce disparities and violence against Black and brown people and that reverse systemic and institutional racism (Emmitt Till anti-lynching law, George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, critical race theory, anti-displacement policies); and
8. update, promote, and create model policies related to active living.

Table 2. *Expert Partnership Recommendations for Active Living*

Priority Area	Examples for Implementation
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance and advocacy groups • Environmental justice groups • The League of American Bicyclists • Newark community street teams • Policy Link • Outdoor Afro • Individuals <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) (men and women) • Residents with lived experiences • Young adults
Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local businesses • Developers
Community-based Organizations/Non-profits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • America Walks • Art societies • Center for Independent Living • Historical societies • People for Bikes
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local/county • Government alliances • Parks and recreation • School systems • State • Federal

Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hospitals/healthcare • National Association of Chronic Disease Directors (NACDD) • Public health organizations
Learning Collaboratives/Labs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equality Labs
Professionals/Member Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labor • National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) • Public health professionals • Transit • Social workers
Research/Academic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-Campus Partnerships for Health

Outreach and Communications

The final recommendations provided by the participants centered around the effective methods that can be employed by CDC/Active People, Healthy NationSM to increase awareness of and encourage equitable active living. Participants agreed that it should not be CDC that promotes such messaging. Given the level of distrust for the government that has grown in the wake of the global pandemic, the CDC and other government entities should rely upon members of the community to not only share such messages, but also be actively involved in the creation and development of it.

Based on their experience in the strategic use of social media, the four interviewees that actively engage in communication efforts shared that they were most successful when segmenting their audiences and using multiple modes of communication. Social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram (Linktree for link sharing), Patreon, and websites were most effective in reaching working adults. They noted that younger audiences were better engaged via TikTok. Because specific segments of their target audiences did not have a social media presence, reliance upon faith-based organization announcements and word of mouth through youth and senior serving organizations was also critical. Other participants that did not put a focus on strategic communication via social media, or even traditional media, cited time, resources, and interest as the main reasons why they did not engage personally or professionally. While one participant stated that social media was “too easy” and made people “lazy,”

another participant mentioned that engaging in social media allowed them to connect with a much wider audience and disseminate information to those whom they would otherwise have no contact with if they relied only on traditional media.

“I definitely think street teams⁶ would be pretty cool for CDC to do.”

As the CDC considers the most effective and efficient modes used to spread messages about active living, scholars suggested the following recommendations for consideration:

1. Go to the source: listen to what is already being said. You don’t always have to create something new;
2. Invest in the community: hire a diverse group of individuals to assist in the development and dissemination of messages (e.g., people with disabilities include those who are deaf and blind; use large font print materials for older adults);
3. Segment messages and modes of communication based on priority audience: do not use a cookie cutter approach;
4. Create relevant content: create content such as videos that feature members of the priority population;
5. Think outside the box: use experiential videos such as virtual reality simulations to encourage participation in active living. It is not enough to tell people what to do, you have to show them how;
6. Elevate voices: Give Black scholars or scholars of other minority or socially and politically disadvantaged groups and local people a platform to share and influence content;
7. Increase access to healthy foods and nutrition;
8. Increase access to health care and health care services; and

⁶ Here is an example of a formal street team of ambassadors: <http://njbikeped.org/nj-ambassadors-in-motion-njaim/#:~:text=NJAIM%20Annual%20Reports-Who%20Are%20The%20Ambassadors%20In%20Motion%3F,the%20state%20of%20New%20Jersey.>

9. Proactively work to diversify Black scholars in these respective fields by addressing the upstream preparation of future public health, transportation, and urban planning professionals.

Key Observations

Equitable Cities conducted qualitative interviews with nine (9) Black scholars and thought leaders around the country to better understand their expert discussions around the historical context and consequence of inequities that have discouraged physical activity among Black individuals and communities. The interviews were conducted to better understand the barriers, racial inequities, and factors related to activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations that influence physical activity among Black individuals and communities. Below are the following observations obtained from the interviews with Black scholars:

- Black scholars approach their active transportation work through an intersectional lens, as it best reflects their lived experiences.
- There are major concerns regarding the impact of law enforcement and gender-based violence on Black mobility, particularly for males as it relates to law enforcement and females as it relates to gender-based violence.
- Investments in infrastructure via Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School programs were valued. Participants were skeptical of how programs like Safe Streets and Open Streets were implemented and they were opposed to Vision Zero programs because of their connection to law enforcement.
- Gentrification and displacement are viewed as tools of structural racism and discrimination.
- There is distrust and concern for Whiteness in all settings, including self-deputized citizens.
- Black scholars value the importance of centering and elevating Black voices, including members of the general public, in active living.

Future Opportunities/Considerations

The current effort included nine interviews with Black scholars, providing a plethora of valuable insights and recommendations for CDC and others to advance active living in communities of color throughout the United States. However, Black scholars are not a monolithic group, and nine individuals are not representative of Black scholars, nor of Black communities around the United States. Therefore, this effort could be enhanced by 1) conducting a nationwide survey of current and up-and-coming (undergraduate and graduate) Black scholars and 2) conducting additional interviews with a more diverse mix (i.e., socio-economic) of Black scholars and the Black community as a whole from around the country.

Video Interview Transcripts

Transcript: Dara Baldwin

Thursday, May 27, 2021, 10:00 AM

SUMMARY KEYWORD

people, disability, community, disabled, talk, person, conversations, black, white, equity, law enforcement, assessable, hear, programs, create, transportation, streets, traffic safety, work, thoughts

SPEAKERS

Charles T. Brown (interviewer) and Dara Baldwin

As part of SOPHE's cooperative agreement with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPAO), we will be conducting qualitative interviews to better understand Black/African American expert discussions around the historical context and consequences of inequities that have discouraged physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities (e.g., limited access to safe and accessible routes and/or destinations, feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, etc.). We would like to better understand the barriers, racial inequities, and facilitators related to activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations (routes to destinations) that influence physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities.

CB 00:03

You have been identified and nominated as an expert transportation and/or land use Thought Leader. We are interested in interviewing you to learn more about your experience and perspective. My name is Charles T. Brown, Adjunct professor at Rutgers University and founder of Equitable Cities. This interview will take no more than one hour. This information will be used to identify opportunities for CDC to embed equitable access to physical activity opportunities for Black communities into its activity friendly routes to everyday destinations strategy. Do I have your permission to record?

DB 04:21

Yes, this is Dara Baldwin, and you have my permission.

CB 04:35

Please tell me why you chose this particular career path or journey.

DB 04:40

Sometimes they tell you, you don't choose, it's chosen for you. So but for me, I'm Dara Baldwin, director of national policy. I've been an activist all my life. I was born in Spain. My parents were serving their country and brought me home to their home city. Newark, New Jersey, which if you know Newark New Jersey, it's a political town. It's a social justice place. we have everyone from Christians, Muslims, Jewish, everybody's

there, it's a melting pot as well as the port is there, right? So you have people from all over the world there. And I was taught at a young age to fight for people's rights and specifically black people. And your life and career go different ways. I graduated from college thought I was going to law school, I was blessed. My parents paid for college; I went to Rutgers. So thank you for teaching at Rutgers. I'm at my party. I said, Okay. my father's like, Who's paying for law school? I hear you going last night. Like, what are you talking about? Like, yeah, I'm not doing that. So my life went into something else because I couldn't afford law school. And I went to healthcare, and I worked professionally in the corporate world for almost 20 years and literally hated it and wasn't doing what I wanted to do. And then I went for my master's degree and learned about social equity, which is a theory within public administration, where I have my master's degree in and in there did an internship working in DC, right and doing policy with congressional leaders and White House, I was like, this is a job. This is a career no black children don't hear about this, like we don't get to be pages, right. We don't get to be interns, for Congresspeople because we can't afford it. You can't afford to live in DC. And it just sprouted from there and went on the face of God and moved to DC in 2007. And I've been doing federal policy for about 17 years now. I can't believe it. So that's how I got here.

CB 06:38

Thank you for that service. Please describe your thoughts or feelings related to identifying as black with any historically white dominated field or space.

DB 06:58

So I work in disability, and Disability Rights Is what that is. And I did that for nine years. I've been doing disability rights or disability work for 12 years. So for nine years, I did Disability Rights where there's only white folks, that is it. I'm here in DC there's an organization called Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities. We work in coalitions here, like the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, right? Like the large Coalition's. CCD is the disability, there are 122 disability organizations there, where they have policy workers people who work in workforces, working groups. I was a co-chair of the Transportation Task Force and their civil rights task force. And in those groups I was the only person of color, right? Not just black, no Asian American, no Latina, no indigenous folks. For the nine years that I worked, and I would constantly try to push them. And they told me, I didn't know what I was talking about. It is dominated by white people. If you look at disability rights and the history, like everyone's loving this documentary "Crip Camp", and we hate it, because if you look at it from a white perspective, every historical video documentary You see, it's about white people, there are black people in Crip Camp, I asked you, "Tell me who their names are?" They didn't even put who they were. Right. So I have no right. And yes, Obama has produced it. But Obama is also surrounded by the disability rights community, which is white and that's all they're going to produce. That's all they're going to present to them. So years ago, about five years ago, some of our interns and fellows that I had, who came here to DC and we're looking for mentors, and I was it, I had to have like all of them, first of all, we have to get black and brown interns here. And they created Disability Justice and Disability Justice centers, black indigenous people of color, they have 10 principles. The first is intersectionality. The last is collective liberation, you will never see the disability rights community collect any of those principles. And so that's why I come from that space. Now. I no longer work with the disability rights community, they, in fact, kick me out of a couple of organizations. This is public knowledge. And after George Floyd, they sent me apologies, and said, let us

talk about race and we want to we've been doing things wrong, and are now so-called having this come to Jesus conversation, which is interesting.

CB 09:29

Why do you think it is historically white? What is it about that sector which based on your experience and connection to it is even more white-dominant than my experience in planning? Why do you think that's so?

DB 09:45

You are correct. And actually, the statistical numbers show you that more black and brown people, black indigenous people of color have disabilities. How about that? Okay, well, I have another thing. Well, I love history, I love reading, and I love talking to our elders. I am a Delta. I have my Delta shirt on here. And when I went to college, I go to conferences. There we go. When I go to conferences, our Delta D.E.A.R.S, Deltas over 65. I ask them questions like what happened at the first conference? And they would tell us, so I did the same thing. When I went to disability rights. I was like, why is this like this? Who, why? Who started all this? And for Disability Rights, the foundation of it was white Republicans. A lot of people don't know that. It was Madeleine Will and George Will; I don't know if you know George Will is a political analyst. You'll see him on TV from time to time. He's a republican analyst. Their son was born Frank, he had a disability, had Down syndrome. And they tried to take him from them because that's what they did to those children. They put them in institutions and Madeleine Will, was a woman who had money and political connections, I said, No way, what are you doing? And she is the woman who started the movement for IDEA, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. She was the first Assistant Secretary of special ed and department ed and she created that department and filled it with her white friends. Right. So move it right. Everything was done. Even the Americans with Disabilities Act, is considered a republican law because it was George H. Bush. Who pushed it? It was. You see the young gentleman in the pictures when the ADA was signed, in a wheelchair with a cowboy hat on his name is Justin Dart. Justin Dart is kind of like the father of their work. He was a republican Texan. Okay. And so they only brought in white people. And that's all they knew. That's all they talk to. And so I do think that, and it wasn't true that black folks didn't help out, they have the crawl, which is where they crawled up the Capitol. It was the Black Panthers, who came and fed them, who brought them the chains to chain themselves. So it wasn't like black people weren't involved, they didn't have space. They weren't wanted. And they've made it very clear. And they still make it very clear. They don't want that, and they put forth that your disability is more important than any other marginalization. And that is why black disabled people got together and said, No, we're going to do Disability Justice. You can't tell us that, because you can't tell a black person to pick which marginalization is more important to them. And that's why I came up with the term multi marginalized, which is multiple, not just multiply. For these young I was like,, you have an African American trans woman who is a refugee, formerly incarcerated and disabled, they exist. And you white folks can't tell us to choose between our marginalization and which one's more important. So that's how they blocked people out of the movement. If you're not for disabilities, only you can't work with them. They make it very clear.

CB 13:09

Please describe how, if any, the pandemic has affected your personal physical activity opportunities or your views on being physically active in general.

DB 13:25

Yeah, personally. I am a person from the city, North New Jersey, New York, I take public transportation everywhere, I don't even own a car. I'm here in DC. And also part of my job is to travel and be in the community. I take it from the streets to the suites. I'm asked to speak at a lot of events. I don't consider myself a thought leader but okay to be a thought leader at events where I met you, Charles, we met at a meeting like that. And all of that stopped. I was in travel. I was at three different cities March 8, that week, eighth, ninth, and 10th. I was in New York City, Chicago, and then went to Birmingham, Alabama, which was one of my typical weeks of travel. And they were shutting down. My boss was like get home and stay home, like go home. And I was like, Okay, and so I've been home. That has never happened to me. In the 12 years, I've been doing this work, and I've been in my home for that long. I'm also a walker. I'm blessed to be able to go out and walk and I feel safe in Washington DC, and we'll talk about people who don't and later but for me, I walk every morning in my neighborhood which I can still do during COVID which is great. On the weekends I had a ritual when I was here. I would get on our Metro, go to a stop and walk an hour or so to the next stop getting to know my city because like there's a building and the next day it is gone and you're like whoa, what? So it was a way for me to get to know my city. Exercise, just peaceful. That completely stopped right because I couldn't get on Metro out because they didn't know, how before we're masking and all that, that I did that all the way to November. Personally, I have high blood pressure, it's been a part of my life. I go to my doctor every 90 days; I couldn't do that. Because March came and it was like, April, I was supposed to go in May. And he was like, No, don't come, let's figure this out. so I couldn't do those kinds of things. I'm very much outdoors and in the summer here in DC, we have a pool, we go to the pool, every weekend didn't do that. And do laps and swim. I think physical, mental is very good. I love Friday nights in DC, there's always free music or free movies. And you could do well, Because the movies and the music are early and the movies at night are dark. So the screen is better, we will go dance and have fun, and the pier, we got so many places here free, and then go watch the movies. And that was interacting with my friends releasing the whole week of stress that wasn't happening, all of that stops. So for me, that was me personally, which I do believe hurt me mentally.

CB 16:10

How Are you now?

DB 16:12

I'm better? Thank you. I'm better. Because we're open. I've been now since November, I've been feeling okay to go out and on trains, double mask and those kinds of things. So I'm vaccinated now. So I feel much better.

CB 16:28

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements: 15-minute Cities?

DB 17:04

I'm familiar with it, because the work I do with disabled folks doesn't work for them.

CB 17:10

Any reasons why it doesn't?

DB 17:17

It takes them 15 minutes to prepare, where are they going to go?

DB 17:17

Right, like to map out the pathway of travel and make sure that it's accessible takes them about 10-15 minutes. Because you don't know if they're working on the sidewalk on that week. Or does the bus route go there? And what's happening here? And are there curb cuts there? So they literally have to sit and map out where you're going to go. And sometimes that can take us 15 minutes.

CB 17:41

So even the mention of the way they framed it as a 15-minute city is still from the perspective of an able-bodied individual?

DB 18:00

Right, people will be like well, we could just go there and walk up the stairs and I'm like, No, like my person in the wheelchair can't go up the stairs. Or there's an escalator that takes you and I'm like, Yeah, but he can't. So the elevator is a block around the other way. It's never the same route. I have a boss who's quad. We used to go to meetings. I could get to a meeting in 15 minutes, it took him 25 because he would have to go around all of the barriers, that I didn't have to go around. I could just walk upstairs. People say It's just a curve. It's just one step that a person in a wheelchair cannot do. So it takes us 15 minutes to figure out pathway travel.

CB 18:45

Calm Streets?

DB 18:48

Yes, again, blocking off streets for us. It's harmful, it depends on what you put in the way. It blocks up a pathway travel for disabled people. We've seen it, stories of blocking off bus routes of people, that's the bus stop is there, and they blocked it off. Now again, especially if you live in New York, streets are shorter, but avenues are longer. So if the bus stop is in that Street between 18th and 19th Street and they're like, Oh no, go to the next Avenue and next street. Usually avenues are a mile, right? Go to Sixth Avenue to Seventh Avenue and then go up a street for a person in a wheelchair or a person on crutches for a person. Right? They have figured out where they want to live because the bus stop is right here. And when you create these calm streets, nobody thought about that. Nobody asked our people. And so you created a pathway of travel we have what's called pathway of travel, which most people in transportation don't know don't care about the pathway of travel. When you set up these calm things and all this stuff. No one asked us, no one talked to us about it. interfere with the accessibility of our roadways and walkways for our people.

CB 20:07

Slow streets and Safe streets?

DB 20:10

Same thing. And we had the conversations with Rails to Trails and all those white groups who decided to do these things for white people, right? And also, I'll just say this, right? That was accepted, right? Let's go out and sit in the street and have fun with our children and do yoga and all this stuff. That was acceptable. Our people do that on a normal basis in Harlem, or wherever else and places where black people live, because they don't have access to a yoga shop. They don't have, right they want to sit on their stoop and talk and they can't because the police say you can't be on a stoop. You can't be on fire and crowds. So it was acceptable to create these slow spaces and calm and safe streets for white folks to sit out and communicate with each other and eat dinner at work because they want to eat in restaurants. So they put the chairs and stuff tables, we got to have a place where white people eat. But when it comes to black people getting together and doing stuff, which is also about your mental and physical health, as I was saying, they said no to us, or they punish us for doing it.

CB 21:13

Open streets?

DB 21:51

Yes, I've seen that I'll just say this, we'll talk about it. There's no physical activity program in the country that's accessible. And I challenge that there's no physical activity in the country that set up and it's nice and that's accessible to our people. So even a bicycle, cycling, they admit this is for two-wheel bikes. Now our people use tricycles and hand bikes, which have a three have a three-wheelbase. And usually, the space is not wide enough. So they'll say, oh, here's this bike lane, or here's this area, but our people can't put their bikes on there. Because it's too wide. Because if they're riding down and you're coming towards them, you're blocking. So there's no point, right? And when people do, oh, we're going to have these fun games and programs and things like that is yoga. And they don't have anybody who knows how to do yoga for disabled people. It is different, you cannot, right? They'll have same thing, oh, let's have free movies and everything else, any kind of setup, they will not set up a space that's accessible to our people where someone in a wheelchair could sit and watch the movie and not be knocked over by people or somebody stands in front of them or right. Someone says, oh, we're just going to do some meditation on the ground with mats and blankets, Our people can't, people with Cerebral palsy, who can't get down on the floor and do that stuff. And we say, Oh, can you do some stuff around chairs? And they are like we don't do that. Right? Do they all bring ASL interpreters so our deaf people can participate? So when you're giving instructions, we're like do you have a sound service? Find me a program and we will show you how it is not accessible to our people. We at the Centers for Independent Living. That is why fellowship is one of our core things. Our people can come to our CILS, which they do the Centers for Independent Living in every state, my CIL does poetry night, and we have sign language people, we do yoga, because you can do those closed streets or open streets, but they won't setup anything that's accessible to our people.

CB 24:03

How do we get around that? Should they come to organizations such as yours, to make sure that it is truly assessable? What would you recommend me the first thing they maybe think about doing when they're saying hey, we want to do this event or want to host this event?

DB 24:57

Thank you for saying that. My girl ,Tamika Butler, she always like Dara will get you together. But at the same time we want to help you, right? I'm not like, oh, here are the problems and here's no solutions. So one is actually accepting equity, which is fair and impartial. It means you include everybody. Okay, that's one because we got these E's in transportation and urban develop that don't include equity, right, this engineering, education, this evaluation, this enforcement, right encouragement me. Okay. But you won't have e for equity. Two, is, as we always say, in this work, and, and we're going to talk about this later, but you cannot have people at the table and have people talking about solutions that is homogeneous. Which means all things, all white people, all men, all rural people, all Christians, how about all able-bodied people? If you don't have any disabled people sitting at your table, while you're making your plans for your programming it is wrong. So the programs are wrong. Why? Because nobody thought about the disabled person. I'm thinking about accessibility and safety. You have to have direct people who are directly impacted live this marriage at the table. And we do, the Centers for Independent Living are there for resources, the CILS, you can go to them, like I said, there's one in every state, but there's many, of course, they have many more, and they're there as a resource to us that you do that. And as in anything in personnel, or DEI , is to get trained in what disabilities are. If you don't know what this is, and you haven't trained your team, or trained yourself, you'll never know it. It is not something that just comes naturally to think and so this is 12 years of working in this and have it right and working cross disability. That's another thing. You have people who only work on one disability area, that's not the person you want. You want someone who works, CILs or crosses everybody, no matter what the disability is, we work with them. So it's like any other like before I remember for years, I was trying to get things in multiple languages. Right? And people were like, why? And I'm like, okay, we have Spanish people. Right? I said North is a melting pot. Rutgers in North New Jersey, right? For 15 years it is the most international campus in the country. We couldn't have programs and records that were only English, most of our students wouldn't come. So I learned that a long time ago, that is inclusion, and that is equity.

CB 27:42

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements: Complete Streets?

DB 28:14

Not accessible. I have been talking to complete streets for years, none of their programs are accessible. And we keep having conversations and no change. And so we as a disability community don't support Complete Streets.

CB 28:30

Vision 00,

DB 28:32

Gosh, anger, just anger and disgust. Why? Because again, Alia, public knowledge, I have talked to her over and over again. And like, years ago, five, six years ago, when I am the co-chair, the Transportation Equity Caucus, when we got started, we started because there was no equity in that work. And it was steeped in enforcement. And we tried to tell her, and she literally said to us, you're angry black woman, you don't

know what you're talking about. This is not what that is. And even now, of course, after George Floyd, right, you want to have conversation and so called changing that and it's not changed. And it's not just enforcement in there. It's automated enforcement. It's not listening to communities. It's taking a cookie cutter program and thinking you can change communities all over the country with that one program, and also it is bringing a program from Europe, that at the time when she started this 10 years ago, was homogeneous, white, does not have the history of slavery that we have in right in this country. And she didn't want to hear any of that. So We don't work with her. I work with everybody, and everybody knows that, but she is someone I cannot work with and will not work with. And she knows this. We had a straight up conversation about it.

CB 29:49

Comprehensive planning or master planning in cities?

DB 29:56

Again, not accessible, no one on those teams. They usually don't have disabled, I was, for DC the director of Office of Disability Rights for Human Services. And they came to us after the plans were done and said here, approve these. We were like, okay, whoa. So nothing there's not a playground in the country that's accessible to our kids. Because there isn't a master plan. Right? There are most pathways are a trap, most bus stops and pathways to bus stops, not assessable because they already made the planes and they come to us after they do the plan.

CB 30:35

Safe Routes to School?

DB 30:39

Safe Routes to schools are actually part of the Transportation Equity Caucus. Love working with them, and they remove the e in enforcement, but we had the same conversations used to work with Keith Benjamin for years and he brought us in, they're getting better. And I appreciate the fact that they wish to talk, and they implement what we're talking about. So we understand that, um, and I don't blame safe routes, Safe Routes to schools in reference to all the accessibility because only 87% of schools in this country are accessible. So we don't have a lot of children with disabilities who are going to school because they can't get in the schools. They can't, right everyone notice election when you go to vote, where is your voting poll is that a school and the voting polls are not assessable. A lot of schools kids go to school on the first floor, kindergarten to maybe second grade, they when they get to write third and fourth, it's on the second third floor, there's no elevators in schools. So our children who can't climb stairs and stuff, they even great working from home in school from home, our kids been doing that forever, because you all refuse to disclose assessable. So the school is monetizable, the pathway to school isn't assessable. And so safe routes are working with what they have.

CB 31:53

Inclusionary zoning?

DB 33:04

Not accessible to our people. What does inclusion really stand for? And it was those kinds of things right? poverty, right? We want to make sure all kinds of people live in this neighborhood. Right? But then again, when you look at the architecture of the buildings we have what's called Universal Design, we have what's called visit visibility, right construction, where you build no step entries into whatever apartments or townhouses your building, and builders don't want to hear it. And so it's inclusion. Again, for everybody else, but not disabled folks. People literally don't think about the ADA or just disabled people living in the community. And that is because of the history of disabilities, right? And people think of Ada as real as doors and ramps, and it's not as community integration. And so when you say inclusion, that's community integration. And people never think of disabled people as part of the community. They are afterthought.

CB 34:08

I have to ask you this question, because I've heard it come up a lot, where people sort of consider the ADA community to be outliers. And the question becomes, why design for outliers? What What's your thoughts about that?

DB 34:33

First of all, it is discriminatory and kind of racist but definitely discriminatory because the ADA is a civil right. Which means, so I get that all the time. When people say well have any disabled people live here? Why do we have to do that? That is not a civil right. And I try to tell them as a black person in West Virginia, somewhere right the hills were here. No black people go to that town, but When I come to the town, the restaurant must serve me. That's civil rights, how many black people in this town, none. But when one comes to here, we got to treat them with respect because of their civil right. So it doesn't matter. That's one, number two is when people say, Oh, it's not that large a number, I look and say, Well, okay, especially after COVID, you see all these people who are now ,the number of people with disabilities is one in five, going to one and three, I don't understand why y'all don't think that's a large number. And also, just because you are right here today with no disability, let me let you know that could not be at the end of this day, you see police officers shooting people, and then they write Jayco. He's now paralyzed, you see people in car accidents. And now you see people who just step out in the middle of the street and step the wrong way and break their arm break day like, you could be disabled, and why not build for people, they fought for the ADA. And it is a civil and human right. And so it should be used. That is not questioned, that is 1990, July 26, 1990, a law. Get over yourself, and let's move forward. And that is what equity is. If you keep saying you want equity and everybody, then it is disabled people, they are here, right? Just like gay people. I'm here. I'm queer. And I'm here. So don't do that. Right. So it's like, you don't ask how many black people here? They don't ask those questions. They don't ask how many gay people here, so we got to make a gay friendly. They don't ask LGBTQ questions like that. Maybe they should, but they don't. They don't. And they are not outliers. They are part of this population and community. And I don't I find the statement offensive. There's no human being who's an outlier if you are working in equity. When you make those statements, you're not working in equity.

CB 37:03

ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units)?

DB 37:37

We don't have a problem with ADUs. Again, they're usually not accessible, right? Because over garage is stairs up to a garage or in a basement is stairs to a basement. Maybe if you put in your backyard, that's fine. If there's no backyard, there's tiny houses, right? We don't believe in that. There's no tiny house I've been to 40 states to look at tiny houses. I haven't found one that was accessible. So when I try I'm like Yeah, no, that's not accessible. Let me show you how it's not accessible. And you can't do that. And the other side for us is we have people, so community integration is ADA. We have people who will take guardianship of their children, which means that they are control of their life. And if that person wants to live on their own, what they will say is okay, we built an apartment above the garage, there's your apartment. That's not independent living because they still are in control of when they come home and when they leave. So that's our questionable areas like, okay, yes, it's their apartment, but you still control you have the keys to it, use it right that is not full, independent living. So we have right concerns when guardians use those units as saying we're providing housing for that person that's independent living.

CB 39:02

Please tell me how you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement and the Black Lives Matter organization.

DB 39:15

So I've known that movement since the beginning I've done this work for years., I'm in awe of what they've done around the world. I actually work with black lives matter all across the UK, Germany, Italy, Canada, different groups here. It is one of the few groups who actually did embrace Disability Justice and gave a space to black disabled people like Carrie gray and Justice Shorter, and they created the hashtag black disabled lives matter because they centered Disability Justice when we tell people to center Disability Justice and you cover everyone. So I think they're doing great work. I think that they're a bit naive. When it comes to federal law policy, and we have this conversation around the Justice policing act right now, I think a lot of the energy that was done last year, they wasted in front of the White House. And what I'm telling you, I told them, and they're like, Why? Because the white house doesn't create laws, they should have been up on Connecticut Avenue, and it's over there beside Constitution Avenue and Independence Avenue in front of the house and senate and Capitol, where laws are made. And I think that's a problem that they have about what federal policy is, because many of them do local state, and that's fine. And I think they're still growing. What I think about the Black Lives Matter organization. Again I've known Patrice for years, I've known Alicia, I'm not, although all of them, I think the organization is doing well, I'm not intimate into like, every day, what happens in there, I know of the controversy around for Patrice, and I know that everyone has controversy when you become a leader, and that especially black women, they do it to black women all the time, I'm going to sit back and listen to the community because I've heard right, I've heard good and bad things. And I've had like I said, I reached out to Patrice and talked to her about it. I think she's handling herself the best way she knows how, but I think she has some really bad people around her that have given her bad decisions that she's making. And she has to do better. Because this movement will be lost or destroyed, if things don't change.

CB 41:36

Please explain how the BLM movement has impacted either your attitudes, perceptions or vision for equitable and inclusive active living in this country.

DB 41:59

Yes, I will say yes, because of their plans, many people look at Black Lives Matter. And that movement for Black Lives was just kind of their sister group or whatever together, as only addressing law enforcement. And that's not it, they are abolitionists at heart, I am abolitionists at heart, just you know, full disclosure, I don't care, in abolition is what we say is that we must, in order to get to this space of no punitive systems, we must have the systems that make us as people thrive and live very good lives. And in that right is having the resources and the services that provide for a mental, physical and emotional health. And so that's it. No, we're not asking, right, they're asking for programs that increase mental health. That is part of that, because we all know that part of mental health is physical activity is interacting with your people in your community is interacting with your family on those levels of being outside and having cookouts and having like I said, going to the movie thing and the theaters and whatever it is you do walking up and down, just sitting on your like I said, being safe sitting on your stoop, having a conversation with your neighbor and knowing that a police officer is not going to come over and knock you upside your head because you're doing it. So that's part of their work, and it always was and that is part of abolition and when people have abolitionism all they hear is well you could never get rid of police officers but there's a whole part of abolitionism which is centered on having people who are mentally physically emotionally healthy.

CB 43:52

Please explain if there are other organizations beside BLM that have influenced your attitudes, perceptions or views on active living.

DB 44:02

Yeah, of course the Transportation Equity Caucus I have to say that, and Policy Link does a really great job around that, Tamika Butler who is my sister in this work, she does excellent work around this. There's also I would say the league the League of American Bicyclists have come around. Equiticity, I don't know if you've heard of a bike ride in Chicago, Illinois and the whole Illinois crew. What is and they have there's a statement around mobility and justice. It's not on my I'm missing them in my head right now. But those groups who have really centered us and taught me about this, this work and what it means to include active movement and in that is a part of your being healthy about that, so yeah, those groups. Excellent.

CB 45:03

Please tell me about your views on law enforcement in this context of active living.

DB 45:19

So law enforcement again it started with slavery, they are slave patrols. And so they are not there to put to protect black indigenous people of color, specifically black bodies, they are there to control them. And so that means controlling any kind of activity we do. And in the Transportation Equity Caucus, we have a campaign to remove the enforcement and safety.

CB 45:45

Please explain how policing might impact your perception of safety in your desire to be active outdoors.

DB 45:52

Right. So safety is defined by black people very differently from white folks. It is not calling the police. We believe that the community is the place to have those conversations, and that we should place that emphasis on making community safe in public safety, creating departments of public safety. Again, like the city where I'm from in Newark, New Jersey, we have what's called the Newark Community street teams. Damon X is the executive director, you can google them doing great work, right before the pandemic, they walk children back and forth to school, they're going to start that back up again. Because the children were afraid of the gangs. gangs are really kind of going away, because of it. And the community street chains are community members. They had meetings in the wards they had the conversations. Damon himself is formerly incarcerated a person who wanted to change his community, there are people who work there. Newark is the only city that during the Black Lives Matter movements last year had not one arrest. And not one building or office or business was harm. There were no riots, because of the North community street teams and how they set up the rallies and the marches and how that was done. And finally, this just can't well come out in January. Newark is the only city and the first time in their recorded history that not one police officer discharged their gun or weapon in 2020, a pandemic year because of the relationship. There's a police department where they're phasing it out, and the Department of Public Safety. It is now the, Ithaca, New York is getting rid of their police department. So this has something to do with our ability to move around and do things parks are being used more in NORC. Now, because of this community street teams, they see this the data has shown that

CB 47:50

Please describe the emotions you feel when walking, bicycling, waiting for and taking public transportation, or hopping on an e-scooter in your community.

DB 48:07

I feel free and I enjoy being outside. I feel that is a necessity for me to connect with my community and my myself my inner soul. But I am always fearful that I may, and I am educated person, right, I have multiple degrees from Rutgers University and certificates and talk and go places and do things but I'm always fearful when I see police, I can feel my body jerk up and get myself I make sure I'm okay. I'm fearful that I step the wrong way. Or I say I keep my mouth shut because I have a big mouth. So I'm not talking around police officers. But I'm always on my guard. One law enforcement and that is my number one fear is law enforcement and two is as a woman, the safety of my body. And that's a shame that is second. Like I'm more fearful a police officer than someone groping, and I have been groped, right my ass has been touched. My breasts have been touched on public transportation walking down the street. The cat calls from men, right? Who are construction workers are just out? So I'm fearful of those two things when I'm out. But it's for me. It's a little back in my mind, because I have not by the grace of God had any encounters with men. I have had encounters with police officers, but not with the fear of my body. But I know I have friends who won't go many places in the dark right because they have been raped. They have been assaulted many times.

CB 49:57

You've stated your number one would be law enforcement, number two, your body? Where does traffic concerns rank in your ordering, if you have them? Where do you placed traffic safety concerns?

DB 50:14

Well, I would say probably after that number three. Yeah, because I don't drive I don't see traffic right and although I am a pedestrian and I live in the district with a high level of pedestrians being injured, I was shocked, but I also understand these people on the phone and stuff. I've stopped many people. Hello, it's a red light like oh my hand now they don't stuff. So it is a third for me. I do see people being reckless. People who are drivers being reckless and people who are pedestrians being reckless?

CB 50:50

Please explain how your experiences might differ from your White counterparts.

DB 51:03

I see them and in this work the field that like I said, Transportation Equity Caucus, traffic is number one today, like that is the only thing and they act like, don't get me wrong. I have family members who were killed by drunk drivers. I have family members who, I'm from Newark like I'm like, I'm from a major city, right? We live right? It happens all the time. But it is number one for them. Like that is like it like if you and they and they put us down. Right? As if we can't have both? Right? I believe law enforcement is a problem. And I believe traffic safety, but from traffic safety is number one for them. Number two for them is maybe there may be white women who have been harmed because I've had conversations with people like people who want to make autonomous vehicles and want to make these autonomous vans, commuter vans. And I had to talk to a white woman who wrote this report for the Union of Concerned Scientists and I'm on record for because I was on a panel and I told them, you're not thinking right if I get in a 12-passenger van, and 11 of them are men and I'm the woman I'm not getting on there and there's no body on here to control these men. Right? They don't think about those things they don't think about oh I'm a Jewish, or I'm Muslim. And these are all Christians from Virginia. Right? Like, I'm not getting on them, man. Because there's no bus driver or no person driver to control these people to say you're not going to treat this person poorly. Right? They don't think about that when they set up their programs, my white counterparts and law, they don't think about law enforcement, law enforcement there. They have a model enforcement is the only way. They have an entire conference lifesavers conference that is based around law enforcement and how law enforcement they be the center of safety and traffic safety, that is Vision Zero, that is row all these zero programs. It is centered and steeped in the fact that if you don't have law enforcement, it can't work. So they have a totally different kind, they all are coming to recommend after these 30 years of doing this bad work. That is not equity. They never knew equity. They never tried to have equity, and they don't care about it. And now they're starting to have to care about it because communities are pushing back.

CB 53:13

Please tell me what thoughts or emotions come to mind when discussing systemic and institutional racism, particularly in the context of active living.

DB 53:27

I don't think people understand it. A lot of people use the terms, and they don't get it. And so I have changed how I talk to people, especially white folks about systemic racism, because they don't believe that every system in the country is based on racism. And so what I let them know is that because every system in this country is based on punitive, on being punitive, that, again, traffic safety, again, moving your body, if you punish these people, then they will act right on changing people's behavior. Right. And

we all know you can't change people's behavior. You got children, I wish you would like I mean, come on. If you got a partner I like you can't I tell my little nieces I'm like, so you can't change him. But we can talk to you, you just can't change our people going to be but what you can do is change the situation and how you respond to it and what happens, and we need to come from a space of love and care. And the reason this country is punitive is because the slave master beat the slaves. And that ghost has trickled down years and it is still steeped in the work we do that you always, white folks, create punitive programs drug, the war on drugs, the war on pot, like if you have right, it didn't work for those things. Having that inch in traffic safety and having that in safety around pedestrians moving around is not going to work if you be punitive, and that is systemic racism, so they don't understand the punitive side of this and that and I've said it to a couple of white folks about this ghost come and they were like, you really think that the ghost is still present? And I say, I don't think I know because here you are sitting here and trying to create spring new statutes around traffic safety, right? Because they want people to stop using their cell phones while they drive or right, whatever it is creating statues rather than sitting with the community and saying, How can we resolve this problem?

CB 55:27

Gentrification and displacement?

DB 55:30

Same thing, we still have the New Deal, people don't want to talk about the racism or the racist acts of FDR, and the New Deal, and how that still has trickled down, right, creating the red line is not only racist is also ableist still, and that still is within our work. And people will say, oh, we're going to make this city better, we're going to change this community and do these things. And, and it's so insulting, it's like, well, because the people here are bad. And the people here are not you guys are the ones causing the problem. And then we want you out, and we create these new buildings. And these places, the rents go up all those kinds of things, which constantly telling people you're not wanted, and it's always black people, indigenous people, people of color, immigrants, who are not wanted in this country. And so the large message there is that instead of again, asking the community, what can we do to make your community better? Right, and it's also power. It's also I want to be in this space. And in order to be in the space, you need to go, whoever you are, and we have got to stop this we have, it's, that's what gentrification is, to me is that, and it's usually white people. I want this space, why power wants this space, and all the rest of you, right, which is the dominant power in this country, in this world. And we want you out.

CB 56:59

Please tell me what your top priorities would be if you had unlimited power and resources, particularly in the context of active living.

DB 57:08

Whoa, Oh, my gosh, that's a hard question. My top priorities would be, as I said, to create this space of people coming together and having conversations to talk about what we can do to make changes in every community. I don't think there is a cookie cutter right? No community, what's good for Newark, New Jersey may not be good for Detroit may not be good for Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, right rural areas, is not as different. But to have those conversations, I would want to also get rid of capitalism, we don't need it, it is a death, it is killing us capitalism people, people always talking about the economic definition of

capitalism, there is a social definition of capitalism, which says survival of the fittest. And we, if you didn't learn that, and it's pandemic, those of you who are fit, will survive and being fit that isn't always physical either. It's having money and having opportunities to go. I'm sitting here on Instagram, watching people who went to Mexico, because they have the ability to get on a private plane, and go wherever they want to go they all we went to the house in the mountains, we went to the house in the beach, because they have these things, and they could do that. That's capitalism. That's a survival of the fittest and we shouldn't be doing and I'm not saying those people shouldn't have those things. But we shouldn't have people who are without housing, we shouldn't have people who are treatment rationed, right? There's treatment rationed, teen and disabled folks aren't, this person isn't worth saving. So let them die. Right? That's survival of the fittest. And that is what happened doing this, I would love to see that go away. And then finally I would love to see racism just not be a part of anything we do. And, and it'll be gone. And I actually believe that that will happen, I don't think in my lifetime, but I see it coming because I look at these young folks behind us and they are just live-in different light and I'm so glad they are living different like this, we set the path for that. So

CB 59:16

Please tell me specific partners you would want to engage to advance your top priorities.

DB 59:20

Oh my god, so many. I have a friend really good friend, Equality Labs. It's her group and she they're the Dalits and they are trying to end Dalit apartheid I would love to work with them. And in this space you spend so much time, they work on a lot of digital, and a lot of other things, but I talked to her and said are you working on emotional physical aspects of your community, and she was like, Oh, no, we don't even talk about that right like because you're constantly fighting was right on the digital for him his Facebook and being harassed on Facebook. And so they do that they do a lot of work like that. So I would love to work with Her. I would love to work with so many organizations who are not, quote unquote, the legacy civil rights organizations who get no play at all right? Like nobody knows who they are nobody talks to them, except for when they need them to sign on the song, I would love to have those groups be partners. And I would love to see philanthropist start funding those kinds of groups. I would love to see that.

CB 1:00:30

Please tell me what specific actions you think the federal government can take to address the issues you've identified.

DB 1:00:50

So I, as a federal person, I work on approach on all of those areas. appropriations are the people who create the funding for these programs. So the first thing they could do is increase all of them by 100%. Doubling their budgets, I would say that, and on the other side, I would say is stop talking out of the side of your mouth stop being the Wizard of Oz. Joe Biden sat there and did a speech ,a press conference after the Derrick Chauvin conviction on how this is horrible policing. And at the same time in his new budget, which he had released a couple of days before those 60.6 billion new dollars are going towards law enforcement in different ways, right? Like and people are looking for the line. I'm like, No, no, it's in a different program. And that's the thing, people only need the top line. So like for mental health services,

we've been begging for more money, right? Oh, they double I was like, Whoa, 15.5 billion. This is great. This is almost double our budget. But when you read the third line down, it said to increase health, mental health services, connection to law enforcement, which is something we don't want, right Oh, my gosh. And then you keep going, you're looking at housing, it's like, oh, give me more money for this. And they want Housing Authority police officers. So right, you have to look and so stop doing that stop pretending that you want to do racial equity, you got to hold executive order on racial equity, and you aren't doing nothing with it. You just put it out there as a press release. Be genuine about that. And third thing on the federal government could do is start putting more black indigenous people of color in charge of these administrations that you're talking about Department of Transportation, DHHS, and not just make it a one-time thing. like we had a Secretary Foxx, and it was like, Oh, thank God, they can't do that. Right. And then we go right back to a white guy, not saying that people just Come on, give me a break here. It's just not working. And when people ask us constantly, how many do you want? Right? It's like, well, how much do you want, and I look at them and say 93% of black people voted you democrats into that white house. And into that Congress, I want 93% I want 93% of the federal government leaders to be black. That's what I want. Because only 47% of white folks voted for you, Joe Biden. So if you want to like you are you're always going to bring up data. And then let's make that connection. Then 97% of your cabinet who's running this country and our lives it should look like us.

CB 1:03:42

Please explain to me your strategic use of social media (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and, etc.) and other mediums (e.g., podcasts) to highlight and/or address inequities within active transportation as well as other intersecting issues.

DB 1:04:15

We have disabled people who can't leave their homes, their homebound. Right, so they will never be able to come to DC. And so Twitter when I first was introduced to Twitter, when it first came out, 2009 I think it was, I had to communicate, is that right But he's like do Twitter and I was like, What the heck is this? And I was on the hill tweeting about a briefing I was in, and somebody replied and say hey, is my house member is there And I was like, Oh my god, nope, he's not here. Two minutes later, he came in and they're like, Oh, we call we tell him Hey, he better get his butt up. Oh my god, this is amazing. I'm actually talking to someone in Michigan about it and so to have that connection to people, so they knew what was going on. Hashtags, right So that you could just go to that word and know the conversation. It's very good, I think at least Twitter. And people laughed at me too when I was doing so. And I was like, let me tell you, you can say what you want about 45, I won't say his name. He knows the power of social media. So it's very powerful. I like it in that way. So I say that, and then and especially during this pandemic you haven't talked about it but Zoom. Many people didn't know Zoom. Before. We've been using zoom; we actually have a Zoom get started in 2017. We've been using Zoom since 2017. Because it is like I just told you, I will take Zoom calls on the hill. So as to Africa talk to us on and they were like, what the heck is this guy like so as much, so the other programs weren't accessible. Skype what Skype is not an accessible, we couldn't get them. We can have ASL interpreters on here while we right because we had the screens, we had captioning. So anyway, using that, but also Zoom has a webinar feature expensive webinar platforms were very expensive for organizations. And we were like, okay, you pay a subscription. We can do as many webinars as you want on zoom. And they could be accessible. So we were doing webinars. So that is also like, in this work I've been doing again, I'll say legacy civil rights groups are all supporting the JPA. A

bunch of us, aren't I, we did two webinars about why we're not supporting the JPA, right, because we could get the word out, we could have conversations that weren't dominated by other people. That no one's going to listen to us, that's that staffer on the hill actually came in and said, okay, what's going on here? So you can use it in those ways. And you can talk to your representatives, people don't know that, like my work. Every congressional member, I told people this, I said, Every congressman will have a Twitter page, a Facebook page, and they have a communications person who is sitting there listening and watching and saying, oh, because I have gotten the emails. What is this about? Follow the ad. And I'm like, oh, okay, this was that. And they call me to know they call us. And so we know it is a direct threat to the leadership. They are watching. They want to know why the constituents are upset, or they want to say, I always tell people don't just tell them when you're mad, say when you're happy. And they're like, oh, tell them to thank you for that. They really enjoy my boss's speech. And I'm like, Yeah, they really liked that. So you can talk to you can actually have a conversation with leaders before you couldn't have it. And I'll say, for me, watching the news, I watched the news and the language they use about disabled people. And I'll go on and say, okay Jonathan Capehart, what did you just say? Let me tell you don't talk about disabled people like this. And they reply, and they go, Oh, thank you. I didn't know my language is poor. Please change it. Right. Just like you said when I told you I like cash, and they changed it. Right. And we never had that before. Right. You had to write a letter to the news editor, and then that's it two weeks or three weeks? No news reporters, right? You put an article out you use horrible like we don't use we use formerly incarcerated people. Could you please stop calling them felons? Right, you get 1000 people to text us tweet to that reporter, and say, Stop using the word felons in your articles. Next article, he's using formerly incarcerated chains.

CB 1:08:21

Is that about power too?

DB 1:08:23

That is about power. Yeah.

CB 1:08:25

Please tell me how CDC/Active People Healthy Nation can help communicate about equitable active living.

DB 1:08:42

I would tell them is to hire some disabled people. And stuff like this. I already know there are no black disabled people sitting in that room. I already know that. Like I said, you got to have people who are closest to the problem, to give you the solutions, who will also help you out all of them should take training and disability. Right? They should have some training and what it means that have a disability and disability advocate, learn our language in which we the language we don't like everybody love you. It's crazy. It's crazy. And we're like, please stop using that word as an adjective. Right? Because that is a derogatory term of how people with mental health are talked about, right? You don't use the N-word, it's not as bad as that, but it's right you don't call LGBTQ people the F word. Right? Because they don't like it. We stopped using the word crazy, usually the source. It was amazing. It was outstanding, right? Like those kinds of things. So when you have that, and your communications are it accessible most of the time is not you are having webinars. You are the federal government. And you're having webinars all through the COVID 19. In the CDC conversations, there were no ASL interpreters now. There are Because Biden came

in and said this, right, but there's no closed captioning. There are no large print documents, when you put documents on your websites, you don't offer them in large print. You don't offer them in Braille, which there are people who still use Braille, but having accessibility and if you had a gay person, on your team, you would do that. And then like I said, the language you use and how you communicate with people picking hashtags, making sure they're not offensive, or even just knowing what the disability hashtags are, right? Every community got their own. And if you don't know them, you're never going to address that you're never going to get into that communities. Hashtag. Like there's a disability, Twitter. Most people don't know that. That's the disability Twitter hashtag. And if a lot of influential disability activists use disability Twitter, and you'll get into their conversation, but if you don't know those ins and outs, and only a disabled person is going to know, like for a black person, will know the black hashtags and all that kind of stuff. Like a queer LGBTQ person is going to know those. There are specific hashtags for specific communities. And if you don't know them, you don't get into the conversation and your information doesn't get to the right people.

CB 1:11:15

It's been pleasure. Thank you. Take care.

Transcript: Samuel Baxter, PhD.

Friday, July 2, 2021, 2:00PM

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, physical activity, community, relates, structural racism, black, rural environments, environment, streets, displacement, focus, cdc, pandemic, important, rural areas, equitable, thinking, ways, individuals, rural communities

SPEAKERS

CB, SB

As part of SOPHE's cooperative agreement with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPAO), we will be conducting qualitative interviews to better understand Black/African American expert discussions around the historical context and consequences of inequities that have discouraged physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities (e.g., limited access to safe and accessible routes and/or destinations, feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, etc.). We would like to better understand the barriers, racial inequities, and facilitators related to activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations (routes to destinations) that influence physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities.

CB 00:32

You have been identified as an expert transportation and/or land use Thought Leader. We are interested in interviewing you to learn more about your experience and perspective. My name is Charles T. Brown, Adjunct professor at Rutgers University and founder of Equitable Cities. This interview will take no more than one hour. This information will be used to identify opportunities for CDC to embed equitable access to physical activity opportunities for Black communities into its activity friendly routes to everyday destinations strategy.

So, we're going to start now with you giving us verbal as well as written permission to record and transcribe today.

SB 04:22

I Samuel Baxter give permission to record and transcribe this interview.

CB 04:27

Please tell me why you chose this particular career path or journey.

SB 04:39

Sure, I chose this particular path in my career as a public health scholar because essentially, my training in public health has taught me that we're to affect change for populations as a whole. And so, one of the interesting parts about my work as relates to CDC specifically to active routes and destination is really

trying to make population level changes in those aspects. However, I'm particularly interested in this particular work with high obesity prevention as relates to physical activity, because we're able to use policy systems and environmental change approaches to most importantly impact local change. So, at the city level at the neighborhood level, where people truly experience the social determinants of health and barriers to those. This matters to me, and specifically with black men, because we are an important part of this country's fabric. And on a more commonplace level, we're members of families, we are coworkers, we are leaders, we are community participants. And the lack of focus on this particular population has also resulted in issues as it relates to life expectancy and quality of life which have intergenerational consequences.

CB 06:17

Please describe your thoughts or feelings related to identifying as Black/African American within a historically White-dominated field or space.

SB 06:33

Yes, public health is historically white, it is historically white women who were leading and operating a lot of its initiatives. And so, as a black man, being often seen as opposite or different from those attributes, it becomes very difficult and even challenging, I have to exert a great amount of caution, and sensitivity when we talk about concepts of equity, or inclusion, disparities or injustice. Given that while there are colleagues that I have, who are white women, I'm able to have those conversations and not have to be as cautious, it still feels different, because this is a predominant white space. And because the predominant white because it's been normalized, it makes it difficult to have frank and honest conversations that we're trying to focus on the work that we're doing.

CB 07:33

Now, is this, this sort of hesitancy to fully express how you may feel or think within this particular space? Is this something that was taught, experienced or learned and can you speak to how that came to be front of mind for you, as it relates to operating in a white dominated space?

SB 07:56

Sure, growing up in a predominantly black environment as a child, only really interacting with white people at the bank or the grocery store, or community events, such as the fair or at school with white teachers, the message has always been to, be respectful, don't act out, then transition to adolescence, I get the sense to learn that this is really all about safety, right. And the consequences of when deemed a threat, or disrespectful to a white individual, there could be actions taken against me, that would be not only harmful to me, but also harmful to my family. Moving into academic spaces, practitioner-based spaces, it now seems the flavor or the tone now is their thoughts, our priority, if you will, and because they often are the ones setting the agenda, they're often the ones who have obtained the funding. And so, my thoughts and my responses and reactions to that do need to have a level of caution because this is the precedent that was set and understanding that any thoughts or actions that go against that, I have to also back it up. And so, one thing that I've learned on you know, as a professional now is focus on the research, have examples, don't just cite how you feel or what you think but make sure that you can back it up with on scholarly evidence.

CB 09:28

Please describe how, if any, the pandemic has affected your physical activity opportunities or your views on being physically active in general.

SB 09:52

The pandemic has infected my views on the importance of physical activity because CDC guidelines have always encouraged outdoor recreation, they've encouraged recreation exercise for people to deal with their stresses and anxieties and senses of isolation as it relates to the pandemic. However, as we think about the work that I do in physical activity, and specifically active routes to destinations with the pandemic has shown is that there are definitely disparities rooted in place where people live even at the neighborhood level, that is less advantageous for communities of color to add those opportunities, such as active routes to destinations come in comparison to their white counterparts. And these comparisons aren't necessarily comparisons that are far apart. It could be the difference between a five-minute walk or a 10-minute walk to destinations and just the availability those resources are often centered in white communities and not centered in black communities. So, it's been a challenge. Definitely, as we tried to do equitable work.

CB 10:58

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements: So, 15 minutes cities, are you familiar with the concept of 15-minute cities?

SB 11:20

No.

CB 11:22

Calm streets?

SB 11:35

I think calm streets are a great idea in theory, and very important, especially as we understand the health benefits of walking in specifically walking and even biking can transcend just the physical benefits, they can also transition to mental health benefits. So calm streets are good, but calm streets in black communities do not exist at the same extent that they do in white communities.

CB 12:05

Do you feel the same way or differently in regard to slow streets, safe streets, open streets, and play streets?

SB 12:17

I feel differently. To me, it often was associated with the income level of that particular community. But even as we look at rates within similar income categories, we still do see disparities as it might relate to safety, as it might relate to the opportunity to also have play streets. So, it gets a little more nuance when you go to open streets, safe streets, and play streets. But yeah, I still think that there's a depth of disparity primarily because the less desirable neighborhoods are often associated with minority groups and

communities. And that is really rooted in the disinvestment of resources, particularly, especially as we think about just the maintenance of roads and streets and sidewalks in those areas.

CB 13:10

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements:

Complete streets?

SB 13:40

Incomplete and I say incomplete, because complete streets in it of itself are not equitable, are not attainable for all. I think it's primarily due to policy and the way that zoning laws are organized, and also the way that level local government operates to really continue to focus on self-interest. And so, if there is a street that, if there's not a complete street initiative on one side of a town, and none of the local representatives have friends who live there or are from that area, it won't get done. It's really usually at the local government when they're involved. It's really based on what they know in their limited kind of sphere of influence, which unfortunately affects the whole city leading patches.

CB 14:37

Are you familiar with Vision Zero?

SB 14:42

No.

CB 14:44

Comprehensive planning or master planning?

SB 15:01

Self-serving. That's what comes to mind when I think about comprehensive plans and master plans, because especially in rural environments, predominantly where I'm working in now, those plans are often focused to serve the interests of those who are governing at that particular time. And so, while we would expect roadways infrastructure to be a major part, while we would expect increasing the amount of grocery stores that are in walkable distances especially when they are grocery store closures and hospital closures in rural areas, the emphasis is usually on businesses and promoting businesses that often do not do well. And so really, it's just a limited focus as we think about comprehensive physical activity and walkability. Even biking is not at the forefront as it should be or is not even included. Honestly, it needs a greater inclusion in those things in rural environments.

CB 16:24

Safe Routes to School?

SB 16:30

The phrase or word that comes to mind with that, it's really a question, for who say? We all know that if communities are racially segregated, schools are more also following that trend to be racially segregated.

And so, we think about safe routes to school, the question I always have is for who? What is the racial makeup of the students at the school? What is the economic makeup of the students at the school, and then allow that to help us to guide an equitable vision as we try to make safe routes to schools?

CB 17:12

Single family zoning?

SB 17:16

I'm not 100% familiar with that.

CB 17:23

Inclusionary zoning?

SB 17:27

My issue is with the word inclusion. I think when we often say inclusion, we're really meaning diversifying. I think of inclusion really as creating a sense of belonging and shared ownership and stewardship. And oftentimes, it's including one group that might be more disadvantaged into this larger group, whether it's based on race or income, for example. And assuming that by adding them or diversifying the area, that outcomes will be better, and that the environment will be safer for all involved. And that's not the case, especially when you are a black person in a predominantly a white dominated space that's not often safe, or as promoting of your health and well-being as people would like to assume.

CB 18:26

What about ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units)?

SB 18:32

No.

SB 18:33

Please tell me how you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement and the Black Lives Matter organization.

SB 18:46

I think the Black Lives Matter movement is a continuation of black people's struggle for freedom, justice and now what I think it's really calling for is accountability and hopefully power. I believe Black Lives Matter. I do think that I would like to see a greater emphasis within the Black Lives Matter movement on health and power and how those two things coincide together. On the Black Lives Matter organization of course, I hear you know, things and people have for the past few years have kind of tried to tarnish reputation, especially with its multiple leaders, and kind of doing personal attacks and assassinations to their character. I'm not so much focused on the organization and its leaders. I think that's one of the newest things about Black Lives Matter as an organization and movement. It wasn't necessarily a single leader driven initiative or effort, but it was comprised of multiple leaders and then therefore chapters in different states. and whatnot. But I think Black Lives Matters is important to health and I would like to see

that link be made more explicitly clear beyond individuals are really thinking about the ways that place and racism coincide to result in health outcomes.

CB 20:18

Please explain how the BLM movement has impacted either your attitudes, perceptions or vision for equitable and inclusive active living in this country.

SB 20:32

Yeah, well, one thing, as I do participatory research as well, it's definitely the spirit of it, the tone of it, even the conversations. Anecdotally, they relate, they talk about the Black Lives Matter movement, as it might relate to police killings, or access to health care. And so, I'm seeing community members that I engage with bringing up the Black Lives Matter movement as a possible entry road into having these conversations in a more meaningful way. Unfortunately, public health research for all of its well intention, our methods of engaging community members and really uplifting their lived experience allowing back to lead and drive our solutions and that identification of the problems and solutions is kind of behind with where the current our country is in its current social, and political landscape. And so, I think the Black Lives Matter movement could really help us to leverage the ways that we do research the questions that we most importantly ask and even the data sources that we draw, and again, hopefully really focusing on those who actually the live experience had to really create more equitable environments that promote physical activity and walkability.

CB 21:50

Please explain if there are other organizations besides BLM that have influenced your attitude perception, or views on active living?

SB 22:02

Yes, so, Campus Community Partnerships for Help. It's an organization that really focuses on raising the issue of inequities and research again, with the participatory nature. Their emphasis, unfortunately, is not largely focused on physical activity, but we do have great conversations as relates to that understanding that, while unfortunately, food and physical health ailments seem to be the necessity, walking, physical activity, and the way that our environment enables that is a major factor that will prevent it. And so, directions are now shifting, to focus on that more. Also, I'm, I'm alumni of the Health Policy Research Scholars program with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. And one of the best things about that particular fellowship opportunity was that we are networking co-learning and also unlearning with people across disciplines such as transportation, health, psychology, and urban planning, and so we were able to learn really about how equity, racism, and power operate to influence policy that results in local experiences. So that's been also really helpful to learn people's perspectives from different fields and most importantly, about physical activity.

CB 23:25

Please tell me about your views on law enforcement in the context of active living.

SB 23:43

Law enforcement as the idea is very important to physical activity, being active, is important to mobility. It can encourage, it can discourage individuals from interacting with their environment in those ways. I think that while law enforcement has definitely been a new recent debate that's reawakened and made it to the national landscape, it's a problem that has long existed, the racial biases, the prejudices, the ways that they exert force and racism and their own ideas of maybe superiority or even acting out their own insecurities on individuals that they may deem a threat or may deem expendable. So, I think that while law enforcement is important to physical activity, we have to think about ways to protect communities from those discouraging aspects of their presence. When participatory projects that I recently engaged in, we were asking young black men living in historically black community how does your environment related in a way to your health and well-being and then specifically one dimension was physical activity. And there was a rich debate and discussion about, number one, law enforcement. And then number two, the presence of a black law enforcement officer in your neighborhood. So having a black policeman live in your neighborhood, there was not one clear cut dominant view, it was definitely diverse as black people are in this nation. We're not a monolithic group, but it really challenged me to think about, recommendations, and how some members of the black community may feel positively, negatively, or indifferent about it. So yeah.

CB 25:48

Please describe the emotions you feel when walking, bicycling, waiting for and taking public transportation, or hopping on an e-scooter in your community.

SB 26:05

At first, I feel fine. I feel at ease. But then you take in the environment, you hear the sounds, you see the weather, you see people moving, you see cars going by, you see a police car going by, you're praying that it continues to move, and then it moves out of your line of sight of vision, you're wondering what's going on, will there be another, you then start to observe, the people in your community, especially if you're living in a community that is not predominantly black, you try to make eye contact and so the my emotions go from being at ease to really being more vigilant. And if I feel like people are looking at me weirdly or differently, it then becomes a feeling that anxiety, and anxiousness, but still trying to appear at ease. So really kind of, trying to walk two lines, if you will. But those are the emotions that I usually go through when I'm walking, biking, or even taking public transit, always on guard, never, that moment of ease doesn't last very long.

CB 27:21

Please explain how your experiences might differ from your White counterparts.

SB 27:29

Well, I think we are more alike than unlike as a human race. I definitely think that as a black man, considering a white man of similar age and upbringing, I have many more concerns for my safety for my family safety for my community safety than my white counterpart may have. I also think that I might have greater fears as well as relates to the ways that I even present myself and how that will be received. And I do feel as a tall black man, I feel that I'm always fighting against this inertia or this notion to make myself smaller, to make myself smaller for my environment. So, I'm trying to push back at that, and you know, just stand tall to hold my head up to keep my shoulders straight, and my chest out because I understand that while people say I'm very jovial and friendly and kind those who don't know me who just see me see my

height, see my stature, and the color of my skin may think of me as dangerous, as unfriendly as threatening as posing a risk. And my white male counterparts may not have that though thing levels of concerns.

CB 28:59

When you think about safety what came to mind first traffic safety of personal?

SB 29:09

It was personal safety, not traffic safety, because I have to get through that barrier first. I have to think about what the implications for me, and my personhood are first before I can think about my environment, unfortunately. I was in a workshop on race and racism and asked white people to list all the things you can identify with about you in your community, and then they asked black people to come up with the list as well. The white individuals list was much longer than the black individuals list. And what we realized is the level of mental gymnastics that we have to go through, being able to do that limits the amount of things that we can be concerned about at a time. So, I would love to see more traffic calming, even interventions on the street that I live. My concern is how am I being perceived in my environment, I can't even think about changing my environment until I make sure that the way that I'm perceived is not not going to be added to my disadvantage or detriment, unfortunately. And that's also what I'm seeing in many of the people that I interact with, with the work that I do. They would love to live in a community that has a slower speed limit so their child could go out and play, but most importantly, they're worried about like, who will see their child and how their child will be perceived.

CB 30:41

Please tell me what thoughts or emotions come to mind when discussing systemic and institutional racism, particularly in the context of active living.

SB 31:07

Structural racism is the elephant that's in the room that we I don't think have yet really talked about for physical activity specifically in a meaningful, critical and an action-oriented way. Structural racism is also the elephant that we have to figure out how to eat one bite at a time, and so when we aren't yet acknowledging it. And therefore, we can't really even figure out how to really eat it and take it apart and dismantle it. The way that I think about it, is really being the system as we think about systemic racism becoming a new buzzword for 2021, especially with the bad administration's run for presidency, but structural racism, to me really, at its at its simplest element is all the systems of racism and how they work together. Which also, I think because it is the systems of racism that work together and their connectedness, it does become hard to acknowledge structural racism when we're still having issues, acknowledging institutional racism. You know, we're still focused on dissecting and taking a bite out of this interpersonal racism, that is still ever present, that is still important. We're spending so much energy on that. And it's trying to start to even acknowledge institutional racism factors, we're not yet ready to dismantle structural racism really face it head on.

CB 32:48

Please explain your thoughts on gentrification and displacement, particularly in the context of active living.

SB 33:08

So, I want to thank my colleagues who were in the planning space, who as a public health practitioner have taught me more about that. So, gentrification first, it's what we think in public health is revitalizing the community, changing the features to make it more amenable to physical activity. But what may end up happening is the cost of the interventions or the improvements, elevate the cost of living and the cost of that environment to the back that those who are originally there who were trying to serve are no longer able to live there and reap the health benefits of the work that was done. It causes a new group to be able to move in or on the other instance what we're seeing with a lot of policy now pre-gentrification, what I would call it really, allowing and incentivizing efforts to increase the appeal of an environment to make it no longer affordable for those who live there. I know that gentrification also is not only a racial difference, but it can also be an income difference, which is also not equitable. So having a low-income black community be gentrified so that a wealthier black community can come live in as well it's not equitable. Displacement we have interventions such as the moving opportunities that tried to move people based on voucher programs and we just didn't seem to health benefits that we thought would happen. I'm always thinking that if we're intervening on the environment, let us try to most importantly, to prevent the displacement of individuals. Adding to displacement, we live in environments and familiar with them and there's a level of social cohesion that we're also losing when we do create environments that individuals who are living there are no longer able to remain. And so, the psychological implications for health, the mental health implications and physical health implications, especially if you're someone who's dependent on public transit, for example, or your neighbors to carpool to get to doctor's appointments or the grocery stores is a major issue that we need to think about.

CB 35:42

Please tell me what potential policy, systems or environmental changes are needed to prevent or mitigate the unintended consequences of gentrification and displacement.

SB 36:10

The first thing I always recommend as a policy change is to raise the minimum wage. If people's income level increases, they can afford to remain there. They may be able afford to get a car or to have car maintenance to keep their car running. They may be able to afford to do some maintenance to their homes to keep it not in a better condition. So, I always advocate as a policy change for raising the minimum wage. I'm also thinking about policy as we think about racial zoning laws, we need to eradicate them we need to eliminate them there needs to be disincentives for individuals who promote promoted it as well. As we think about affordable housing specifically section eight. I think we need to think about not only how to increase access, because the wait lists are super long with that let's also think about where those residences are located and what is accessible to those residents where they are. If someone is on section eight housing, we are we know a few things about them already. And so, let's make sure that the environment that they are able to live in is conducive to their optimal health and well-being. So, thinking about systems and rural areas, the public transportation system in the rural area would never be at the level it is in a more urbanized area, but I think there's still lots of room for improvement, even if it's something as simple as taking people to grocery stores, and hospitals. A few like local community rec centers, or parks, rural areas are just so car dependent, and if someone does not have access to a vehicle, they aren't really able to fully engage with their environment. Thinking about systems and physical activity in rural areas, really thinking about investing more in our sidewalks and roadways. Traffic

calming, I think is also an important thing for us to consider in rural environments as well. Even when we know that a lot of state and county highways run straight through rural communities and towns, let's think meaningfully about ways to really value human lives more than vehicles, and commerce. We can do all of these things. At the same time. We don't have to sacrifice one for the other.

CB 38:53

Please tell me what your top priorities would be if you had unlimited power and resources, particularly in the context of active living.

SB 39:15

Top priorities, money is not an issue. Maybe not in the order of first, second and third, but I think a top priority is to really have a community advisory board for community improvements. Too often, we have a few people who have been there forever who are making decisions. We have agencies who may not even be within the county or that city, but they do serve residents and they're making these decisions. So really allowing the community to have a position of authority in the decision-making process. I'm also because my vantage point coming from rural communities, there's a greater level of home ownership. Not many people are leaving and moving to especially rural environments. So those who are there, they've remained there. So, really focusing on increasing community, community authority and permission, as we think about changing the environment or making it better. Once again, I'm going to go as an intervention to economics, increasing income, especially for single parent households. One issue in rural communities, as many of them who have better paying jobs, if you will, are going out of the city or even the county for work. And so, they're having long commute times. So, if we think about bringing jobs into rural areas, jobs that the people in those areas are able to work, I think, is an important caveat to that. That could help that could keep people in their cities longer, less commute times able to actually get out and walk on more. I'll stop there. For now. Those I think the two top priorities for me right now,

CB 41:07

Please tell me specific partners you would want to engage to advance your top priorities.

SB 41:18

Sure, I really think that, as I've continued to engage in this work, and I've continued to learn, I know, federal national things are great and important, but I'm really focusing, I see more of the, the influence really being at the local level. So even if we just focus on a county, because we have so many counties, we have 100 counties in South Carolina. Every county is different, and have unique challenges so, really thinking about county leadership in ways that they can get their directives and be held accountable by those who live in put in their specific communities. So, I think counties should be a partner, but it has to also have a huge component being citizen partners, there are also many organizations who serve vulnerable populations, or minority populations, bring them to the table, even if physical activity, health, or transportation is not the thing that they do. People who have lived experience, they understand the problem better than I ever could. They understand the solutions they seek. So, I would definitely encourage that, as partners, non-traditional partners, I would really think about focusing on young adults, these are people who, hopefully have just finished high school, they may be trying to figure out their life, but they're still in the air for whatever reason. There's also a large demographic that we see moving away from rural communities, as we think about young black individuals, especially young black men, that's one

of the most tenuous times for our life expectancy, making it to the age of 25, and also for our black women. And so, we really need their voices at the table too. I would love to see businesses get involved, and again, businesses, that people in that particular area are able to work, not outside business coming in and saying, Yeah, we want to be at the table to make this better but thinking about businesses that people can actually take. And then because I know, food and nutrition are major issues, especially in rural environments, bringing them to the table as well, and kind of breaking down some of those silos between this physical activity or the walkability space, and this is the Food and Nutrition space, but really seeing how those places can serve each other.

CB 44:07

Please tell me what specific actions the federal government can take to address the issues you've identified.

SB 44:47

Yeah. I think that at the federal level, which again, goes back to local we have a digital divide, we have a digital divide with internet access, especially in southern states, especially in rural counties, I think the government as we're trying to be more energy efficient, especially now, we need to think about increasing access to the internet with resources, people being able to use GPS to find their nearest Park, or to find your nearest grocery store, I think will be a major thing that the government should overtake. As we think about transportation, and many places have different transportation structures, I think the government really needs to think about transportation for the future and how that can be accessible. I also think that as we think about energy, especially in rural areas, starting to see more and more solar panels pop up, let's think about ways that we can attract, increase tree canopies on the places that are walkable, you might have trees in your backyard at home or in the wood but when we get to city centers, there's nothing, they're very sparse. So, that would hopefully help to increase, with people's ability to walk, especially in hotter temperatures. If we think about law enforcement, and even like information security, I think that the government, at the federal level, need a mandate to, well, we have several laws that have not been passed, we don't we have the justice in policing act that has not been passed, we have the Emmett Till anti-lynching law that has not been passed, let's pass those things. We need more policy action, less symbolism from our federal government, which by making these policy actions will help to enable and support positive changes, equitable changes, and at the local level.

CB 47:01

Please explain to me your strategic use of social media (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and, etc.) and other mediums (e.g., podcasts) to highlight and/or address inequities within active transportation as well as other intersecting issues.

SB 47:35

Yeah, the first thing is audience segmentation. So really thinking about who the audience is, and then at that audience needs to be segmented further. And so, one issue that we're working on, actually, is to get some intersection crosswalks just painted on the ground, in one of the downtown quarters of one of the counties that we work in. And what we realized after doing our work is that the city owned some, the county owns some, so we're only focused on those that the city owns. The question now becomes how do we raise the public's awareness so that they can also act for this as a change, things won't move unless you

know, people make it a priority. And so, we need to segment the population from older adults to working age adults and then to children. These are also sometimes priority populations. So, for older adults, the issue and benefits of crosswalks is you know, slower paces, their gait isn't as wide as it used to be, so this will help give them time to be safe. Communicate that message strategically, while older adults may not be using social media, more actually are but for oldest, we're really focusing on word of mouth, and the senior centers to communicate our messages as we think about the CDC and though the wealth of resources and information that is digestible, and easy to understand, not seeing into a link for this population, but actually sharing it with them. And a pamphlet that might have been repurposed. One piece of paper, large font, not a lot of color and business going on. Now, our working age adults, that's kind of like our Facebook crowd. We have an active on Facebook page, wherever you use hashtags, and we have community champions, we try to kind of do one every other month that may be focused hopefully on having the hope to improve walkability, and physical activity or environment to give a local touch and feel to it. I'm also leveraging outside of Facebook, the county websites or the city website, I should say of city government, they see what we're doing. They tell us to share it with them to put on their events calendar, so we do that as well. Church announcements are also really important to us, especially when we're trying to convene a group of people together, especially black groups of people together. Church announcements have been a really important aspect and then most importantly, identifying those gatekeepers or those community champions, not only those people who are required to get kind of their buy in to get other people, but those people who also are supportive of this effort and initiative because they actually value it too for themselves and their community. Young adults, it's kind of difficult, especially during the pandemic to tap into what they're into. But right now, what is the success with us is focusing on youth serving organizations, those who might even focus on community service and kind of giving them health messages strategically.

CB 50:31

Please tell me how CDC/Active People Healthy Nation can help communicate about equitable active living.

SB 51:11

Yeah, specific advice to the CDC around active people healthy nation. I know they've done some changes to it, especially like allowing people to change the logo in the hashtag to kind of speak to instead of nation, counting for their community. I definitely think street teams would be pretty cool for CDC to do. So, street teams are basically individuals who are of the community who are either able to go out and fly or share a quick message kind of by canvassing, if you will, I think that would be a really cool initiative for CDC to think about, in a few particular places, just see what effect and reception that could have. Unfortunately, CDC for all of its good work, still is kind of seen as a federal entity, a big thing, even though a lot of what they talk about is at the local level, which is important. So really kind of cutting that barrier, I think street teams could be a good way to do that. Also, experiential videos, and I guess what I mean, by an experiential video, we have virtual reality now. And one of the benefits of virtual reality is you're able to actually kind of like walk a mile in someone else's shoes. Instead of having, a traditional PSA, where there's more black face telling us, how it's hard or you know, how, I feel like my life is at risk, like, let us actually, go through the experience of them in a virtual reality simulation. I think I've seen a few videos that a few organizations have done as it might relate to poverty, or even domestic violence, just kind of us coming from the vantage point of, for example, the victim, or the child who has to be told make sure you eat at school because we don't have anything, here in the evening. So, I think those could be effective strategies.

And I just challenged them to really think about audience segmentation, I would like there to be a different message for policymakers, then it would be to citizens, and even thinking about citizens at different activity levels and motivations and having a message for different groups in in that way. Also, partnering with local organizations, or organizations that might be national, but have also local touches, I would love to see some collaborations, if at all possible.

CB 53:37

Do you have any closing questions or comments for me?

SB 53:48

The recommendation I would also have, or communication is if CDC could actually elevate the voices of not only black scholars, or other scholars of minority or socially politically disadvantaged groups, but also local people who may not have an academic pedigree, but definitely have the years of experience doing, this type of work. I would love to see CDC kind of elevate them in some recognition forum, or if it's some quarterly meeting where we just hear their perspectives, their challenges and how they overcame them. I would love to see that oftentimes, I think instead of talking to us, just you know, pass the mic on is also a great strategy. So yeah, I would also want to lift that up.

CB 54:44

That's excellent.

Transcript: Tamika Butler, Esq

Tuesday, June 1, 2021, 11:00AM

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, folks, black, impacted, zoning, feel, streets, bike, talk, space, physical activity, transportation, white, person, communities, pandemic, black women, living, organization, black lives matter

SPEAKERS

CB, TB

As part of SOPHE's cooperative agreement with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPAO), we will be conducting qualitative interviews to better understand Black/African American expert discussions around the historical context and consequences of inequities that have discouraged physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities (e.g., limited access to safe and accessible routes and/or destinations, feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, etc.). We would like to better understand the barriers, racial inequities, and facilitators related to activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations (routes to destinations) that influence physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities.

CB 00:03

You have been identified as an expert transportation and/or land use Thought Leader. We are interested in interviewing you to learn more about your experience and perspective. My name is Charles T. Brown, Adjunct professor at Rutgers University and founder of Equitable Cities. This interview will take no more than one hour. This information will be used to identify opportunities for CDC to embed equitable access to physical activity opportunities for Black communities into its activity friendly routes to everyday destinations strategy.

Do I have your permission to record?

TB 03:23

Yes.

CB 03:25

Please introduce yourself if you don't mind.

TB 03:30

Sure. I'm Tamika Butler. And I'm the founder and principal of Tameka Butler Consulting, and about to be a grad student at UCLA Urban Planning PhD program.

CB 03:50

Please tell me why you chose this particular career path or journey.

TB 04:00

Yeah, so you know, for me, I started off as a civil rights lawyer. I think that's what I always wanted to do. I grew up, you know, really caring about black people and discrimination, queer folks. And I think you when you care about those things, sometimes you get pushed into certain professions, especially having a parents who hadn't gone to a four-year college gotten, you know, advanced degrees. And so, they really wanted me to be a doctor or a lawyer, became a lawyer. While I love being a civil rights lawyer. It just wasn't for me. Um, and so I think when I left law, I really, I went straight through from undergrad to law school, and so I didn't have a lot of practical skills and was trying to figure out what I could do. And I ended up going to a few different nonprofits. The first one being a public health, nonprofit, and then a foundation. And when the opening came up with the bike coalition, I think it was at a time after being at a foundation where I had experience discrimination from a white boss. And I just felt like I wanted something light, and easy and fun. And I remember talking to a friend who is like, what's the worst thing that happens if you work at a bike coalition, like you hand out fewer bike lights, like, that's not as stressful as like someone losing their job because you did a bad job as a lawyer or making a decision not to fund a certain organization. And they, you know, can't make payroll, whatever it may be. And so, I took a job at the bike coalition, I think, very quickly fell in love with it. And I think part of it is I was coming from this more civil rights and also public health background. And I really saw it as more of a public health issue. And from there, you know, I took a job at a parks organization, I wanted to learn more about planning beyond just transportation. So really learning about green space, and the parks organization that I was executive director of, we actually owned and built parks, so learning a lot about land use and development and zoning laws, and how all of these things impact and I found myself back in

transportation. And I think it just became clear to me that just because no one tells you growing up, if you care about racial justice, and you care about the treatment, of folks of color, and folks who are oppressed, like transportation, and how we use our public spaces, a huge area where we should be doing more work. And so, I've really swung the pendulum, you know, from just dabbling in it for lightweight fun to kill your PhD in it. And I am very happy. And I think there's a lot of I think there's a lot of impact to be had here. There are so many social justice and issues in society that if we don't talk about how they come together and built environment, we don't talk about how they're tied to transportation, then we're never going to really make true impact.

CB 06:53

Curious if you find it ironic that you're still doing civil rights work?

TB 06:59

I don't, you know, it's interesting. In my interview with the bike coalition board, I said to them, exactly, I'm a gender queer black woman. And that's how that's how I live my life. That's how I see the world. And so, if you don't want the LA County Bicycle Coalition to be a civil rights, social justice organization, don't hire me. And so, I think for people from the outside looking in, my path looks rather Securitas and like, I did this and then did this, and it did this. But I think for me, it's always been tied to helping black people get free. And so, I find it perfectly in line with that. And I just felt really lucky to have discovered this field of work. That both brings me a lot of personal joy, but I know also as deeply impactful.

CB 07:49

You said, queer, black woman, right? But then you say you're fighting for black people? Why the mention of queer before black, but then you mentioned a black before queer in the fight? Was that intentional?

TB 08:15

I think no. I think a lot about identity since I'm at the intersections of identities. I feel like on any given day in any given space, different words might come first. Frankly, I feel, you know, I feel like being a black woman is probably the identity I hold strongest. And I've, I don't know if we've ever talked about this before, but I think I also use the term genderqueer. And so, I think I am someone who you know, wears men's clothes, I think I identify as a little bit more masculine. And I sometimes I think, if I wasn't black, if I was just white and identified in the same way, I might be like, hmm, I could be trans should I think about transitioning, and I would probably have that like deep conversation with myself. But I don't even question it now. Because being a black woman is so fundamentally centered in who I am. And I think, you know, I always trust black women, I rely on black women, and I really think black women are such an important part of, of not just my life, but I think everyone's life. I think people don't realize how much black women keep us going. And so, I think that is the identity that is strongest to me. And I think frankly, whatever I say first is usually just based on what I'm writing or what I'm saying and just how it comes out. But even if you know I might not be able to hide the fact that I'm queer very well. But even if I could hide everything else, like I could never change the color of my skin, I think the reason it's important for me to always keep queer in there is because being queer is very important to me, I think it is a very important part of my identity. And I think just because I feel such a strong affinity with being a black woman, I still don't think that changes how I present to the external world. And I think there are a lot of people who see me as a black man, like I think most often, you know, if I'm out, and my Jays and my jeans and my hoodie,

like the person at the store says, how you doing today, sir? And so, I'm very aware that that's how folks see me. And so, I think it is an important part of my identity to keep in there.

CB 10:45

You're perceived as a black male; does the treatment you receive is it do part to you being perceived as a black male? You speak about black women, why not speak about the trials and struggles of black men with the same passion given your lived experience in terms of how you're treated? If it's true, or because in many ways they see you as black first, but then potentially, secondly, as a black male?

TB 11:24

So, I think that I do, and, you know, the job I had at a foundation was running their Boys and Men of Color work, like I think and so I think throughout my career, it is, it's tough, right? Because I, I think when you walk that line, I see those perspectives. So, I totally understand what black women mean, when they say, you know, say her name or when they feel like, why isn't Briana Taylor getting the same amount of shine is George Floyd, like, I totally understand that. I've also been accused of raping a white woman by a white woman and know what it is to be like to be viewed as a black man and to be viewed as that predator and to be viewed as dangerous on site. And so, for me, I think there are a lot of issues where I think my perspective allows me to see both worlds and look like at the end of the day, like one of my identities that I haven't talked about yet is a mom, and I got a black son, and I got a black daughter. And I think that they will have, you know, many different experiences. And I can guarantee that they will both have to face things that on either side I faced on either side I haven't faced right. And so, I think I'm just as passionate is making sure that my black son can be you know, a black boy full of joy and a black man who can be proud and thrive and live. And I am very committed to making sure my black daughter has the experience to be a dignified Queen, who can excel at whatever she chooses. And so, I think I feel both of those things equally

CB 13:12

Please describe your thoughts or feelings related to identifying as Black/African American within a historically White-dominated field or space.

TB 13:26

Yeah, it's so interesting. You know, I think for me, this hasn't changed, no matter where I've been law is a white dominated space, right. And so, I grew up in Nebraska, a white dominated space. And so, I think I've always had to be comfortable being in a white dominated space. And I have, I have a father who's whose roots are in Oklahoma, I have a mother's who's whose roots are in South Carolina. And they have always raised us to be very aware of our blackness and very proud of our blackness. And, and I think, you know, from our names to how to the things that are important, our traditions, our food, everything. And so, I think I've always grown up knowing that I there might not be a lot of people who look like me in this space. But I can be proud of being in the space. I think my parents shielded us from a very long time, from the discrimination they face from the things that were going on. I think as I matured into seeing that, it's not that they tried to hide it. I think just creating that space for us to feel whatever we needed to fill in those moments and to support us and hold us has been really important. So, I say all that to say I don't think it's really changed for me throughout my life. What I think has changed is how white people perceive black people being in white dominated spaces. And I think especially over the last year, now we

are everybody's favorite friend, right and I think it's so interesting to see this change that has happened, and in many ways on a surface level. And so now everybody wants us in the room, everybody wants to set the table. Everybody wants us on the project. But I don't know that there has been that true shift of power. And so, in these white dominated spaces, I think it's still hard to relax, I think it's still hard to take a deep breath. And I think it's still a constant movement of feeling these white folks out and like, who are the folks who we can really trust and rely on? And who are really about it? And who are the folks that just see an opportunity and are exploiting us, and frankly, are like, is this a situation where I know this is happening, but I'm getting something out of this to our where I have to keep more space? And so, I think our vigilance has had to increase in these white dominated spaces as of late

CB 15:49

Through that vigilance, is there a sign, action, investment or something that signals trustworthiness to you from a white person?

TB 16:01

I really do think that I really appreciate white folks who, who are consistently they're even when they don't need something, I think that's huge. I really value white folks who do their own work. So, I will have a deep conversation about race with a white person who comes to me, and is like, you know, I joined Charles's book club. And I've been reading these books. And then outside of this book, it took me down this rabbit hole to this other book in this other book, and I got a lot on my mind. Like, I'd love to talk to you about it than someone who says, I saw Charles Brown was doing a book club. What's that book about? Tell me about it. Why is that problematic? Right? So, I think folks who do their own work, I will always trust folks who are there even when you don't need something. And then I think the folks I really trust are folks who are willing to speak up and speak out, and not just rely on us, right? There's a lot of like, Oh, thanks, Charles. Thanks to Mika for saying that I was thinking the same thing. But the white folks who actually say that and speak it, and don't just wait for us. I think those are also folks that I feel like I can start to build that trust with.

CB 17:16

Please describe how, if any, the pandemic has affected your physical activity opportunities or your views on being physically active in general.

TB 17:28

Yeah. I mean, I think I think I'm a person who eats my feelings. And so, I think it's a, it's a negatively impacted my physical activity. I think I've always been someone who struggles with anxiety, and like a little bit of depression, especially weather related. And so just being inside all the time has been really hard. I think having two young kids during a pandemic, and trying to fit in time for yourself, has really impacted my physical activity. And then I think just wanting to be safe, right, having so much misinformation from our health officials. Makes it confusing. And I think when you layer that on top of like, are you supposed to wear a mask, do you not have to wear a mask? Well, who's going to get harassed for not wearing a mask, who's going to get harassed for being in too big of a group in the park or at the beach. And so, I think, and a lot of ways, in addition to my physical activity, it's the mental health piece, because I think it wasn't just a pandemic, it was a pandemic layered with black death on black death, where we were captivated. And you can see nothing but it. And so, I think even when I felt energized

enough, and like, I want it to get out and be physical, I think there was still the sense of am I going to get harassed right now, because I'm black, and I'm trying to go on a jog, go on a bike ride, whatever it is. And so, I think in some ways, it was the pandemic mixed with everything that was happening with race. That made me a little nervous, you know,

CB 19:07

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements:
15-minute Cities

TB 19:26

I'm sure I just had the word for that one: a gimmick. And for all of these interventions, I could use one word, which is well intentioned, but right. And I think the 15 minutes city, like in theory is a great idea, but it feels like a catchy phrase. And I don't care about a 15-minute city and if those 15 minutes, my neighbor could be like, do you belong here? I can get, you know, pulled over for jaywalking at a disproportionately high rate. So, for me, I think I think a 15-minute city is not going to be helpful if it is not complete and as if it is not a well-rounded, holistic approach to a person. And that's 15 minutes

CB 20:20

Calm streets?

TB 20:28

Yeah, yeah, calm streets. Calm streets, I think. You know, I think, honestly, I think of common streets, streets, either of those, I think of a map of arbitrary and I think of a street that is common enough for this man to run on it. But if his if his neighbors, if his fellow citizens are not calm, then they will be suspect, I think of streets that are coming up for folks to take a walk down them. But again, just this weekend, there was a black dude who posted in the northwest that he was on a bike ride, and he was on a slower street going to a gravel road. And a lady stopped him and said, do you live in this neighborhood? We pay for the streets. And so, I think I think calming streets is great. And I think it's something that needs to happen for the safety of folks who walk and bike. But I think you can calm streets, but that doesn't mean you can come on people and racial tensions.

CB 21:32

Open streets and play streets?

TB 21:41

I think my thoughts are similar. I also just think like, when I think of open streets and play Streets, I think of a black barbecue. So that's the other thing that's like, I think that's the one thing that's different about it to me, like I think of like our neighborhoods in the summer, where you're like, we don't close down the street, and we don't have a party. And so, I think that open streets and slow streets again, well, intention, I would have loved to see them be more inclusive of what different communities would have viewed of doing with that streets instead of just trying to have like a blanket program that worked for every neighborhood.

CB 22:16

Complete Streets.

TB 22:30

I would love a complete Street, give me a green bike lane, a red bus lane. I think Complete Streets are great. But we can't make complete streets without conceding that cars are not the end all be all. And I think that sometimes with complete streets, we like to just, um, we like to just add things on instead of realizing that we might have to take some things away to truly make it complete

CB 23:05

Vision Zero?

TB 23:09

Over it, I really believe that we should try to get to, to a place where people walking and biking and kids and older adults, and all of these vulnerable street users are safe, I don't like safer like, I don't want to just be safer, I want them to be safe, I want them to live, I want them to thrive. But until folks are ready to let go of enforcement, and Vision Zero, I think it will always be a good idea for a different country. But you have to acknowledge just where we are with policing. And so, I want Vision Zero to be successful. But we have to realize that you can take a good idea from another country and make it your own. You don't have to keep it exactly the same.

CB 24:00

Master plan?

TB 24:06

My first word is confusing, and not confusing to me as a planner. But we're here in LA right now. We're doing a lot of kind of neighborhood-by-neighborhood community plans. And just the process. I have a lot of friends who are working on those plans and the process of trying to get community members, their residents, their volunteers engaged. When there's this city deadline and this, you know, did you go to this city council special meeting? Oh, you missed it. Oh, the city council member like I just I think they are really important documents that have been made ridiculously confusing, both in substance and in process as a way to keep people out and I think we should be trying to figure out how to bring more people into these master planning processes.

CB 25:00

Any thoughts on it being named master plan?

TB 27:01

I mean, there are so many things that are named. Whenever I think about any one's plan, it's like, whose plan is this? Right? And so, you have a master plan. And like I said, my main critique is that it's really hard for, for average, everyday folks who are going to be most impacted by the plan to engage in them. And it seems intentional, that there are certain people who have power who have determined that they should be the Masters, the masses have the vision for what, for what people, for what people live and see and

experience in their communities. And so, you know, grandma always says, listen to people when they tell you who they are. And I think folks told us exactly what they meant when they named it, what they named it.

CB 25:55

Safe Routes to School?

TB 27:01

Safe Routes to School makes me smile. That's the word that comes to mind. You know, when I think about schools, or school districts that are really into it, they have, they're walking school buses. And like, for me, a big part of a vibrant community is going to that elementary school and seeing the kind of musical orchestration of how people get in and out and interact. And so, I think, when done well, Safe Routes to School can be really, really transformative. I just happen to think that a lot of advocates who are supportive of Safe Routes to School are supportive at a very surface level and like good neighborhoods with good families and good kids, but they don't want to really talk about Safe Routes to schools in the hood, and what that might entail. And so, I think it is a great concept that if we really took it seriously and really invested in it could make a huge transformative difference to a lot of kids.

CB 26:58

Single-Family zoning?

TB 27:01

Single family zoning, the first word that comes to mind is NIMBY. And I think it's, I think it's so interesting, the way society works, we just had some friends over this weekend, who are you know, some of my most liberal radical friends, but they just bought a house. And they just bought a house in a place that is contemplating eliminating single family zoning, and they're like, but we just like we saved up so long. And we just got our house and now they're going to do this to our property value. And like the one of the people in the couple is like, I'm happy with it. And the other person the couple is like, but our property value. And so, I think single family zoning is this really interesting thing, we've set up this ideal of an American dream. And I think something that's sometimes hard, especially for folks of color, folks have less means, is it seems like just when you're starting to obtain that dream, you got a whole bunch of white urbanists moving the goalposts are saying no. Now to be a good person, you should want more housing density. And it's like we've been living in dense housing, but you told us we should want a house. So now we work for the house. And so like, I, I have a lot of empathy for some of the folks not all the NIMBYs but I have a lot of empathy for folks who felt like they worked really hard to accomplish this, this American dream. And they were that they never thought they would have because of lack of generational wealth and all of these different things. And now they see a bunch of white folks saying we're here to help, we're going to change the zoning. And I just think we have to be more nuanced about those conversations and understand where we're coming from in the same way I think we have to be when we say get rid of all cars, like I think we have to understand that y'all made the rules, and now you're changing them, but we know it's going to impact us differently.

CB 28:51

Inclusionary Zoning?

TB 29:01

Yeah, I mean, I think so, you know, full disclosure, for me, zoning is something that like I love, like what one of the things I want to focus my PhD on is using my law degree to look at land use laws and zoning and how those overlaps. And so, I'm super nerdy about this stuff. But the reason I said yeah, is because when I think of inclusionary zoning as someone who thinks about planning and zoning and law and the intersections of this. See it is something that can be really powerful. I still think it's confusing. So, if I had one word I would I want to demystify inclusionary zoning, I want to demystify all zoning because I think that right now, we have a lot of folks with fancy degrees or developers or whoever, who get how to how to bend these different zoning things to their will. And I feel like there are many things whether you're not talking about single family housing inclusionary, whatever, that could actually help a lot of people, but they just they feel so confusing and so mystifying to folks that it's just like it shuts people down and it allows those who get it to be able to continue to use it and manipulate it.

CB 30:17

ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units)

TB 30:21

ADUs have been huge here and LA, um, I am on the advisory board of an organization that's one of the cities darlings and helping people with ADUs. I like the idea. I worry about people who think that 80s and in of themselves are going to be a solution to housing problems. I love an ADU for families and communities that want to create space for family members and other community members to come in. I also see it being used as like people with means and wealth, saying I have room for an ADUs, I'm not going to charge exorbitant rent on this thing in my backyard. And continue to stack up continue to have somebody back there that I get to feel good because I'm giving them housing but there's actually no path to ownership. There's actually no path to anything. And so, I like ADUs, I think they could be a helpful tool and a toolkit, I am suspect of people who think they are the end all be all and really suspect of people who are like that's literally in my backyard. So, who are you really willing to rent to? Are you really willing to help out? So that's kind of how I think about those, I guess my one word would be skeptical.

CB 31:42

Please tell me how you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement and the Black Lives Matter organization.

TB 31:58

So, I think the Black Lives Matter movement is an important movement. I think it's something I mean, I hope it's something that going forward is going to be, you know, written about in history books, as this pivotal organization that that really helped, um, really helped change the conversation for a lot of people. The reason I don't say all people is because I think it's a conversation so many of us are already have already been having right? I believe that someone probably said Black Lives Matter before we were in this viral world, right? Like we've all said, like I matter at some point, I really think I applaud and thank the ingenuity of folks who have kept it in the narrative and have kept it going. My concern is that again, especially in this last year or two, it's become a catchphrase that folks use to virtue signal. You know, I was on my peloton this morning. And the number of folks with white pictures whose like, main hashtag is

Black Lives Matter. Right. And it's interesting, because just and this is just me using peloton, but I see way fewer black folks with Black Lives Matter as their hashtag, than I see white folks. That's not necessarily a bad thing. But I just I think sometimes, I think sometimes things become commodified as a way to have cachet, and trade currency on wokeness. And, and I worry about that for some people, not all people, I think for many people at open their eyes that made them understand something that they struggled to understand, and it made it more relatable. So, for that I am thankful as an organization. I think it's tough. You know, I don't envy one of the founders is here in LA. And she's had this huge story written on her about how she is stacking up real estate, because she bought a \$1 million home. And like for those of us in LA, we're like, how did you find that home? It's so cheap. It's so cheap. And it's not that nice. Like, and you have to live with? Oh, girl, that's all-black lives matter. Right. So, I think, I think I feel for them as an organization. The people I feel most for are the are the families who have actually lost these young men and young women. And so, I feel like we have to believe them. And we have to trust them when they come forward and say this organization is not helping me. And I think we have to investigate that. And I think we have to; I think you can both hold space to say this has been a transformative movement. But we also have to think about where it is, who it's impacting, who it's benefiting, and frankly, have compassion. I think so often we like to destroy our own instead of being restorative and saying like were there mistakes made are things perfect, but how can we heal together? Because the folks on the outside want us to tear each other down.

CB 35:06

Please explain how the BLM movement has impacted either your attitudes, perceptions or vision for equitable and inclusive active living in this country.

TB 35:17

Um, I mean, I think it would be unfair to say it hasn't at all, because we're all products of our environments, and I don't think something like that could happen at the level it's happening. Without it having some impact on our work, I think we're all influenced by what we see. While at the same time, I think that what's most impacted my work are folks like you, Veronica, Keith, um, you know, Dara, um, I think what's most impacted my work or the personal relationships I've made, and frankly, finding other folks of color, mostly black, but also, you know, like all of the folks in our space, who inhabit these identities. I think that's like; I don't think any of us are constantly saying Black Lives Matter. Black Lives Matter. I think we're talking to our personal experiences, the experiences of our family and our friends. And I think that, you know, I don't know if the hashtag George Floyd has, has impacted my work as much as knowing and seeing the pain and sorrow of George Floyd losing his life, and how it impacted his family and his community and his cities. And so, I guess that's what I mean, on the other question, like sometimes BLM feels like a hashtag. And that's not as impactful, I think is, is some of the interactions and experiences of working with folks who get it and care and are doing the work on the ground. Not that Black Lives Matter isn't I would never say they're not doing the work on the ground.

CB 36:55

Please tell me about your views on law enforcement in the context of active living.

TB 37:02

Yeah, you know, I think it's a system that doesn't work. And I and I think that, I think whenever you talk about being active, so whether or not you're talking about walking, whenever I talk about jaywalking, whether or not you're talking about biking, whether or not you're talking about, you know, driving, whether like when you are whether or not you're talking about sitting and hanging out with your friends standing on a corner, your experience and waiting for a bus, I think all of these things, the experience is different for those of us who are black. I think that I have a hard time with folks who want to reform a system that seems just broken, and not broken in a way of like, can we Tinker here and there and fix but broken in a way, it's built exactly how you want it to be built. And it's having the impact you want it to have. And so, let's throw it out. And I think we live in a world I say this all the time. We live in a world where so many people are afraid of being called racist, that that they don't want to talk about race. They don't want to say racism, because they don't want to be called a racist. And I think I can say policing is broken. Without making a statement about what I think about a particular person who is a police officer, I can have a conversation with you, you can explain to me why you did this work. There are many brothers and sisters who get into policing to help the very communities that we're trying to help. I'm not denying that. I'm just saying you are such a good person who wants to do such important work, there's a better way to do it because they're saying it right. And so, I think that's something to just be thought about. I strongly believe that it is a system that needs to be you know, whatever catchphrase you want to use abolish, defund whatever it is, it doesn't work, and we should be investing our resources and our communities in better, more productive ways.

CB 39:06

Please describe the emotions you feel when walking, bicycling, waiting for and taking public transportation, or hopping on an e-scooter in your community.

TB 39:19

So, I might my first emotion is honestly just so much fun. best job I ever had was working at the Bicycle Coalition. The first time I got on one of those scooters. I was like, holy shit, this is fun. This is fun. It is fun. It is free. You know and I think when you can just pick up and just go on a walk down the block and see your homie and not be in traffic. I think when you are counting every penny and you see how much of that bus pass cost. It feels good to get on the bus. It feels you know, I read this book to my son one of his favorite books is about a bus ride that this kid and his grandmother take and it's fun watching the people play music and dance. And like seeing all that, like it is, it is a fun experience, I feel a sense of freedom, especially on a bike or when I scoot, or walk. And I think Wouldn't it be great if that was the only feeling I had to have? Because I also have the feeling when I'm on my bike, like, you know is that person in their front you're looking at me a certain way is this cop car that's going to drive past me that make some pretexts to stop me on my bike. And so, my number one feeling is fun and freedom. But I think and every time I use this word earlier, when I talked about being in predominantly white spaces in our profession, our world is a white supremacist world. And so, I think the word of vigilance is something we all understand as black folks. And even in our freest funniest moments, the vigilant switch comes on in a second. And I wish I didn't always have to have that I wish I could just have that free fun.

CB 41:03

Besides fun, let's talk about that your feelings or emotions as it relates to traffic versus personal safety? Like, how would you rank those? Yeah, concerns about the two.

TB 41:16

I mean, you know, it's so interesting. And it could be that, you know, you're talking to someone who was an executive director of a bike coalition has been very, you know, like, I think when the average person comes out and will ride a bike with me on LA streets, they feel unsafe, I think when you are a person who uses that as your main mode of transportation, or is on your bike a lot, I am aware of the dangers of traffic, you know, but I think there is a rhythm to the streets and the movement, and you kind of just get in your zone. And so, I think despite the fact of knowing that I am vulnerable, and one door or one, you know, know what someone not looking on a turn could be devastating. I think I have to feel a certain level of confidence. And so, I think I do, and so it's interesting to me, because I don't know if the data would bore this out. But I feel less worried when I'm on my bike about being hit by a car than frankly, I do about being stopped by a cop. Like that feels scarier to me. And that is probably less likely than someone not paying attention. Now with that being said, even though I have an extreme level of confidence, I am disgusted by how little we invest. And making sure if your question was how comfortable do you feel like getting your son on his bike and jumping in with you not at all right? And having one of my best friends from law school, Bula, black woman living in the Netherlands working at the International Criminal Court, like the difference and being there and visiting her and seeing how easy it is and how seamless it is, for anyone of any age have any ability to just hop on a bike? Like I think when I think about that, and think about when I'm biking in, then it feels really unsafe.

CB 43:12

Please tell me what thoughts or emotions come to mind when discussing systemic and institutional racism, particularly in the context of active living.

TB 43:27

I mean, I think it's, I think it's built into our built environments. And so, I think it makes it particularly difficult, challenging. But it also makes it perplexing to me, when there are people who care about active living health, or transportation like we do, and they're not thinking about systemic racism, they're not thinking about white supremacy, they're not thinking about not just what is the infrastructure change I need to make, but also what is the institutional change I need to make whenever people don't have both sides of that coin. I'm perplexed because we've already set it from the name of Master plan to the structures and systems that have been set up. It is built into our built environment. And so, I think they are things that we have to talk about and understand if we're ever going to make the type of progress, we say we want to make on some of these issues.

CB 44:22

Please explain your thoughts on gentrification and displacement, particularly in the context of active living.

TB 44:30

I'm living in a predominantly black historically black neighborhood of extreme wealth. We're, we're adjacent to Baldwin hills, and I think it's really interesting to see the way that people want things coming into their neighborhood, is new train stop is being built? I think that gentrification making things greener, I think these are real concepts. And one of my main frustrations, one of my thoughts about going into

academia is something I hear a lot from practitioners in our space is that there isn't enough data to show the tie between gentrification displacement, and structural racism. And so, despite the fact that in some ways, these feel like old terms, and the thing that comes to mind is like, of course, gentrification and displacement are real, and they're pushing out black and brown, and low-income folks. And businesses, I am always surprised by how many people are still skeptical of it. And so, I feel like we still need to keep talking about it and not just think of it as something that's passe.

CB 45:44

Please tell me what your top priorities would be if you had unlimited power and resources, particularly in the context of active living, and please tell me what you would do to advance your top priorities.

TB 46:03

I would try to change some of our bureaucratic structures to make it easier to pay actual community members, community-based organizations, as the experts that they are, I would try to flip that paradigm of who's an expert and who gets those big paychecks to do the work, I wouldn't make the work we do around built environment, active living and transportation, I would make it. I would use all the advertising dollars and all my connections to make it a topic that was always in the public discourse, you know, and in the same ways that we talked about, you know, take the campaign that we talked about crime and the environment, and education, transportation is tied to all of those things. And so, I would just raise the public awareness and dialogue on the subject. And frankly, I would try to hire people, I would try to make the institutions that run this work, more reflective of the demographics of our country, and give people raises, and pay them really good wages to do this really critical work.

CB 47:17

Please tell me specific partners you would want to engage to advance your top priorities.

TB 47:25

I am surprised. I think you do this really well; I think because my first non-law job was a public health job. And I came to transportation as more of a public health person, I am surprised by how few transportation folks really deeply talked to public health folks. I think that is a huge connection that needs to be made. And I think on a kind of a peripheral level, there is more of a connection with folks who do like climate and environment work. But like, we're really like, we're really not going to solve any of our climate problems without really being serious about the impacts of built environment and the different systems. And so, I really would want environmental justice folks to have more of a say, and then frankly, I am still shocked. And maybe I shouldn't be. But I'm still shocked by how little we talk to indigenous folks, and really let indigenous folks lead the way. You know, this, this was a whole world of thriving communities before the Western world really got involved and colonized. And sometimes I think that, that the systems and rituals and collective way of thinking and being smart about how you use land is lost. And so, I would want more partnerships there as well.

CB 48:48

Please tell me what specific actions the federal government can take to address the issues you've identified.

TB 49:10

I think that procurement piece is huge. I think so much work around equity gets slowed down, based on governmental red tape. And I think the way in which you have to kind of be like a career government person sometimes to work the way around it. So, I really think that sometimes government is looking for a splashy PR, like kickoff campaign or press of it, when instead they should be looking behind the scenes at the unsexy stuff. And so, I really think the way they procure the way they hire. And I think those types of changes could be huge from a governmental level. And then I think again, some of that bureaucratic red tape I think makes that intersection All of those different types of departments that you miss, like I just did a training for EPA. And one of the number one comments from staff was like, we need our leaders to make it easier to work together because the training was for EPA, HUD and DoT. And they're like, it doesn't help to have our figureheads on TV saying like, intersectionality is the thing. We're all about it. But then it's hard. There are so many bureaucratic barriers that this department can't work with this department. And so, I think some of those things need to be really looked at and examined.

CB 50:31

Please explain to me your strategic use of social media (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and, etc.) and other mediums (e.g., podcasts) to highlight and/or address inequities within active transportation as well as other intersecting issues.

TB 51:06

So, I would say it's been not strategic, and particularly of late, I think I really had this moment during the pandemic. As you know, everybody in our family got COVID, then my wife had a baby and had major complications that we later learned were a result of her having COVID, which were like, very serious. And so, I had this moment where like, I felt like social media was too much for me. And so, in some ways, it was completely on strategic, and I feel like I've really pulled back. I think when it is strategic, it's so hard to not get caught up. And how many likes did that get? How many retweets and that get? And so, I think what I've tried to take a step back, and really ask myself, especially as I've been trying to use it more sparingly is do I have something that's important to say, for me? Like, is this going to make me feel better? Is this going to make me feel like there's something that's being put out there. And then I think when I think about being strategic, sometimes it's not even what I'm offering as an original thought. It's just watching some of these folks, and particularly white folks who are trying to be more strategic, say things and just misstep every time. And so sometimes I think one of the most strategic ways to use social media is just knowing when to say something in response and how to say it.

CB 52:30

Did we miss why you stopped using social media as heavily.

TB 52:35

I think just because everything that was going on in my family, I fully anticipate picking it back up. But I think anybody who's been lurking in my tweets might notice, man, Tamika, it hasn't been tweeting as much. And I think I've just really been trying to be present with my family and check in on my own mental health. And then I completely got rid of Facebook, because all the privacy stuff. I mean, the real reason I want to say that I was on this higher level of privacy, I like opened up a virus that I realized it was going to send to all my friends and I couldn't, I couldn't deal with it in that moment. And so, I was just like, oh, I'm

just going to close down Facebook. And I actually saw the positive impact it had on my mental health to not be on it all the time. And so, I'm trying to be just a Twitter person, and be thoughtful about how much of it I'm consuming.

CB 53:25

Please tell me how CDC/Active People Healthy Nation can help communicate about equitable active living.

TB 53:39

I think that one of the things that I would say whether it's you, or whether it's you know, somebody who's in a strip mall with a yoga class, I would love to see an investment in the fact that there are folks in our community who are already talking about healthy, active living, there already doctors that predominantly serve our communities, and like, went to med school with the sole hope. And I think that sometimes, government agencies like to sit in their very official buildings. And we have a perfect campaign a perfect idea. And often what happens is it comes out and people find it really confusing. And only then do they talk to people and see why it's confusing. And so, I think often, instead of trying to create something from New invest resources in seeing who's in communities and who's doing things well now, and how is that working? And how can you amplify and support and expand that message rather than creating something new? All right.

CB 54:40

That concludes our piece. Thank you.

Transcript: Veronica Davis, PE

Friday, June 18, 2021, 11:00AM

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, black, streets, space, communities, transportation, bike, pandemic, houston, cdc, home, safety, neighborhood, husband, talk, perception, group, world, walk, zoning

SPEAKERS

CB, VD

As part of SOPHE's cooperative agreement with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPAO), we will be conducting qualitative interviews to better understand Black/African American expert discussions around the historical context and consequences of inequities that have discouraged physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities (e.g., limited access to safe and accessible routes and/or destinations, feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, etc.). We would like to better understand the barriers, racial inequities, and facilitators related to activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations (routes to destinations) that influence physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities.

CB 00:02

You have been identified as an expert transportation and/or land use Thought Leader. We are interested in interviewing you to learn more about your experience and perspective. My name is Charles T. Brown, Adjunct professor at Rutgers University and founder of Equitable Cities. This interview will take no more than one hour. This information will be used to identify opportunities for CDC to embed equitable access to physical activity opportunities for Black communities into its activity friendly routes to everyday destinations strategy. In order to get started here, I need your name and your verbal and written permission to record.

VD 01:27

My name is Veronica, middle initial, O, last name Davis, you have my verbal permission to record.

CB 01:33

Please tell me why you chose this particular career path or journey.

VD 02:47

I feel like this career path found me, my dad was a civil engineer, an urban planner, and worked in the transportation field. And then my mom also worked for New York City Transit Authority. So I just grew up in the transportation field. And what I ended up I actually thought I was going to do a completely different career path, but I ended up doing civil engineering. And I originally thought I was going to do structures, but it's one of those I kept making other decisions and ended up back in this space. So when I was a junior in college, I had a Professor William Sermons, that was my introduction to transportation planning course. And that is when I was like, Oh, this is actually kind of cool. This is what I want to do. And that was

like my first introduction to transportation planning. And then as I moved through my career started at the federal government level, doing transportation work in the private sector, I worked for local government, and then had an opportunity to work for myself. And part of the reason why I started my own company was, I felt like there's a disconnect between the infrastructure we build, and the communities that we allegedly build this infrastructure for. And so starting a company to be able to just bridge that, no pun intended, but bridge that gap. And so then, when I sold my company, I knew I wanted to be, I knew I wanted to run a Department of Transportation. So that's how I ended up here in the city of Houston.

CB 04:24

Please describe your thoughts and feelings related to identifying as Black or African American within a historically white dominated field or space.

VD 04:47

I'll even take it a little bit step further, because coming from civil engineering, when I graduated in 2001, from Maryland, and I believe I was only I might have been the only one of two women, and I graduated in civil engineering and transportation. But even out of the 30 syllabus, that graduated from transportation, I think only like five or six of us were women. And then same with Cornell, I was only one of two black grad students in the planning department. And then on from a Master of Engineering, I was one of two black people, and I was one of five women. So my entire career, I have always been one of the few, one of the far, one of the in between. I think one of the challenges of being one of the few is that you're constantly having to represent all of the black community. Because I think that when you look at all communities you have people who are who grew up rich, all communities that people grew up poor and everything in between. But when the space is dominated by white people, you get that variation, right, and you get the perspective of someone who grew up in a rural area, and someone who grew up in an urban area, within the white space. But within the black space, when you're one of two, you have to represent all of blackness. And it becomes a challenge because I can have an understanding of growing up in the hood, let's say, I didn't grow up in the hood. Like I can read about it, I know about it intellectually, no matter how much I listen and hear, that's not my world, and has never been my world. But I'm still having to sit and represent all of that world. And so it becomes stressful. there's a really great book written by Radical Women of Color, called This Bridge Called my Back. And so it talks about how I'm constantly particularly as a black woman, you're constantly a bridge to all of these worlds. And you're not necessarily part of all the worlds that you're bridging. So it says challenging, but I will say in the space that I sit here, I recognize the power of being the first black woman to sit in this seat, really the first woman to sit in this position, and the first black woman to sit in this position. And I understand what I mean, to my staff, who are largely, my staff is mostly black majority black, and Latinos by the next biggest group for my crews. And I know what that represents to them. And I know the ecosystem that I work in, and unfortunately, when you've had decades of an ecosystem developed by white people, there's a lot that gets missed. And so as a city, there's barriers that exists because no one stopped to think about the person making \$15 an hour who's a semi-skilled labor or no one stopped to think about the person making \$20 an hour as an equipment worker, but they're out in the heat in the in these conditions. And so for me, it's okay, but my time in this seat, how can I change the ecosystem, such that we can just truly serve all of Houstonians, in addition to the Houstonians that work for me, and that show up every day.

CB 08:31

Please describe how, if any, the pandemic has affected your physical activity opportunities or your views on being physically active in general.

VD 08:59

I mean, for me, we've spent way more time out, I'm an outside person anyway. But with the pandemic, we spent way more time outside when we were living in DC, exploring parts of DC that I never explored, like I'd never been to the Arboretum, and others but it was being outside and exploring different places, specifically with my family, and then moving to a completely new city. I think I have exhausted hitting all the parks. And so we're constantly hitting parks and going and exploring new neighborhoods as we also learn the city. So I definitely have increased my outside physical activity because of the pandemic.

CB 09:44

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements: 15 minutes cities?

VD 09:55

15 minutes cities are typically areas where we have left out Black and Brown communities.

CB 10:03

Calm streets, slow streets, safe streets, open streets, and play streets, any thoughts on any of those?

VD 10:16

I will say my thoughts now sitting in this position are a lot different than I had, being a consultant. When I think now of all these types of streets, I think one, it's interesting in that for some communities, we had these. So when I think about my own neighborhood, and in DC, you know, we had a slow street, we had safe streets, our kids, the kids, my neighbors, one of the reasons I love my block so much is the kids played in the middle of the street. And so to me, that is kind of like, we've been doing it right, like you go to, black communities, or you go to even Latin communities, whether it's, the Bronx or others, like, we've been in the streets, we've been playing music in the streets. I think the challenge is when we did it, it was like, Oh, no, that's a no, no, like, you can't when I look at certain things, and I know, I'm comparing apples to apples and communities, but we look at one community that does the slow street, and they have music blasting, and everyone's involved and will say, No, that is you're ruining the community, and it's too loud. But then I look at other communities where they've taken these slow street safe streets approaches, and they've done porch concerts, to which it's music, but it's acceptable. And so I think it's just been very interesting of this dynamic of, depending on who does it determines whether it's acceptable or not, or if the government does, it's acceptable. But if we organically do it, it's not. But on this other side, when I think about the pandemic as a whole, and I think about, safe streets. I have 700 people on the operation side, and they've been here every day during the pandemic, and no one's noticed, they've been out filling potholes, they've been out taking care of communities, they've been out making the streets safe. But they've been the ignore part of this entire part of the pandemic, we've uplifted, medical workers, and I'm not discounting them but we've put our arms around people in the restaurant industry. But there are, between us and even Houston water, people that have showed up every day, had to wear masks have lost

colleagues because of COVID. But they showed up every day, in order to make sure the streets were safe for everyone. And that is a group of people that have have been ignored.

CB 13:00

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements:
Complete streets?

VD 13:28

Safety, I think partly if we're truly making complete streets, it's really about we're removing space for motor vehicles to make space for other people who need to move through the corridor. And with that, it creates a safer environment for everybody.

CB 13:54

Vision Zero?

VD 13:28

Vision Zero. A campaign. I say it because there have been a lot of Vision Zeros. I've worked on our vision zero plans, put a lot of effort and energy and but even with all of that effort and energy, there's no push, right? Because we can crunch numbers by way till one day. We know where the unsafe streets are, however, that money is not getting to those unsafe streets. And the savvy ones have said, Oh, well, Vision Zero, you need to fix my street. And it's like, could every street be safer? Absolutely. But we're still not putting the investment where the need is. In Houston we are , the mayor has made it very clear. And so we've identified the high energy your network, and we are actually going out and actively putting our resources to work in the high injury network which typically have all Any city overlap with black and brown communities. But there hasn't been the commitment there for other cities, just nationwide

CB 15:11

Comprehensive or master planning?

VD 15:17

Old ideas that we're going to take into the future.

CB 15:24

Safe Routes to School

VD 15:35

Systemic racism. And I say that because I know, I know, that's like a big thing. When we look at kids get into school, we have underfunded, neighborhood schools so much that kids can't even get to the school that's in their neighborhood. We're busing them all over the place. And I think that's a there's a that's just a systemic issue around education.

CB 16:04

Single family zoning?

VD 16:09

Maybe? I say that because I think when we think of when, when people think of single-family zoning, we assume it's a 3000, 2000 square foot, single family home on a lot with a front yard and a backyard and two car garage. And ultimately, that is what we build. It takes a lot of land, which will reduce the amount of land available and increases the costs. But interestingly enough, in Houston, there's a lot of single family detached homes, but they're vertical. And so a lot that may have one big house in in New Jersey, we'll have six tall houses here in Houston. And they're not connected to they're not townhomes. They are single family detached and it creates a community where it I think it's what helps stabilize the housing prices here. It helps to stabilize the housing because I can be a moderately income family, and I can live in a desirable 15-minute neighborhood, because there is a vertical 22,000 plus square foot home that exists that I can afford in this neighborhood.

CB 17:57

Inclusionary zoning?

VD 18:02

Inclusionary zoning, a waste of time. We have it, we don't do it. It's, and honestly, and it's interesting. And I'll say that I think being in this in Houston has changed my perspective on a lot of things. I think people give Houston a hard time about the lack of zoning. And there are some strange things that happen. But I can also say being here. Not perfectly. But by not having zoning, Houston has been able to create everything that we've been trying to do with zoning itself. And I'm not saying that we should just throw zoning away, but I think there is there's a little something to it.

CB 17:57

ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units)?

VD 17:57

Opportunity. I think that it does open up opportunities for different housing types. And for people to be able to live more affordably.

CB 19:10

Please tell me how you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement and the Black Lives Matter organization.

VD 19:53

Black Lives Matter. I think that what it has done In a very short amount of time, largely because of social media, which just changed a lot of things from when I was growing up, it has put a huge spotlight on policing of black bodies in a way that it's nothing new. These things existed when I was younger. Even as I talk about the great state of New Jersey, I knew at 17 to never have more than two of my black male friends in the car with me, period. And I was very much conscious of that. And there's pictures of the former governor Whitman jokingly patting down these black perpetrators. So I had a very much level of awareness at 17, in a way that with social media, with the fact that anybody has a phone, and I can bear witness to what's going on, I think all of those things have helped to really elevate and open up the

consciousness. For some people. Now, there's some people who are going to deny but doesn't matter, they're going to always deny, and I think part of that denial is

VD 21:20

just always going to happen. And I won't get into them. But I think it did open up the eyes. For a lot of people. I think one of the challenges of the movement as a whole is people's inability, of nuclear, white, non-black people, non-black people, an ability to see past the current issue. So great, my eyes are waking and for non-black people, they could say, well, this policing stuff is an issue and like, that's what I want to tackle. But if you're saying that Black Lives Matter, you're saying that my existence matters. And if my existence matters, then it forces you to evaluate, and change and elevate all of your interactions with me. And I think that's the piece that is missing. you had people putting out Black Lives Matter statements after George Floyd. And it's like, okay, but let me see your board. Because we clearly don't matter. Right? We are not in the leadership of your company. We're not on the leadership of your advisory board, you're hiring us, but we're not at the leadership levels within your organization, regardless of what it is, whether it's a firm, whether it's a city, we're not there. So how can you say that we matter? You don't even see us? And even just all the little micro aggressions like you just don't see us. And so I think that's kind of the hard part is people can pat themselves on the back, I did a great thing, I went to this protest, because we need to defund the police. But it's bigger than that. And I think that's what's missing. And I think, also, even with the defunding the police, it's, oh, we need to have social services around low-income people, so they don't commit crimes. And it's like, it's part of it. But I know that I've said this before on a panel that we did together of, I've been black my whole life. I never been poor in my life, like maybe like a year when I was in grad school that was poor, but I wasn't, I wasn't really poor, but I still had parents that would take care of me. And so you have someone like me of, even as we elevate black communities, you're still missing the point, you have colleagues that you work with every day that you might that you have micro aggressions against every day. And I think that's what people miss. So it's like, I can pat myself on the back, because I am dismantling the system. But you're still in the system. It's like I talked about earlier. I exist in this ecosystem. But I have a level of awareness and consciousness that this ecosystem sucks, and it needs to be fixed. Because a lot of people who operate in ecosystems that just go on about their merry day, because that's the ecosystem.

CB 24:18

Please explain how the BLM movement has impacted either your attitudes, perceptions or vision for equitable and inclusive active living in this country. Then, please explain if there are other organizations beside BLM that have influenced your attitudes, perceptions or views on active living.

VD 24:38

So, the movement itself, I don't know that really changed anything. It's the reporting and the reaction to the movement that is changed my perception. The fact that people can peacefully walk down the street in protests, but have violence acted upon them? by someone in a vehicle, right? And now you have these laws that I can legally strike someone with my car there in the middle of the street. And we're like, oh, no, that's perfectly fine. I mean, if they get murdered, they get murdered. So there's that or people who are, who are allegedly supposed to be peacekeepers are disturbing the peace. And so what it has done for me it has it has shined a light on the vulnerability of black bodies as we exist in public space, not that I wasn't aware. So I'm not going to say it wasn't awareness. But it's just like, our sheer existence in public space

creates fear. and then it's like, so how do you then go and say, You should take a walk, Charles, walking is great for you. 30 minutes of walking a day can lower your cholesterol. But 30 minutes of walking a day in your neighborhood, could lead to your death, just from your mere, I'm just you're just merely existing in the public space. And so, I think that as we talk about active living and all these things, we can't be myopic around that of, Oh, it's just about walking, it's just about riding your bicycle. No, we talk about safety, then you need to be able to safely do it. But you can't, because all it takes is one phone call if someone say I'm scared, and it could lead to your arrest or your death. And I think Black Lives Matters movement has helped make that connection in the transportation world.

CB 26:53

Please tell me about your views on law enforcement in the context of active living, and then please explain how policing might impact your perception of safety and desire to be active outdoors.

VD 27:24

I don't necessarily worry about my personal statement too much. But I do think it, it changes as we do ordinances of people can't bike on the sidewalk. And then I think, well, who's biking on the sidewalk? And if they're biking on the sidewalk, how are we enforcing it? And why does that really matter? what is the problem with someone someone's biking on the sidewalk? Because they don't feel safe biking on our street? So how do we fix our street and I think that part of the issue, as we talked about Vision Zero earlier, is we took a European model. And we brought it to the United States context. And unfortunately, our context is we are all about law and order. That is that is just the, the American way we are about law and order. And so when you look at the Swedes, their vision zero was we need to fix the design, we need to do everything possible to fix the design to make it safer. So Charles makes a mistake and walks out in the street. Even if he gets a bump, he's going to go back home, and his family will get to enjoy him for dinner. Right? The American context is, oh, our streets are really unsafe, you know what enforcement, because heaven forbid, we actually fix the real problem, which is the streets are unsafe. And we lean so heavily on enforcement. And so you see it in New York City, where delivery by people on delivery bikes are being clothesline by the police. But it's like for what, what is the safety issue that's being created? And so I think that under the guise of safety, it's like, oh, well, I'm tackling you off your bicycle because they're trying to keep you safe. and I think that it's just like we're missing the point. And I think it's easier for it's easy for the politicians because going into a neighborhood and saying we're going to take out two lanes because we're going to put in a protected bike lane is very hard. And politicians don't want to do the hard things they want to get reelected.

CB 29:37

Please describe the emotions you feel when walking, bicycling, or hopping on an e-scooter in your community.

VD 29:56

I feel safe in my neighborhood. Mainly cause I know my neighbor's. But other than the other raccoons, we have a family of like six raccoons that live in the sewer. So I don't like going out at night. But I do generally feel safe in my in my neighborhood, and I enjoy being outside we walk, we walk a lot.

CB 30:21

Please explain how your experiences might differ from your white counterparts.

VD 30:34

I mean, I think for me, well, so I'll say this, my husband is ethnically ambiguous. And so I think having an ethnically ambiguous husband and a whatever looking child, it probably changes my perception of safety versus if my husband was blackity, black, and my child was chocolate, I do want to contextualize that I would have a different perception of safety. And different concern for safety. Because of a spouse.

VD 31:18

They don't provide me protection, but it changes everyone's perspective of me as I walked down the street. I think it's wrong, right, but I can't control anyone else's perception of safety. But like, let's say as an example, if I walked by, if I alone walk by someone, they may be uncomfortable. If I walk by with a child, regardless of what my child looks like, generally, a woman with a child, people are going to feel safe. And people will talk to me, because children period represents safety, if your wife and your kids were just walking, because they're small, people will feel very comfortable, there's going to be no level of discomfort, depending on the age of the child. But small children in general, that isn't always be the kind of perception. And then you add in a man to the equation, I think just I think my husband, he's short, and then he's ethnically ambiguous. And so I think it's a different level of comfort than if he was six feet and black. And I think it's just the perception of comfort of others. And I'm very conscious of it, and I think for white people, they operate in the space different they don't, their discomfort tends to be, if they are going to be uncomfortable, it's when they are the minority, but that very rarely happens to them. They operate through life where everyone looks like them. So it's just a different level of operation. Whereas like when you're black, unless you were in a black community, you're always going to stick out. And so you're always conscious of that.

33:23

Some of them

CB 33:24

There is a level of comfort of feeling safe around you and your family due to the fact that your husband isn't a darker hue, and much larger in appearance. So if your husband's skin tone match that of yours or mine, people would feel less comfortable around you?

VD 34:08

Correct And then if you remove my daughter from the equation, if it's just my husband and I Well, that's a different people will perceive that differently. I think that we talk about it within the black community. But I think colorism is a big thing. And I think that's a whole different tangent really quick, but I think that's whereas we talk about black representation, I think that's where there's this kind of desire of like, we need darker skinned black people or darker skin, Latinos to be representations. Because I do recognize even my husband, he is black, but the world doesn't perceive him as black. And so it allows him to move in the world differently. He's very conscious of it. It allows him to move in the world differently. But interestingly enough for him, it doesn't take away his fear. But I can't speak for him about us with me. But it does, it doesn't take away.

CB 36:44

Please tell me what thoughts or emotions come to mind when discussing systemic and institutional racism, particularly in the context of active living.

VD 37:03

Well, I think that when we talk about institutional and structural racism, I think that there's this, I think people would think of racism as I'm trying to hold you back. And I think that it's a strong term that makes people feel uncomfortable to the point you can't even get to the root of the root. Ultimately, what it is, is when you have majority, white people putting together a program, by default, you have centered whiteness in your recommendations, period. The same way, if you had all of black people building a program, you would center blackness, and all of it, or if you had all Latino, and I think that's where there's that push for inclusivity. Because if everybody has representation, you can get to those things. So it's a lot of culturally insensitive things that occur, right? So like, even if you talk about active living, and you look at a brochure, we're going to put out a brochure because I want to get you walk in Charles, what is the pitch you're going to be? It's going to be a stock photo. It's almost kind of like when you look at advertisements of people eating salad, nobody smiles when they eat salad, you're eating it, because you're just like, I'm trying to get my vegetables, zero people smile, but it's always an ad of like a person and they're like carefree. And like this is the best sell they've ever had in the world. And so you end up with that, like, United Colors of Benetton diversity, I got my Asian with this. But even in the pictures, people can't see themselves Great. So you put this black woman, am supposed to see myself in her. Right? But like, Where's the thick black woman? Where's the older black woman? Where is someone who maybe is aware use a wheelchair where someone who's visually impaired it's like that representation is missing. And that's because that representation isn't at the table. And no matter how much you can read it, no matter how conscious you are, as I said earlier, even for low income, if that if that is not my world, there's always going to be my limitation to be able to accurately represent that worldview. And so I think so when you talk about the systemic racism part of it, I think it's just when you have leadership when you have people building it, and they are all white, you have centered whiteness in your programming. And so then by default, it's there's a bit that's much racism, but it's like this, almost said white supremacy but it's not that it's just you centered whiteness.

CB 39:55

Please explain your thoughts on gentrification and displacement in the context of active living. Then, please tell me what potential policy, systems or environmental changes are needed to prevent or mitigate the unintended consequences of gentrification and displacement.

VD 40:19

I mean, I think, honestly, the root issue of gentrification I think it goes back to the housing stock, when you just don't have a diversity of housing. as things change, things are going to get more expensive, it's just that is just basic economics of supply and demand. but I think some of that is people in low-income areas, people in black, brown areas, they want these things, right, they want a coffee shop, they want to be able to go to a sit-down restaurant, they want to better go to a grocery store. So it's not about wanting new development. But it's you put in new development. And now it's priced at a point that I don't have access to it. That's the root issue. And so some of that is homeownership programs, it is very hard even if you

take-out low-income people, if you just focus on the black people who did their four years in college, maybe a couple years in grad school, they can't get a home, right? Even if they're making six figures, they don't have the access to capital to be able to afford a home. They don't have a family member who's own their home, in the Midwest for 30 years. So they can do a reverse mortgage, to pull the money out to give it to their child, so they can go put this down payment on this home. And so, when you look at generational wealth over time, we've never had the wealth, there's even things Brookings had a had a had an article that, black educated, black college, educated people in our kind of genre, still don't have any type of wealth, we haven't made gains. And part of it is like we're trying to catch up for hundreds of years and being behind. And even when you when people say, Well, I grew up in the Midwest, and we weren't wealthy. Yeah, but your families own the same home, you three generations in on in the same home. So that's a wealth building, your parents aren't paying a mortgage. So even if their household income is 70,000 day and on the struggle bus, and so I think ultimately so even for black people that want to move into black neighborhoods, it's having that access to be able to do it. And then there's the whole without getting into the devaluation of black neighborhoods, to eat at a house. I mean, even here in Houston, there's one street, where if you were Third Ward, this house is 340,000. If you're in Southhampton, same exact house, it's built at the same exact time, this house over here is 900,000. So it's like, but that's a disparity their ward is black, South Hampton is not the same house, they're a mile apart. And so there's that wealth creation, that that homeowner who bought their house in 1990 for \$100,000, is now sitting on a \$900,000 asset, that they can pull that equity out and give to Oh, my kids, I can pay for my kids tuition. Right. Meanwhile, his black family, they might be sitting on \$100,000 an asset but it's or nothing.

CB 43:55

Please tell me what your top priorities would be if you had unlimited power and resources, particularly in the context of active living.

VD 44:18

Dedicated federal funding, for sidewalks and for bicycle infrastructure. That's number one. Number two, direct funding to cities. I think that we have misaligned philosophies with our state partners who want to build highways and spend billions to build highways, when we see that billions could be used to create better walkable neighborhoods for our residents, so that direct funding to localities so that we can actually put the investment where we need to.

CB 45:03

Please tell me specific partners you want to engage with to advance your top priorities.

VD 45:10

NACTO, National Association of City Transportation officials, and that has been a big push. Both of those have been a big push for us. I think that there's a space for the nonprofit advocacy groups like America wants to a League of American Bicyclists. I think that challenge with those groups, although they are trying, they are attempting to create diverse boards, there's still a, whiteness, of definition of this is this is the way we should do it.

CB 45:55

So you were saying what you said earlier, if I hear you correctly, that they still center whiteness?

VD 46:00

Yes. So like even in bike culture it's been interesting being in DC, where you have a bike advocacy group, largely made up of young white people who are pushing policy, right, they are the ones pushing the bike policy that's happening working with the League of American Bicyclists and they're pushing bike policy. So when I look here, you do have same thing Bike Houston, which is an organization pushing policy, the ones that have access and seats at the table. But I'm also a part of all these Facebook groups of all these bike groups. And these bike groups bike every day of a week, there's a bike group biking. And each by group has its own culture. So there's one bike group where they put on the on lights, and then they go biking. There's one group, they call themselves the illegals something, it is mostly people of Mexican descent, and then they bike. Then there's this one group where it is a woman who are kitted out, they clip in, there with clipless, pedals and all of that they're all Latina, and they and they got their little vibe going on. So there's all these little groups, right with their own culture, they got the wheelie boys, and they all different types of bikes, they all go out different nights. But it's such a rich culture, too. They don't have access to me, they don't have a seat and access to the bicycle Advisory Council. So we create bike priorities. And that is a big chunk of people who are out here biking, and have their culture, but they don't they don't have a seat at the table.

CB 47:47

Please tell me what specific actions the federal government can take to address the issues you've identified.

48:07

VD 48:09

I would say I think for the federal government, I'll say one of the things is we talk about kind of healthy living and on all those things, I think we have to reevaluate the welfare programs. Welfare is supposed to be a stop kind of like a stop gap, right? it's created an environment there's no space for me to move out of this. There's no space for me to move from this position. Because the minute I make \$1 more, I lose everything that was supporting me. And that's everything from that affordable childcare, everything from being able to have food it's like we there's this like, what do you pull yourself up by your bootstraps? And it's like, okay, but we know it's supposed to be a safety net, but it doesn't mean the minute I make \$1 more you just pulled in that there has to be an okay, but you can make a little more and a gradual decline of Okay, well, we're going to keep you at this level and then X number of months. We're going to I don't know what the answer is among an econ person, but I do see that and even access to food have, I'll have time to cook right. I work all day. Thankfully, I have a husband who works from home and so he can do dinner. But imagine if I was a single mom, so the now get my child, get home and then try to figure out dinner. Imagine I'm a single mom or whomever or single dad, a single parent and I got to work two jobs tonight. Got to go home, cook and go to another job and with snacks I can't even buy a rotisserie chicken from the grocery store that's pre prepared or greens to go with it. So I can't even though this meal is accessible to me, I can't even buy it with my food stamps. And I think that's kind of the things that we need to look at. And I think on the transportation side, we have to have funding available to cities to be able to invest. Part of my challenge, Charles is I know, I have issues, but I asked 16,000 lane miles. And I got everybody pulling on my money, and I got drainage issues. And it's like, okay, but we need to be able

to invest in the areas that need it the most. We don't have the resources for neither person nor financial resources to even begin to start scratching it the real problems.

CB 50:53

Please explain to me your strategic use of social media (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and, etc.) and other mediums (e.g., podcasts) to highlight and/or address inequities within active transportation as well as other intersecting issues. Then, please tell me how CDC/Active People Healthy Nation can help communicate about equitable active living.

VD 51:29

Two ways. So one, I think it's for me putting out information, putting out just my thoughts, putting out the things that I see, because I got thoughts and that's really, to me what Twitter is, it's a stream of consciousness, people could say, I walked down the street and I took this picture, that's a thought you can all experience what I just experienced walking down the street, and I took my picture. but lately, mostly because I don't have time to do it, like I used to be. But honestly, and I also am very cognizant of what I represent. Now. Every time I'm on Twitter, I'm going to just speak for myself, but what I've actually been using Twitter for really starting at the beginning of the maybe probably about last year, is also to listen, for me, it gives me access to voices outside of my own, and places where I need to elevate my thinking. So I follow a lot of people with different types of disabilities, neurodivergent, to physical disabilities to I got a wheelchair to I have a C pap to all these things. And it's interesting to be able to have a peek into a world that I'm not a part of and learn from that world and learning from the Deaf communities. I follow people from the deaf community, right, and learning these things and learning about things that they get offended by right or learning about things that people feel like people with disabilities don't have sex. And I was like, I don't really ever think I thought about it, but okay, I could see it, but you get a chance to see that world. And when you see that world, it gives you a chance to be different or be more conscious, I follow a bunch of people who are transgender, people who are non-binary, because again, it's all about learning, it's all about understanding. It's all about celebrating, too, and amplifying their voices. Because there's a lot of times, Charles, where you and I can get a seat at the table, but there might be a black transgender woman who's in this space, who doesn't get a seat at the table. So it's awesome, to me as an opportunity to amplify those voices. But I'm missing a lot of time to just learn. I think it's just for all for all peoples elevating consciousness, and I think for CDC, connecting with all people and so yes, cool, connect with people like myself, like rRichard like to Tamika. But there's also all of these other beautiful voices that are out there that have a space like there's one person, I'm nonbinary he's in planning, well, now they are in planning, they love to dance, and I love their Instagram, and it's like the greatest Instagram ever. They are very great at the hula. And but it's so refreshing to see someone bring their culture and their art and who they are into this urban planning space. And so I think how CDC can use social media, there's pushing information out sure. But there's also taking in all this free knowledge right like this, all this free knowledge is constantly happening on Twitter, so that they can help just be different and change And evolve and grow.

CB 55:02

Building upon this you talked about how it would be advantageous to CDC and others to kind of look into these other worlds expose themselves to all the beauty that exists within them. One of the things we see least often whether it's in health or transportation, is the black cisgender male. But yet, you see, in many

ways, an acceptance of all other things, less so the black male. Speak to the importance of having cisgender heterosexual black males in this space in the importance of that.

VD 56:02

Oh, I think it's critically, that it is a group of people that are feared, just by their mere existence. And that's not a Veronica O. Davis opinion, that is a historical fact. Black cisgender men, particularly darker skin, have been murdered, have been lynched, have been arrested for their existence in space. And I think that when we're talking about safety, that needs to be centered there's Taiyeb out of Philly I'll never forget he said look, I'm a vulnerable population because if I just want to be in a park just being at a park is a threat to everyone else around and I have done nothing but just sit there and apart and read my book. And so I think it's when we talk about systemic racism it's almost like there's there has been a decade's long marketing campaign and everyone's scared of the big black Boogeyman despite the fact that crime has gone down, and all these other things, but I think that that is absolutely something that has to be centered, especially if we're talking about safety and we're talking about active transportation.

CB 57:54

Excellent. Thank you as always running good through for the interview.

Transcript: Richard Ezike, PhD.

Friday, June 18, 2021, 10:00AM

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

communities, people, active, physical activity, push, black, policies, parks, organizations, transportation, sidewalks, planning, areas, law enforcement, policing, space, advocates, challenges, neighborhood, promote

SPEAKERS

CB, RE

As part of SOPHE's cooperative agreement with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPAO), we will be conducting qualitative interviews to better understand Black/African American expert discussions around the historical context and consequences of inequities that have discouraged physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities (e.g., limited access to safe and accessible routes and/or destinations, feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, etc.). We would like to better understand the barriers, racial inequities, and facilitators related to activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations (routes to destinations) that influence physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities.

CB 00:02

You have been identified as an expert transportation and/or land use Thought Leader. We are interested in interviewing you to learn more about your experience and perspective. My name is Charles T. Brown, Adjunct professor at Rutgers University and founder of Equitable Cities. This interview will take no more than one hour. This information will be used to identify opportunities for CDC to embed equitable access to physical activity opportunities for Black communities into its activity friendly routes to everyday destinations strategy.

CB 01:43

I want to start by requesting your permission.

RE 01:55

You have my permission.

CB 03:54

Please tell me why you chose this particular career path or journey.

RE 03:54

Thank you, Charles, for the opportunity to speak on this topic that's very important to me, I would say that I chose this path, because I feel that transportation and built environment is directly related to the quality of life, and especially with black communities, who have been historically marginalized and from that have had significance or significantly been behind in many different economic and social categories

due to the historical disenfranchisement. I'm using my expertise and my skills to push this conversation forward, to help to provide insights and thoughts on ways to mitigate the disenfranchised and moving this forward is something that I feel very passionate about. Being able to directly make an impact. I think it's important to be in places where I have an opportunity to do that. This topic is one that's near and dear to my heart. And so that's why I decided to move into this space.

CB 05:07

Please describe your thoughts or feelings related to identifying as Black/African American within a historically White-dominated field or space.

RE 05:30

Personally, I would say that my experience has been eye opening, let's say being in a space that is white dominated, that stems from the how they that community have been really the dominant voice in our planning and decisions, I wouldn't say that I feel I have a unique voice to be in black, to actually provide solutions and sketches to this conversation I think being black is also given gives us, gives me a unique perspective. And I am seeing that I have a lot of that even though we're still small, there's still there's a growing number of us that are starting to lift up our voices into, say, bring up issues that are important to us, as a mobile, we plan to talk about later this interview. I will say that I feel that being black gives me a special voice to contribute to this conversation. And the more that I feel like I'm speaking up, the more that these issues are starting to come to the forefront. I see being unique as an opportunity to bring out these issues and reports. But it's also still a long way to go to really get more of a say, and I'm wanting to help and want to be part of that conversation, as well as how to get more diversity and blacker by black voices in this in this conversation in transportation and infrastructure

CB 07:01

What have been some challenges you have faced due to being black in the space?

RE 07:08

I think one of the challenges that I've faced is being recognized as a serious scholar. This hasn't happened a lot, but there are times where I maybe in some panels, or webinars that are primarily a white dominated space. That means that my voice or maybe I thought my voice isn't being considered seriously, or my comment is outside, it's not something that has happened often. But I also feel like it's those conversations that I have, and I feel that and therefore, what I have to say may not be considered as serious. And then I will also say that there are challenges when I'm actually in the field or actually in the community working in some of these really challenging spaces, especially that to reverse some of this organization discrimination, there's definitely pushback from people who have been displaced longer. And you don't want to make those transformative changes that would need to happen to ensure that all people, especially black people, have equal access to transportation and accessible visibility to So just a couple of things I have been challenged.

CB 08:28

Please describe how, if any, the pandemic has affected your physical activity opportunities or your views on being physically active in general.

RE 08:47

I would personally say that the pandemic has helped me to actually become more physically active. And I will say that I am blessed to be in an area where at least where I grew up, or where I've lived in areas that have very easy access to physical activity physical places to have that energetic physical activity like parks gems, but I do know that that's not the case for a lot of our community. And so, even knowing what I would have access to I also understand that I have a part to play in uplifting the discussions uplifting the challenges that many people may not have when it comes to physical activity. It looks nice personally for me, I've been able to take in more walks and go into the parks more than nearby to run and play sports do some physical activity. Being able to go to the gym regularly being the fact that the pandemic has kept us at home it's kind of forced me personally to go out more to exercise or do it at home and get the equipment they need to do that. I definitely am I'm in a place of privilege. And in the course, of course that has helped me to also think about how I can get the same Vantage privileges to many people who do not have, they don't have that accessibility that I have. So, it's it gets set in some ways helped me to be even become more active, because I understand that because being in a pandemic, and being at home, most of the time, physical activity, which in our past, and when we go to work, and back, we could incorporate that into our commute. That is not the case. So, it's helped me to become even more focused on a physical activity.

CB 10:40

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements:

15-minute cities?

RE 10:55

With 15 minutes cities I think two things. One, positive, and then one I would say challenge improvement. I think this really great idea to help put all our everybody's needs within a short commute, within 15 minutes. I think that's a great idea if it can be implemented. One is implementation. There's a lot of entrenched interests, a lot of entrenched rules and land use policy that kind of prevent the 15 minutes from happening. And then when we think about all 15-minute cities, who a lot of times do we discuss for 15 minutes cities for? It's really for the people who have the means and the values, it means that they get to live in areas that are 15 minutes from everything. That's not the case, for many of our community, especially the black community depending on where they live, and how is historical disfranchisement in and the policies had pushed people out to the suburbs, or even further away out, or in areas that are food deserts or don't have other amenities that aren't there. The 15-minute city is kind of a misnomer for them. And so, if you really want to think about how we get people able to get to things they need to get in a reasonable amount of time, we have to think about those land use policies that have disenfranchise a lot of people to really make the 15-minute city, not a possibility for them.

CB 12:38

Calm streets?

RE 12:42

When I think about calm streets, I think about traffic mitigating measures to speed mitigating measures, roundabouts, speed bumps, those kinds of things that help to slow down speeds on neighborhood roads,

and which is directly tied to the movement to reduce fatalities, and that are situations that cause some deaths or injuries on streets. I think though, those types of engagements, especially in the streets, where there's a high amount of fatalities due to speeding is very important. And I think it's important that cities in the Department of Planning work with neighborhoods directly, especially in black neighborhoods, where we know that the fatalities due to road to speeding are significantly higher than other communities. So, working with cities, and directly neighborhoods and neck partnerships are very important to show that if it's a road diet, or they need to slow down speeds, this is needed in that community, then that can happen. And very quickly.

CB 14:06

Slow streets, safe streets, open streets and play streets?

RE 14:14

I do think the central theme that I'm saying that I'm going to push is this engagement between the neighborhood itself and the members of that neighborhood. Whether that's a neighborhood, a community group or advocates directly having connections with the City Department of Planning to City Department of Transportation and ensuring that that connection and collaboration is a key part of the discussion. And that there's actually action is action taken to implement those slow streets, play streets to help again make neighborhoods safer, more equitable, and also more conducive to active lifestyle. out, which of course, benefits, health wise and therefore benefits everything.

CB 15:04

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mentioned the following interventions and movements.

Complete streets?

RE 15:35

So, when I think complete streets, the word that comes to me is I said the word that comes to me is incomplete. And I'll say that because I think complete streets works. I think that the premise behind it is, is the sound. But the large scale, push of the policy and implementation to the actual things are just seen in the streets is still not there. And I think that's not that's not the case with people who advocate for complete streets as for, again, kind of the entrenched interest in the Department of Planning and transportation across the country who, for whatever reason, are really pushing the paradigm as quickly as they could, again, to promote safety to more active lifestyles. So, I think the movement should continue to grow. But we need to get past those entrenched interests who are used to planning in the old ways that unfortunately, do not lead to the complete streets policies and paradigms.

CB 17:02

Vision Zero?

RE 17:22

When I think of Vision Zero, misplacement and here's why I say that. And I'm focusing on specific to Vision Zero here in the United States compared to its origins, and Europe. The premise and the focus behind it, and why we do it makes sense, zero deaths, zero fatalities on roads, makes high resistance. But here in United States, we have a major component of it, which is enforcement. And when that ties into the history of enforcement of black communities as well as around black communities. It definitely undercuts its mission. And then kind of adding to that, even with many cities who have put their plans in the last five years, we've seen across many cities increase, or at least in this nation, we've seen an increase in road debt and travel fatalities, even with reduced driving due to the pandemic. So, there's a mismatch between the push behind it to zero and what's actually happening on our streets. And trying to figure out and address that mismatch and that separation is still something that I feel cities and busier advocates are still trying to struggle to figure out.

CB 19:06

Comprehensive planning or master planning?

19:10

RE 19:13

I would say I've heard of the term I won't say I'm an expert at it.

CB 19:17

Safe Routes to School?

CB 19:26

Admirable and the reason why I say that is because in my understanding of safe route to school, I think it's such a great program, focusing on our young people being able to walk to take alternative transportation to school and other places where kids grow personally, physically and socially. And that is having a dedicated program and many people who have worked with that program, are very passionate and are pushing for policies and infrastructure development. To ensure our safe transportation, safe movement of our young people is so key. And I look continue and will continue to advocate for that program. And again, the challenge being is being implemented across all our communities and certain communities are much more forward thinking when it comes to everybody's policies and subcommittees based again, on their historical planning and infrastructure. It's a little more difficult for them. So, but I think the program is wonderful. They agreed to continue to push it. And I definitely want to congratulate and give honor to those who are in it pushing for these policies to make sure our students or young people can get to where they need to go to in a safe way.

CB 20:50

Single-Family zoning?

RE 21:01

The word I'm thinking about is adaptable, and when I mean adaptable, I think more so the idea behind a single-family zoning, especially in building more diverse, equitable and affordable cities needs to change. And, again, there's going to be entrenched interests, this society has been built on single family zoning or

receipt estates or housing policies have been built on that. But then there's opportunities for flexibility. That's probably a better word, flexibility for encouraging other rezoning especially accessory dwelling units at the US homes, if there's an economic opportunity to help build more formal housing and more housing general, we need to pursue that. And if that means shifting the zoning policies that encourage single-family houses, we need to look into that.

22:13

What about inclusionary zoning?

RE 22:16

And so, when I think of inclusionary zoning, I think the word that comes to mind is needed. Our planning history has really focused on an exclusionary zoning, and I think we need to as a planning community, as the people who are empowered to build, need to think about how to be more inclusive when it comes to zoning laws and zoning policies. We're seeing some great examples across many of our cities, think something that can again, needs to happen, and needs to be considered in future land use planning decisions. And the more we do that, the better our prospects for affordable housing for 15 minutes city for safer streets, they all play a role and haven't had people and experts who could interplay all those together to get focus on the safest be able to build a safe as possible all people, no matter what race, gender is very key.

CB 23:37

ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units)?

RE 23:42

That's necessary. And this is all about one providing more opportunities for housing, but also there's an economic benefit as well. And I think the idea of ADUS, especially if there isn't a desire for in a city shouldn't be restricted. Because certain political or certain people in the planning space, think it's bad, or it's not natural in terms of the overall play scheme. I think if there's a flexibility for it, we should look into that, and especially if people are having homes that are willing to do that, to repurpose some of their homes for ADUs and build those spaces, especially if there's a need for it. We need to pursue that 100%, we know housing is a key component of a high quality of life. We know that housing stock is very restricted these days. I mean, we see what's happening in the real estate market, and high build out cities like San Francisco. So, I think we need to pursue all options when increasing housing stock. And if ADUS is a way to do that, and there's interest in it, which thing is my understanding there isn't a place in the country, we should pursue it.

CB 25:00

Please tell me how you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement and the Black Lives Matter organization.

RE 25:18

Sure, I think when it comes to the movements, it's long overdue, the stability for young people to come together to advocate for things that people take for granted such as being safe in their communities, trusting their law enforcement and advocating for things for the black community that we haven't had the

human hasn't had due to racism and historical disenfranchisement. The movement, I think, is the implicit moniker, BLM is kind of a spur, many people to think about these issues, from the community all the way to the top in our government and corporate levels, and definitely want to see that continue. Now. The challenges are these are these entities of entities, especially those who are in power, going to come through on their commitments and the challenges that we're already we're already seeing, we're seeing, and we'll probably continue to see resistance to it. Whether it's cooperation, saying they're given money, and they do not, or respects are seen in Congress, their reticence to passing out a George Floyd policing rights bill or this push to ban critical race theory and another white washing gov or black history that's coming from one side of the political spectrum. There's going to be challenges to that, that said not a bad thing and movement, spurring those tough conversations is in finding that backwards. But continue to push through that, because that's what his that's what our history is about. I think in terms of the organization, my personal feelings are that it's done a lot of good, I will say that there are some challenges with that. I think it needs to be more centralized. The way the organization is represented is that there's no one set of leadership. I mean you have the three co-founders who kind of spurred the movement and themselves across the country, but I think a more centralized leadership structure from top down, and again, this is kind of based on how I operate and how I work, I think would really help the organization to become much more effective. And then, also needs to be more upfront and standing up for when it gets questioned, and unfortunately, a lot of stories about internal strife within various Black Lives Matter organizations across the country, and internal tension that held things up like how they operate, people are looking to find stories to discredit its leadership. And there have been stories that's been out there doing that, which again discredits the organization, and you're seeing some sort of decreased engagement that supported that of the organization itself, after George Floyd, we need to continue that moment. We need to kind of think of how it can be better organized and more effective, to not only push for policies but make this policies reality. Because right now of course, we're facing a lot of headwinds. And that's history. I mean, people who want to see black lives, kind of stay in their place, I would say, or not continue to operate and open to say we don't need to be heard or realized, it's a sad, a sad fact of American history, since its founding. The same forces that want to prevent the growth in the black community, even if by planning what they can do with themselves to prevent the policies to do that. So, it's I think the realization needs to be it's great and glad it's here, but there's definitely some improvements they can do that can really help move the mission forward.

CB 29:46

Please explain how the BLM movement has impacted either your attitudes, perceptions or vision for equitable and inclusive active living in this country. Also, please explain if there are other organizations beside BLM that have influenced your attitudes, perceptions or views on active living.

RE 30:09

I would say, in my thought, at least, my personal area. I would say the Black Lives Matter movement hasn't really much affected my view of the physical or the ports of physical activity. I think organizations like Safe Routes to School, I think of organizations that promote active living. Outdoor Afro, for example, is a very good organization, there are organizations that that focuses on getting black Ed and those from the Diaspora out into nature. In that direct focus, I think it is very key. BLM for me as we as we focus again on the historical inequities of law enforcement and plan the need for police reform, and that, to me, that

focus is very key. An organization that are particularly targeted to how do we get young black men and women or anybody who any amount of people personal deserve community that has black have access to parks and other green space, those organizations are really doing the work. And, of course, they support Black Lives Matter. And likewise, we support Dev. But I see those organizations have been much more targeted and packed in with their folk for their focus on active living act, physical activity. I think the sports leagues also are doing a really great job, I would say the NFL is like play60. Or the NBA is focus on Junior NBA, where it helps young kids to play basketball in junior leagues or leagues for young people. Those are organizations that I think are really pushing forward when it comes to physical activity for young people.

CB 32:08

Please tell me about your views on law enforcement in the context of active living.

RE 32:27

Yes, a great question. In my views, I think law enforcement is kind of a two-way street. So, on the pulse of law enforcement, it's necessary for our communities I would say that in the places that I've seen, the places where I've lived and parks in areas or green space, and there's issues usually the police are the first to respond. And many times, they're able to diffuse the issue, and really helped to maintain a safe environment with our parks. Now. This maybe the case for some areas, but for other areas, that might not be the case, law enforcement, may be actually detrimental, because people are scared to go out. And due to the fear of law enforcement , for example, Michael Brown who was walking in Ferguson , just walking, being active around heading to where he needed to go and he was, unfortunately gunned down. And so, law enforcement kind of has this interesting space where they're document incidences where interaction with police officers has resulted in unnecessary death, and therefore, cause people in certain communities have fear for going out, which again, in turns, hurts their health. And then you also see in other communities, where, especially if law enforcement has committed to being an active partner with the community, so push for community policing, for example, developing strong relationships with law enforcement and the neighborhood bank, they actually be a benefit, as again, working with neighborhoods themselves. I'm working with the people to promote safe, a safe environment for young people to play, to be active, to get to eat to go to using active transportation, active movements. So, I will say Law enforcement can be a two-way street depending on how they interact with the community. And again, the history of the interaction between them and neighborhoods themselves.

CB 35:03

Please explain how policing might impact your perception of safety and desire to be active outdoors.

RE 35:13

So, kind of similar to my previous answer, I think there could be two ways that policing can be impacted by outcome There's this idea that on the other side, if I want to be active or be out there, if when I want to be an area, I feel safe, then having a robust law enforcement, law enforcement group that prioritizes safety, that prioritizes protection of active areas is very key. And again, there's examples that show that, but there are also other examples. And unfortunately, we have seen where law enforcement again, and

based on the interaction between neighborhood, especially if it's negative, and it's not supportive, can lead to potentially not wanting to go out or being fearful of going out into the world and doing walking and biking and other activities like that. I could see where, depending on where you live, and your past interaction with law enforcement, it could be both ways. And so that raises the question is law enforcement the responsible party for ensuring active and safe activity in our communities? Are there other options or other ideas, either as neighborhood watches, for example, or volunteer safety, sponsor safety advocates who work in nice, active areas to ensure a safe environment without the ability, the ability to kill by force or something like that, like those kind of options, if they're out there, they're going to ensure that no matter what community you're in, that you could, especially young kids, young people can feel safe being active in the green space, and parks and other areas where activity is key for a long life and good health.

CB 37:43

Please describe the emotions you feel when walking, bicycling, waiting for and taking public transportation, or hopping on an e-scooter in your community.

RE 38:05

Especially in areas where those options are well maintained and accessible, I feel such a happiness I feel happiness, I feel that especially if you live in an area that has well developed sidewalks, well developed bike lanes or in a community that is that encourages biking, a robust public transportation system, it's a feeling of happiness that people can get around without a car, or be able to get around in a safe way on by using by using their legs whether to walk or bike. So, I feel I feel a sense of pride. But I also feel, again, it's kind of the there's that there are ways that two ways, like you feel happy, but you also feel disappointed in many communities, especially black community that don't have any of that they have inadequately maintained sidewalks, biking is unsafe for them, and therefore people don't do it. And also, been in areas where there's a lot of, there's a lot of areas where transit is lacking, or it takes a long time for buses to get to get to where they need to go. I feel like it's good that we have committees like this, but it's also sad that it's not something that's widespread throughout the country. And then it's also very disproportionate. All those things being at a well-developed level are predominantly white and very wealthy. And so, this is an equity of developments and infrastructure in communities across the country, and unfortunately disproportionate in the underserved community and black community, black and brown communities where this infrastructure has not developed in the case. And so, we need to do better to build up active infrastructure for these communities, it needs to be prioritized. And that, of course, means n reevaluating how we, as a country, evaluate and implement our land use policy. And that's it goes through some of that the to do that will take some toppling of the old ways of thinking.

CB 40:42

Please tell me what thoughts or emotions come to mind when discussing systemic and institutional racism, particularly in the context of active living.

RE 40:59

That's a very good question. So, for me, I think that we definitely need to be cognizant and vocal in speaking about institutionalized racism, particularly thinking about how our planning decisions, especially in the 20th century, have discouraged the development of active infrastructure in black

communities in particular and then we to acknowledge that, and we need to really address it. So, I feel that there needs to be a lot needs to be done. I feel the discussions are happening at some sort of level, but not happening at a level to promote transformational change. And that takes place. and we really as the planning community, we sit down and say, how can we how can we overcome these systemic barriers, to promote more active lifestyles? You're not going to really see a lot of progress. Unfortunately, my opinion on changes is changes are just tough, especially in the built environment where many things have decades of useful life, and planning patterns, land use patterns are established and, in a time, where the systemic racism was rampant, and then kind of taken it for the norm. So really thinking about how we can change and promote more active living, and in communities that don't have that infrastructure is going to take a lot of work, a lot of creative thinking, it's going to take me to take a concerted effort from a diverse set of stakeholders to make that happen. And that's a big challenge but can be done, if the will and the drive is there.

CB 43:12

Please explain your thoughts on gentrification and displacement, particularly in the context of active living, and tell me what potential policy, systems or environmental changes are needed to prevent or mitigate the unintended consequences of gentrification and displacement.

RE 43:40

Yeah. When I think of education, especially when it comes to active living, I kind of have an interesting take on the idea of gentrification. Gentrification versus revitalization. I think it's very important that communities that have been distressed, that have been marginalized, and have an opportunity to be redeveloped and grow, and to be monetized and safe and become safer and more robust, economically is very key. Now, in the sense, that is gentrification, but when that happens, you need to have whispered developers and the planners or helpers who are making these decisions about redevelopment, the lack of community engagement, the lack of focus on helping the people who have been there in distressed communities and for them to be the people that also reap the benefits of the growth. Right. And so, I would say that a lot of areas have been gentrified in a recent history, really high value high, desirable cities and that lack of engagement has not happened and therefore displacement has happened, whether it's an increased property taxes, whether it's developers coming in and asking people to sell their homes but doing so they don't have the knowledge of how they do say they do want to move they're not they're being underpaid, or they're being pushed out through blockbuster or things like that. And it happens across the country. I mean, in the Breonna Taylor, Louisville case, that was just a situation when that was happening. And so, we need to focus on revitalizing our communities, and therefore revitalization can help promote more active lifestyles. Now, as I mentioned, kind of earlier, in many of these areas that we develop, they have better sidewalks, they have more safer areas to buy, they build up green spaces and parks or if they have parks in there already, but they haven't been maintain, Revitalization. Again, that's kind of the invocation with the community in mind, can be a really good way. And I think it's an important way to help build more active living in our communities. But again, it has to involve the community itself. And then it has to minimize and reduce displacement. And in terms of like policies that can mitigate unfortunately, unforeseen and unintended consequences. Now you have, there's ways that I think I've discussed in terms of co-ops, and or community land trust, for example, housing land trust, to buy areas in those in those areas that are being revitalized, to make sure that people in the community have seen it or encouraging people to buy their homes and providing for us to help them with that who have been there a

long time so or maintain the lands. If they do want to sell then it's really on them to drop the asking price, not developers, or if they do want to stay, they are going to be a part of the conversation. What the development around them looks like, and who gets to benefit from that. So really, it's means really empowering the people who are in those neighborhoods more so that when development does happen, they're not pushed out. And the development around them benefits the community, the community that's already there. I don't think that's not happening enough. I think that's fortunately, that's the exception rather than the norm. And if we really want to promote more active lifestyle especially for those communities, the paradigm of what it means to gentrify needs to change. How do we revitalize really changing that conversation originated in the planning and development system around that?

CB 48:28

Please tell me what your top priorities would be if you had unlimited power and resources, particularly in the context of active living.

RE 48:42

I would say my top priorities would be one increased funding to support the development and maintenance parks and green spaces, especially in communities that have been historically neglected. In addition to that, with the funding comes increased play areas. So does that mean more basketball courts, tennis courts, more baseball fields, more outdoor exercise systems, parks where they have like a trail and you can do like pull up or then you go do like a place for push-ups, and sit ups, those kinds of things. And I think having the type of those areas, and our parks in our communities is very important, of course, that needs more funding, and more dedicated resources to those to those to those parks and green spaces. I would also focus on improving our sidewalks and crosswalks, right. The idea of being able to feel safe when you're walking no matter where you go. It's very important. And in many of our communities, especially black and brown communities, that's not the case. And so, funding to rebuild sidewalks to rather than acceptable, but I would say even exceeding acceptable. Many of these are suburban communities that are well planned have great sidewalks and lots of green space, like plant life planting communities have that, why can't we take that same mindset and put it in the communities that have been historically underinvested in? There's no reason why we can't have funding and effort, effort, but more so a commitment so that can happen. And so yeah, those are probably I say my two top priorities is increasing funding, to rebuild our parks and open space and green spaces in a way that promotes multiple styles of active activity. And then building our infrastructure, more especially sidewalks, and biking we will have protected bike lanes, particularly in our sort of marginalized communities so that everybody can feel safe walking, or biking. And by doing so, that will promote a more active lifestyle for people.

CB 51:02

Please tell me specific partners you would want to engage to advance your top priorities.

RE 51:16

In terms of specific partners, the lower departments of planning and transportation are very key and having applicants with those agencies in addition to the MSA, the regional government as well, clout in terms of those decisions within those communities, making sure they have advocates within those groups is very key. And also did, I was also included the parks and rec department as well, because they're mostly responsible for maintaining green spaces. I would also have advocates who are in the private sector and

developers who could play a role in this. So, developers who want to focus who see the intersection between redevelopment but also community revitalization. I think having a progressive developer, especially since there are ones influencing decisions with engagements with the mayors and other city leaders across the country should be a role in that. And then really forward-thinking planners who understand the historical way we've done land use policy and are willing to kind of stir the pot to change the way we develop, test the way we improve and build, focus on build environment. And really focus on again, active living, active areas that promote active activity for our communities is very key. So, I think you need to have government engagement, the private sector engagement, especially from the developer side, and the planners have their own organizations, but then also nonprofits can play spades as well. So really, the intersection of every level of engagement think is very key. So those partners in the level departments of planning, parks and rec transportation, planners and housing developers, and then nonprofits to make this a top priority. They all need to be a part of this construction.

CB 53:38

Please tell me what specific actions the federal government can take to address the issues you've identified.

RE 54:06

Sure, so I think there's a number of actions that at least the government can take. Now, you mentioned some examples at the federal level like the CDC, and they're really promoting a new, or updating their policies or best practices when it comes to active health and really pushing that forward, especially in their sort of communities and then tying that to language from organizations that could be supported by the Department of Transportation. A partnership that during the Obama administration was very powerful and very impactful was a Partnership for Sustainable Communities, the PSC which is a collaboration between HUD, HUD, EPA and DoT to promote sustainable communities and that included active living, bringing those partnerships back and collaborations, and then be able to put a funding for either grants or direct payments to local groups to focus on developing redeveloping parks and green spaces to promote active living. So, the federal government has a role to play in that. And then of course, that land use money usually gets funneled to the States, which is funding to local governments. That line of agreement across all different levels of government is very key, I would say at the local level, especially if they're able to get these funds is to actually reach in provide funding, provide resources from local departments to directly invest in those parks, directly invest in other green spaces, to invest in playgrounds to invest in basketball courts, to invest in sidewalks, these additions are usually made at the local level. So there needs to be, again, a renewed commitment from the policymakers at the local level to make this happen. And if they have the will in me to do that, they can do that. So, I think, again, I think the summary, you can get the collaboration, the partial federal level, the funding behind it, which then trickles down to the local level, and a local level officials implement that.

CB 56:22

Please explain to me your strategic use of social media (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and, etc.) and other mediums (e.g., podcasts) to highlight and/or address inequities within active transportation as well as other intersecting issues.

RE 56:44

I think social media has been absolutely critical, and really bringing these issues to light. I mean, these issues have been around for years, decades, right? And people in the space know that. Social media has kind of brought that those issues to the regular person to the everyday person who doesn't really think about these every day, but they feel it? And because of that we're seeing a lot more education about land use and about active living, and the historical connect and how restrictions to active living have been connected to land use policies and transportation development that has again targeted and focus on disenfranchising communities of color. And now that's at the forefront, because now people are using Facebook to post videos of messed up sidewalks, or videos, or pictures, like their Instagram and Twitter and show areas that have been historically neglected, it's bringing that to the forefront. And then that engages the people in the community to be more vocal and going to their local officials saying this needs to change. So, it's really brought about a new activism. And unfortunately, in light of the declining impact of local newspapers due to funding cuts, social media has kind of filled in that gap. I think it's very important that we have to have people who are advocates for active living, to use every medium necessary, especially social media, to bring these issues to the forefront and to encourage people to be more active and making sure that they see change in the community.

CB 58:34

Please tell me how CDC/Active People Healthy Nation can help communicate about equitable active living.

RE 58:48

I think the CDC can help by providing guidance to inform rural committees about the connection between healthy Living between active living and positive public health outcomes, whether that's in reduction, diabetes reduction and other respiratory illnesses, reduction in other health issues that are mitigated specifically by an active lifestyle, being at the forefront and put out guidance from its leaders and scientists that can help that little communities to make this a priority with key.

CB 59:29

Richard, thank you. Take care.

Transcript: Kristen Jefferies

Wed, 7/14 11:09AM • 1:16:49

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

black, people, feel, grew, partner, pandemic, issues, thought, moved, started, trusted, home, bike, active, places, federal, opportunities, local, piedmont triad, transportation

As part of SOPHE's cooperative agreement with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPAO), we will be conducting qualitative interviews to better understand Black/African American expert discussions around the historical context and consequences of inequities that have discouraged physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities (e.g., limited access to safe and accessible routes and/or destinations, feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, etc.). We would like to better understand the barriers, racial inequities, and facilitators related to activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations (routes to destinations) that influence physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities.

You have been identified as expert transportation and/or land use Thought Leader. We are interested in interviewing you to learn more about your experience and perspective.

CB 00:02

My name is Charles T. Brown, Adjunct Professor at Rutgers University and founder of Equitable Cities. This interview will take no more than an hour, but if we go over an hour, that's okay. This information will be used to identify opportunities for CDC to embed equitable access to physical activity opportunities for Black communities into its activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations strategy. Please identify yourself by name by title and position if you would like and state whether or not you give permission for us to record and transcribe notes from this folk school.

KJ 02:57

I am Kristin Jeffers on the founder of Kristen Jeffers media, and I do consent to be recorded and have my information used.

CB 03:12

Please tell me why you chose this particular career path or journey?

KJ 03:20

I've always been interested in how cities worked. I've noticed as a child growing up in North Carolina, that I've always been encouraged to sort of asking questions about why things are the way they are. My parents grew up in rural settings adjacent to the main cities of the Piedmont triad metro area. They grew up in the 1950s and 60s. I was born in 1985, and I grew up through the late 80s, all of the 90s, and then in the 2000s. I'm a graduate of NC State University with a communication degree and I am a graduate of UNC Greensboro with a Master of Public Affairs with a concentration in Community and Economic Development. All of that was built on being encouraged at a young age through gifted programs in the public school system in Guilford County, which employed both of my parents, my mom, as a teacher, my

father, as a maintenance worker, and someone who was active with the facilities. And so between the two of them, I got a sense of a really strong sense of place. I saw that teaching and talking about this was possible. Writing was possible. I wrote my first book at the age of six and would enter my first writing contest around the same age. UNCG at the time had a young writers conference. So in 1994, I was able to go there. At a very early age writing was implanted as a possibility. Then I also thought about why stores were leaving our sides of town, particularly the groceries, so I followed groceries to different sides of town, we had a whole shopping mall that was in a predominantly black area of Greensboro that went from farmland to Walmart in 30 years with demolitions and revisions in between and loss of businesses. And so I saw a lot of demographic change there. On the west side of town, there are homes, shopping centers that have also changed. That weird thing is that we have a shopping center on the west side of town, Friendly shopping center, that part of it used to be headquarters of Burlington industries, one of the major textile mills and was on the National Register, but it'd be outsourced in the late 90s, so similar to what happened in Detroit, outsourcing impacted us where we were a textile and furniture and tobacco processing capital and then all of a sudden, it went overseas. So I started to have classmates, friends, and students of my mom talk about all these different changes happening. So basically, it all kind of fell on me to do just start talking and telling stories and writing about what was happening. Around 2008, I also got kind of caught up in the Great Recession as a millennial and ended up moving home. Six months before moving home, I had a job, I had a nice apartment, I had a vehicle, I was able to afford things, but six months into that I was laid off, internship didn't work out. The media was having a lot of layoffs around that 2008-2009 timeframe. I said to myself, I'm like, Okay, I'm at home, I've always kind of been interested in how cities work. Let me just immerse myself in that. So I worked for a call center while learning about kind of the intricacies of the nonprofit field at the time, I had done some nonprofit work and volunteering. My first job was with a nonprofit doing program coordination, but I ultimately wanted to write, so I leveraged that and then I thought I wasn't going to write anymore. And that's what influenced me to go to graduate school. I thought I was going to be doing more planning. But ultimately, in my first semester of grad school in my Urban Policy class, I looked into my textbook, and I realized this doesn't reflect the full black experience. Yes, the US government-built housing projects ultimately became areas where most black folks would live in certain jurisdictions, especially if they were working-class or poor. But there was no mention of how that worked. Or if that worked, or if anything was going on with people in rural areas. Like my parents my grandparents, they have more knowledge of situations around heirs property, and having land to cultivate but maybe not having the wealth to maintain it, or having developers call because their land is so close to prime areas of suburban development. And so not only that, but I also wanted myself as a black woman, I had not come out as queer at all that part wasn't quite there yet, but definitely a black woman proud of herself and feminist and wanting to address representation issues. And having already had experience blogging and using social media, I took too blogs and social media, I'd already been blogging under one name waxing philosophical, but it was a lot of different things. I decided to rebrand as the Black Urbanist and bought the domain name, started on Tumblr moved to WordPress where it sits today. Facebook and Twitter Initially, the Twitter now I've had for going on 11 years it's probably my most popular platform over 11,000 people follow me there. And then I added Instagram when I didn't have my first iPhone. Of course, a lot of things still go through iOS first before they come on to Android. Then I got the iPhone when I was done with graduate school in 2012. So then I added Instagram. And then in 2015 I got the opportunity to go work in-house at Bike Walk Casey as their communications and membership manager. I also realized I needed something else to do before that I had been working in an architecture firm and things didn't work out so well and so on. I got fired from there.

And now the firm is no longer in its initial form. So I could share what firmness is. But I'll just say that a prominent architecture firm in Greensboro I was working there, I was working in marketing coordination, I was starting to get invites to go to speeches and talk about my own story. I worked briefly, for about 14 months as the communications person at the North Carolina Humanities Council, a lot of my Postgraduate School jobs ended up still being in communication, but more in nonprofit, government adjacent type fields, and then, of course, I went to the architecture firms and more in the built environment and land use world. And then between the time I was fired every time I matriculated out in Kansas City was about six months. And I had always been interested in my mom's sews as well, and as always, I've always been around fabric and fiber and yarn. And I started within 2016, I launched that arm of my business called a crisp pattern, which is evolving into thinking holistically about not only the textile history of North Carolina, but my personal history with making my own objects and just thinking about everything in that supply chain, the environmental effects, labor. And I mean, it's still a lot of it as a hobby, but a lot of it also allows me to there's a lot of lessons that I have that go back into my writings, my speakings, my ideas, my way of doing my urban planning and urban design work. Also comes to play in my fiber design. So yeah, that's the story of how the courier has come to this point. So from 2010 starting a blog, growing it around the consulting and I, I do, of course, consulting, not just writing, but I do consult and I'm a diversity consultant in a lot of different and a public affairs consultant on a lot of different sorts of

KJ 12:00

design projects, equity studies, etc. I do keynote speeches I do to social media platforms; I have a patron where I host teaching courses, and podcasting, and all those things. And on top of that, I'm also writing fabric and yarn patterns and sharing my process in sustainable and slow fashion.

CB 12:22

Please briefly describe your thoughts or feelings related to identifying as black within a historically white-dominated field or space?

KJ 13:01

Oh, dear, it's, it's tough. Because just even before this conversation, it's, I've had constant reminders. I think about as much as I love having the access to my time, the ability to generate income, it's still in that frame of, am I palatable? Am I saying the right words, and not just as a black person as someone who also is looking at alternatives to capitalism and other financial structures what can we make sure that people can do and live and thrive and be abundant? That is, black feminists and black radical thought influence a lot of that in a lot of how I show up now, of course, I am lighter complexion, I wear glasses most of the time I present feminine today, I mean, today I am in my gym clothes, but even when I go to the gym, it's like, oh, yeah, she's here. And she looks happy and working out or she's in her dresses. And look, there's this, there is this comfort level. And of course, I sound like I'm from North Carolina, and a lot of people aren't used to it. And I don't think we talked enough about regionalisms sometimes in these different study things and how, and then also thinking about population spread. That's something else. I'm looking at it my work, how I know we've talked different agencies and such I've thought about the black belt and how the concentration of black people is in the census-designated South but when you go out to say Western states, the percentages have never really been that far above 10% if they've even made 10% in certain states and certain jurisdictions but I've always grown up around black people in positions of

power. I've had distant cousins be mayors and principals. My aunt was a principal. I've had multiple cousins and aunts in the classroom as teachers, my mom was a teacher. My father, in addition to working as a maintenance person for the school system, was a licensed electrician and had his firm. So entrepreneurship was there. I have an uncle with a cleaning business. So there's all this, I know that black people can do all these different things. But when I go to work, it's like, I have to try it. Just the tenor of my voice as I feel like the suddenness of my voice, I was even on an interview, and this was another black person interviewing me. I've been solo in my business now since around 2016. So I've done things like Lyft and Uber and Instacart. And all these things to fill in the gaps between contracts between getting people to see me as somebody worthy of hiring, hiring for an adequate level, sharing what those rates are valuing that it's not just about having a person in the door, having someone where you feel comfortable and palatable, but we have to be willing to challenge and we have to be willing to make those reparations. We have to be willing to make sure that people can thrive otherwise, as we have seen with this pandemic, there are going to be continued to be disparities, and they're going to be disparities. Afterward, they're going to be trust issues. And of course, I have been not trusted. I have had been reprimanded for not using the Oxford comma and workplace situations. I've been lied on. People lied and said that I deliberately didn't turn in RFP one time I got my final Bahrain I mentioned before I got fired over not being able to find a phone number on LinkedIn, because of the way my warning letter was written. I couldn't make any small mistakes like that. So of course, in the building trades industry, the federal form, you have to fill out the form SF 330. And there's also the SF 254. But most places still require 230 actual federal projects to the 330 is the main project at this point. I think I was researching to fill out a 330. And the 330 is a very complicated form. And once again, just having these, whether it's federal or state, just having difficulty, like you have to fill out all these forms, and the website calls out or you have to go back and recount information and recount memories. And then sometimes I'm doing some journalistic interviews right now myself, and I talked to a colleague who I knew, and I know that they are brilliant at their work, they do know their stuff. It's not like it's a charity hire or hire, because they're white, but and this adds on the layer, of course, being a feminine woman and also identifying so publicly as a queer woman is so people know that they can't put the same gender pieces on me are the same performances. So a sort of that, Oh, well, I don't know if we want to deal with her. Now. I will say that I don't go through it the way my partner does, who's a little bit darker complexion. It's just hearing her witnessing what she's going through. And just, it's triggering and of course, where we are happily partnered, moving towards marriage, live together, doing things together. And so knowing that we are seen a certain way, that we're not trusted. Now she's trusted sometimes in like law enforcement and being in punitive situations she's trusted to, as she says, run the money to the bank, but not to make the same amount of money on trust that sometimes to be a spokesperson and be on the phone or to introduce somebody or people see my story. They see two parents. I do raise a lot of Southern colloquialisms. So it's that sort of down-homey kind of thing. And there's, there's this comfort level, when I'm performing as it were in keynotes and on stage, or even when people are reading my work or reading my Twitter threads, and they're like, Oh, well, I was challenged, or, oh, Kristen Jefferies said this, this must be palatable, I can, I can share this. But then on the flip side, it's like, Okay,

KB 19:28

all of us are out here, all of us are doing similar work. All of us have an approach. In some ways, maybe you could tag-team us, but why do you feel like you've when you've picked one, you've picked them all, or if you can't pay a certain amount of money, and then, of course, we can't make the money that we need to

we can't pay the rents that we need to since we're saying okay, it's okay for rent to rise with inflammation and inflation. I mean, we're in flames. And we're at dock There's because we're bearing this weight, the adrenal stress we're eating, we're eating for joy and just for nerves, I have had nerve issues diagnosed bipolar it does. My father also had that diagnosis, all these things that come from being in this box despite two degrees from prestigious state schools. And of course, this particular week, I mean, I'm a twice UNC system graduate. So there's a huge microaggression in the media to this day. And so just wondering and hoping that people understand that Yeah, there is something. That we are owed some things , we are not that far removed from not just chattel slavery, but redlining, segregation, lack of trust, lack of seeing people in certain positions, or using people who chose or had no other choice but to do corrupt things and governmental positions as a guide, or seeing our children as criminals, or if they're not learning if they're not testing a certain way, they're hopeless. So all of those things, in addition to my own experience in the white and white spaces as being this representative and having to put on a face and pretend that I don't see stuff or hear stuff, especially on days when the news is tough, especially weeks like this, or we're thinking about George Floyd and Brianna Taylor and of course, all the trans and gender non-conforming folks that we don't talk about. And of course, loving the gender non-conforming person. That's another thing. Okay. Keeping this box together, yeah, it's a box

CB 21:43

COVID-19 pandemic, please briefly describe how, if any, the pandemic has affected your physical activity opportunities or your views on being physically active in general?

KJ 21:57

So I stopped going. I've been a member of Planet Fitness off and on for the last decade, about a year or so in Greensboro and I took a long hiatus then I rejoined in Maryland when I moved there. And I've been going fairly regularly, both my partner and I go regularly, we have a gym, fitness gym, across the street from our apartment. It's very convenient. And there's one near her work, I would carpool with her in, and I would drop her off. And then I would go and do the different machines and everything. I'm a black card member. So I do the beds and everything. So I had this sort of space, but then when the pandemic hit Now, of course, they had already warned us we had signs we weren't doing what they call social fitness in yet where they were marking off machines, but they were reminding us to clean off your machines more than you would normally and that's kind of a thing now you clean the machines wiping things down. That's sort of part of the culture at Planet Fitness anyway. And so was around late February, and so we had heard that mostly it was happening in and around Chinese restaurants. Now, no, animosity never had any desire to just go and say, Oh, no, they brought this here. This is a horrible thing. How dare they do this, but I was like, Okay, well, we'll just be mindful and cautious. I remember the original SARS before obviously SARS-CoV-2 , MRSA. and some of the related types of things and we're thinking okay, well, is going on in other places, they'll have it under control here. But when it hit here, I was like, Okay, the first minute on March 10, I was in the line at an Aldi. And I come from Hurricane world. And so I treated like it was a hurricane, I was like, Okay if we're going to have to lock up in the house, I'm going to buy a bunch of food. I know a lot of that food was like comfort food. So already planning on being stationary, planning on stuff in my face, hunkering down fattening myself up just in case it would be weeks or if I got the virus, I would need some extra weight that sort of thing because I had seen pictures of people who already who had dropped weight or needed that extra weight around them. And then, of course, there were weeks , I mean, there were days I did not leave the house, days, I did not leave the bed. I had a configuration here in my

bedroom where I'm able to work on the bed. I mean, I was doing a lot of stuff and sort of just stationary. The gym itself close. Prince George's County, Maryland, where I'm at, we've had an extra layer of closings on top of everything else, but even our governor shut down gyms at five o'clock, I believe it was like a week after March 10th. When Of course the NBA shut down and Tom Hanks and Rita Wilson got it and that hit the news. So yeah, it was pretty stationary until about June. We live near National Harbor my partner's like Well, let's just go out here and try walking. So for the first time I kind of started doing some trail walking during this pandemic was in June of 2020. And we kept it up until around, I would say, October, it started to get cold. And I did not feel safe now Planet Fitness reopened with masking and social distancing. But until literally, this Monday of this week that you're interviewing me, I did not feel comfortable walking back in there, and only because I have had both vaccinations, and it's been a few weeks, and I'm still masking and even though our mask Monday ends at five o'clock, the Friday of the week of this interview, I will still probably cover myself because I also have seasonal allergies. I'm adjusting to that because I'm happy there's more air on my face now. So yeah, and the morning of this interview, I had ordered some roller skates they just came in. And so I have been to my local roller rink temple hills skating palace, where they almost closed on us because of pandemic-related economic challenges. But they're going to be around at least another year, we're very close to the Anacostia Skating Pavilion. So the plan is to can take now that it's warm again. And now that it feels safe to go to the gym, even on rainy mornings, that I wouldn't necessarily want to go out on the trail. Even when we were walking the trails on the Wilson Bridge and around National Harbor regularly. The goal is to get back into doing that together and even getting my bicycle out, but it's mostly been trail walking. And then as of this week with both vaccinations and in about three weeks post-second vaccination, going back inside masked with no more than like 20 people and generally our gym has low attendance in the weekday mornings probably until like most folks come to that particular location and Oxon Hill, Maryland around 5:30. The weekend mornings tend to be more crowded.

CB 26:54

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements? The first one is going to be around the covid 19 pandemic recent interventions and then routes to destination plans and policies, which is where we're talking about everything from complete streets to at-use or accessory dwelling units. There are at least six of these. 15 minutes cities?

KJ 27:36

There's potential but there are ways I think we need to be mindful of equity and we're not always ready for 15 minutes cities

CB 27:47

Calm streets?

KJ 27:56

Definitely up for because I like the idea of being able to have a space people can just kind of play and walk in, especially in neighborhoods, you can extend your front porch.

CB 28:13

Along those same lines, slow streets?

KJ 28:17

Yeah, the same thing, just being able to know that you don't have to worry about people like calming down, people slowing down. Personally even when I'm in a vehicle I try to stay under 25 If not, or just let the car roll. So I support but definitely with proper public engagement and warning, especially if people have to commute out because they have to go to service jobs. There's no other way for them to there's no bus service and there's not that I'm way of providing alternatives.

CB 28:50

I will assume you feel the same way for safe opening place streets as well.

KJ 28:54

Yes.

CB 28:56

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements: These are routes to destination plans and policies. The first one is complete streets?

KJ 29:08

There's a lot of possibility with complete streets. The main thing is that I see issues with public engagement and helping people understand exactly what they are, how they can help, and if they're proper wraparound interventions like public transit and being offered and parking provisions being made, especially in marginalized communities that need alternatives to Trent transportation.

CB 29:35

Vision Zero?

KJ 29:38

Also in need of some revision, definitely I like the idea that we are not we're conscious about pedestrian deaths and cyclist deaths. But if it's a means to ticket people as a means if people are using the opportunity, the funding to buy speed cameras or harass people or profile people That takes away, you're keeping some folks from dying, but you're making other criminals. And I don't like that aspect of it.

CB 30:08

Comprehensive planning or Master plan?

KJ 30:12

Is necessary. And it's necessary to educate people on what you're doing. And also make it so that zoning variances and things of that nature can't override the goals or there at least there's flexibility, but flexibility, not just for those who had the money and the funds and the will to get things changed,

CB 30:31

Safe routes to school?

KJ 30:33

Definitely necessary, definitely helping with rebuilding the fabric of allowing children to get exercise, families and community members to have a part in being part of the communities around their schools, especially where the schools are on major thoroughfares where they need help to cross streets.

CB 30:54

Single-Family zoning?

KJ 30:56

I think there is there needs to be some revision, but I think there's not enough education about exactly what's going on here. What's happening here, why we're moving away from single families, especially among communities of color, and others who make the most of the one house on the property and may even add unofficially, to that property. So yeah, explaining that single-family zoning can also allow you legally to add to your property and the single-family zoning doesn't mean the worst

CB 31:28

Inclusionary zoning?

CB 31:32

Same, especially living here in DC, obviously, we have one of the more sophisticated IC programs, people know people can take a class on it, the opportunities are there. But it's not something that's it's not like people get a mailing and say this is how this works. And I think more education needs to be done on this particular terminology. And more ways of using it besides what policy folks have thought or what funding seems to dictate.

CB 31:59

ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units)?

KJ 32:04

Definitely want more of them. We celebrate tiny houses on like the house channels and on YouTube like they're legal. They're not legal in a lot of places. And that there's a lot of families who are on single-family plans that don't, or we'll be happy to add that in that way or have that opportunity. And it's especially in places that have not built anything in a very long time. We definitely need that intervention to allow more homes and businesses to be able to be built on dwellings.

CB 32:36

Please tell me how you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement, and or the Black Lives Matter organization?

KJ 32:55

Positive, definitely necessary, definitely needed. And I'm looking forward to continuing the events, the conversation around black liberation, and our needs.

CB 33:07

Please explain how the BLM movement has impacted either your attitudes, perceptions or vision for equitable and inclusive active living in this country?

KJ 33:18

Definitely, At first, I thought there was sort of duplications I didn't realize that so many people weren't as immersed in some of these issues. As I had been, I had been introduced to some of the theories I had been practicing. If anything, it was like, okay, of course, our lives matter. We should have places to live, of course, our school should be great, of course, we should have access to fresh food. of course, we deserve to live in a world where we're not worried about being harassed, and there are alternatives to policing that can work. So that's where my thoughts are around the movement and how it's evolved in my work is that I am definitely in solidarity I want to do everything I can in planning and bringing up these issues and even saying words like abolition and alternatives to policing and stronger mental health and stronger social service revisions. So that service provision doesn't seem punitive in any form.

CB 34:12

Please explain if there are other organizations beside BLM that have influenced your attitudes, perceptions or views on active living?

KJ 34:20

Shout out to the movement for black lives. I'm part of the design as Protest Collective, BYP100. And then, of course, CNU,ULI, APA, AIA, ASLA, all the built environment, professional groups, as well as local sort of committees. One I was involved in early back in the mid 2000's where the triad let's see, I think it was it was like it was a local sort of action committee for transit for the Piedmont triad area. And then I've been privy and invited to once in and around the DC metro region. I've also been a contributing writer and editor for the Streetsblog Collective, which I mean, it's a, it's a publication, but also an organization, and my side is an affiliate. And I've also contributed and edited Greater Greater Washington, which is the Streetsblog affiliate for the DC region.

CB 35:19

Please tell me your views on law enforcement in the context of active living?

KJ 35:26

I think it is keeping a lot of people from feeling like that they're safe, the profiling, the tactics, whether or not they're like on board or not, but just the scene of a vehicle, or seeing vehicles that are somewhat obscured, having signage, certain signages saying what you shouldn't do on a particular property, it definitely makes me feel less invited. Sometimes less safe, but less invited to be in a space that makes me feel like okay, well, and I don't notice that more in the neighborhood I live in now, which is predominantly black and Latin a Latinx. Versus being in a different neighborhood in DC that's been gentrifying, and the white population is growing. Now, I still see presence. I saw speed cameras on the streets, I lived on both of them. But just that feeling that we're always under surveillance, we're always watched, we're not trusted. And as someone who deals with mental illness, sometimes very publicly, I have episodes and fits, I definitely am afraid that someone will see me and I might be out walking or I might be like punching in the air or yelling to get the change my energy and change my headspace, but I could still be seen as a threat. And of course having the partner that I have just the fear that someone could do harm to her or

having a parent who we've had the call law enforcement on them sometimes to help them calm down. And that was the solution. Thankfully, they were very, they weren't out of order. They didn't harass him now there have been times that they have taken him and put him in a cell. There have been times we've had to have been committed in the legal system. And so that that felt really bad. But other than that, those are, those are my main concerns around law enforcement, I definitely want to start seeing more of the use of violence interrupters, people, social workers versus having lights and uniformed officers constantly around to supposedly regulate the community.

CB 37:33

Please describe the emotions you feel when walking, bicycling, or hopping on an e-scooter in your community?

KJ 37:46

Depending on the neighborhood, I'm in with the quality of sidewalks, what I mentioned before and the other question, presence of law enforcement or even just whatever I'm wearing, whether if I'm wearing something that's more skin revealing something that accentuates the shape of my body, depending on what neighborhood I'm in, I may feel hostile. Where I live now there are times of the year that I mostly drive, it gets me in my car more often, it makes me less likely to use active transportation, even across the street to my gym, which I can walk to quicker than I could drive to, but I feel more comfortable. And there is space for me to drive to my gym. And then the same thing with waiting on public transportation, I have no problems with using public transportation. Even when sitting on public transportation and noticing people a little elevated or they're obviously having maybe a manic or psychotic episode. As long as they're not touching me. It's not like I feel like there's something wrong that I've chosen to do this. I don't have equilibrium to get on those scooters I've tried so I support them, but I can't stand on one very well. And with my bike, I feel like there's a lot of pressure to like, do it right as it were like, we're just now getting to the fact and acknowledging that a lot of people need electric assistance, especially up and down hills, it's just or needing to lock a bike or feeling like I got to do all this stuff. And and the equipment varies based on price. So I'm more likely to walk than to drive my vehicle or then get on a public transit vehicle and then I might use a bicycle either my own personal bicycle or like a bike share bicycle, especially if it's traditionally docked by bike share where there's a weight issue and there's no not always an electrical assist to help me with hills and being able to compete with cars as it were if I'm in the right of way and of course taking the right away which is legal in other jurisdictions that I live in.

CB 39:57

What are your concerns about traffic safety? You lead with concern about personal safety. What about traffic?

KJ 40:06

I think there are other ways, I think that there needs to be more education around the vehicle use, not just vehicle use personal vehicle use, but sometimes even transit and like commercial vehicles. I definitely support people not speeding, but then also creating roadways that don't encourage speeding or being mindful that when you make a roadway bigger, your car oftentimes picks up speed. And so it can be somewhat aggravating to feel like you can't go a certain speed. And I'm not even talking about going outrageously fast. That's not me, I think we should have speed limits, I also think people should use and

granted not everybody has the same common sense, but I think people should be mindful on where you could think you might see a person by intersections being careful with. I think signals should be recalibrated pedestrian signals should be added and recalibrated as well as regular traffic signals for turning and stopping and being mindful of the actual flow of traffic of all kinds through the intersection. So I think there's a lot of improvements to be had and signals in street furniture and sidewalks and even in just building certain roads at certain widths, and then expecting certain speeds to be there, which is just not as reasonable.

CB 41:42

Please explain how your experiences might differ from your White counterparts.

KJ 41:51

Depending on what I'm wearing, depending on the time of the day, depending on just where I'm at, I, I feel like and this is more of kind of like, within black people, I feel like male-bodied individuals or male presenting individuals of certain types may be more empowered to say things to me that they wouldn't say to white individuals, because that would cause them more trouble. I feel like they feel more empowered to say this than I want. They know I wouldn't necessarily run and tell on them. If they get hurt. If they get a cost it is not because it'll be anything that I'm saying. And then I don't I think complexion-wise as well as sort of I'm usually either in gym clothes or I'm wearing like some sort of like floor or very high feminine clothing. People will see me people will stop they I don't see them running over me. Now of course on a bicycle, if I'm going too slow that I do feel less safe, especially if I'm wearing street clothing. And I'm not wearing the jerseys and everything so I feel more unsafe on a gender-based level in black communities, because I think that people are afraid to say certain things to white individuals that they would they're happy to say to me because they assumed the benefit of the doubt.

CB 43:19

No, I've actually heard some of my wife's sisters saying the same thing. They would say they're more afraid of white men than black men.

Please tell me what thoughts or emotions come to mind when discussing systemic and institutional racism, particularly in the context of active living?

KJ 43:46

I think we are not talking about enough and I've often gotten pushback on my social media channels, even in speeches and workshops. Yes, you personally may not intend to be racist. You might be retweeting me, recommended me for opportunities, you may be a fan of the things that I say they may make you feel empowered, and that you can latch on to the statement. But are you still working? Would you give up your position especially if you're in a federally funded or if you're like an elected official say you ran on a platform of smart growth and complete streets and ADUs and universal income or paying service workers \$15 an hour something that's very much linked towards reparations even would you make that stand and would you be willing to lose your position to make that stand especially if you're a white individual of wealth or the ability to maintain wealth or be assumed to be a person of wealth that institutional aspect and then sometimes, I noticed it is mostly systemic racism, but I do see systemic sexism and other systemic elements within black communities, with other communities of color within

gender communities within the LGBTQ umbrella within, even within classes, like perceptions of what someone's wearing, or how someone talks and well, who, what, what self they brought? And of course, a lot of that especially the performance of a certain way someone carries themselves or performance in the academic sense has something to do with institutional and systemic racism, absolutely think it's real, absolute think is a thing, critical race theory is real. It's very heartbreaking to see my home state tried to deny that teaching and that insight to young people and even people at the collegiate level.

CB 45:50

I'm curious to why you felt it was important to talk about the other isms in the context of institutional system racism? Any concerns that you would be normalizing it by making that statement?

KJ 46:11

Because there's still that intersectionality and intersectionality still plays a part. Kimberly Crenshaw when she talked about it, it was at a legal but of course, she was building on theories from Audrey Lorde, and many others who had lived through being black feminine women who were in relationships or openly loving women, or black poor women are women from Caribbean islands, or who are you can tell that they have local accents or speak local languages on the African continent up today, versus people say with either a southern accent or a Chicago accent, or even the West Coast accent or even Canadian, like their different local accents. And this perception that someone is better, someone's a better employee. When you line up black people that sound differently and sound a certain way. Or if a black person dresses up more often than not or purse is perceived the dress up more often than not. And yes, colorism and then often, I've had black employees tone police me and tell me how to say things. A lot of people encouraged me because I don't look gay to not say anything about that. So that's why obviously, I think racism is part of it. But then those intersections come together and how we all experience our race, in the bodies that we're in, from the places that we're from, with the class trappings educational backgrounds, even just like levels of employment and levels of management or our consulting, etc., that we go through

CB 47:58

Please explain your thoughts on gentrification and displacement, particularly in the context of active living?

KJ 48:08

It hurts me because of gentrification and its requisite displacement, a lot of people want people to be more active, like, I'm sure someone will read this and say, Oh, my gosh, she drives to the gym. How is that? But if you can't afford to live where you can, at this moment in time, there's nowhere in America where you can afford a two-bedroom apartment, Nobody working a service job can afford a two-bedroom apartment. So you have to go further out. So already, that puts you in apartment buildings or even in-home places. Or maybe you have like a tiny house on a plot of land. So you've got to use a vehicle. My grandmother used to talk about taking a bus on one of the county routes in Alamance County, North Carolina to Burlington, which was the closest major town, but that was in the 40s and 50s. Alamance County just brought back municipal buses just in the last five to 10 years. For a long time. There were no municipal buses. And part of it was that they definitely admitted that they didn't want black people. Honest county is of course kind of known at the moment. It's been in the news a lot for having issues around immigration enforcement and terrorizing people, black and brown people going to vote. So it's

kind of known and has always been known as one of those counties where this happens. And so people might tell me, for example, oh, well, if and I'm using Greensboro as an example because people kind of know with DC that there's this expectation, but still, there are people here in DC that deserve to live somewhere, especially if they're serving. There are restaurant workers. They're low-level government contractors on the hill there cleaning up there. They work for the bids and they're cleaning the streets. But if they have to come in, so many people commute from Baltimore, some people commute from Woodbridge, Virginia. It's also happening in our smaller metros and micropolitan as well somebody like if I moved home, I said, Okay, well, this is different. I didn't expect to pay \$200,000 for a house in Greensboro. Somebody might tell me, Well this is a nice neighborhood and Alamance County actually have cousins who did move into elements, because it was a little cheaper than Greensboro. But a lot of things happening here. One, there are black families, but their traditional nuclear, black family, husband, wife, child, nobody is trans or gender non-conforming. That's not the case with me and my partner. Both of them work sort of traditional jobs. Sometimes people get weirded out about you saying that, hey, I bought this house, but I work at x place and it's like a service place. And people get into these whole ideas of who can afford what, and with active living it's like, Okay, if you're having to move somewhere where they, the developer decided that you didn't need to have a silo, but then you're shamed for walking in the street. Of course, the streets and a lot of these newer developments are very why you could throw it bit cars three deep, you could create your road diet, as it were. But people are shamed for not thinking to do the road diet, people are shamed for walking in the street, people are shamed for not walking with enough clothing on so it's like people want no, of course, we're shamed for our size, if we can't get out and walk because we don't feel safe are welcome to do so. And the neighborhoods that were being pushed to were never built for us to inhabit are built for streetlights and habit. There are not even front porches. Now, granted, that's more of a southern thing. But that's something that does create community and a lot of architectural schools of thought have brought back front, front porches and like doors that have patios on the front of the home to promote community and neighbors knowing each other and people walk into them from houses and children playing with toys and biking, but we're not. We're discouraged. And that's in addition to just not wanting to pay, even if it is 30% of what I bring in. But why would I want to pay half of what I'm bringing into the property I will never have full possession of and then why would people expect me to be able to do the same active living things if it's just not provided in this new neighborhood that I've been that I can afford to be in? And of course, yes, I'm very passionate, very disappointed, very sad. And it hurts my heart, especially having done this professionally for 11 years and feeling like there's no answer to this question. Or at least the answers are so much farther away.

CB 52:58

Please tell me what your top priorities would be if you indeed had unlimited power and resources, particularly in the context of active living?

KJ 53:14

So basically, what I would do when I worked at Bike Walk Casey, have one of the first things that they did when they were established a decade ago was to create programs to teach children how to ride bikes, and how to be good pedestrians and how to be aware of the road. I think every bicycle advocacy, some of our bike stores, some of our planning department school systems, I think a program like that incorporated into their physical education will be a good place to start with teaching and teaching traffic safety that's not so geared towards Okay, law enforcement does traffic safety, but more of Okay, this is what a

neighbor should look like, especially in the minds of eliminating domestic violence, eliminating trust issues amongst adults and children and communities, being able to have information and then I think we need to be mailing a lot more information saying like glossy magazines or running more social media ads, I think we need to leverage major celebrities, especially on internet sites to talk about the fact that they run and bike. I just ordered these roller skates and so people just really started roller skate and they were sharing their information on Reddit and Tik-tok and it looks fun. Not shaming people, or at least making clothing that's more like flexible like you can ride a bike in it, or some people are staff that major commuting centers that can help people with fare gates, they can help people get on a transit vehicle. They can help people ride around. And especially when you will have communities instead of hiring, not paying people enough so that it attracts people who had the means to take like an internship job or job at our advocacy nonprofit but paying much like some places are now paying people that are community members a living wage. And of course, I'll be frank to say which community members I mean, like, if it's a black, predominately black community, a predominantly poor community, predominantly Latin, a community, a predominantly Asian community. Hiring those folks, especially those who've been looking for jobs, people returning to the workforce are returning citizens, and giving them the opportunity to be these community leaders partnering with existing violence interruption interventions, giving more resources to safe homes, especially safe homes for homeless, LGBTQ youth, women and people who are fleeing instances of intimate partner violence. And honestly, I think we need to start thinking about universal basic income for everyone because that will at least give people, they won't be commuting, but A lot of people won't be competing, people may consider doing active, active things, they might give that money to a nearby gym or a rec center, or buy things like these skates or basketball hoops, or just things that allow people to get out and be active and be part of the community and build up joy. And being able to do that. And there might be fewer opportunities for people to be argumentative or like more opportunities for people to find things to do together or things like farming local community farms, and people keeping up community farms and growing enough food for communities. Also, fibers, there are so many fibers that can be grown as well. And I am looking forward to a future where I can assist people with learning how to create clothing and create clothing from fibers that they have in their own. In their own spaces are processing raw fibers, just like we've got a foodie revolution. I want to see a fiber revolution as well, like a clothing fiber, not just obviously we need Wi-Fi and everything as well. So a lot of these phone apps, the fitness apps, all of that 5g, all of that being able to have that instead of people going into throttle and 3g, 5g Wireless, everybody can be LinkedIn. And they can they have the option to turn off the phone and when we talk through privacy and we're not using those that information to proceed people from going outside and feeling like they can go outside or even just sit in their house with the stuff online.

CB 57:49

Please tell me specific partnerships or specific partners you would want to engage with to advance your top priorities?

KJ 58:04

Definitely different federal agencies as appropriate. I would like to have what is the League of Bicyclists really, and People for Bikes and then all the different advocacy groups coming together and having a guaranteed federal funding pot or state funding pot for cyclists education at all levels, as well as like education around ABA compliance. Everything from everybody learning ASL or providing different

mobility and disability accommodation. So definitely a rebuilt federal alliance with advocacy groups and transit, labor around transit as well because I've been talking with a lot of people, and they say, or our labor agreements say that they can't do this or that. So having a relationship with labor unions, advocacy groups, planning, and recreation departments on all different levels. I like to see, this isn't necessarily me doing like advancing but having especially maybe after the next census evaluating if certain jurisdictions need to exist like we have zip codes, evaluating our zip codes, re-evaluating our census tracts, helping towns, especially that some towns incorporated because they wanted to keep people out, but now they realize they need to be rejoined back into a different jurisdiction. And I like to see metro areas, especially the ones that cross state lines, have more parks be able to do more with themselves like we saw that kind of ad hoc with COVID-19. Where Kansas City region everybody, all the surrounding counties agree to go on mass but at the same time, here in DC, we've all kind of been Having similar mask mandate, similar restrictions around quarantining. And so using that same partnership energy, and then of course, just continued federal funding around things like kind of reforming agriculture extension, because I know that covers a lot of the food and fiber stuff, maybe new departments and USDA, or new alliances across USDA and the Department of Labor and transportation to reflect that we have created these new ways of doing things, the internet, as well as marginalized communities have come up with different ways. And some things are just pretty simple. Of course, I understand the history of making a large bureaucracy. I'm not the anti-big government, especially if it's helping people. But say, like more people can get federal grants or have federal support health insurance or clinics or just taking the fact that we have generated like there are businesses here that generate a lot of income, actually charging them their taxes and funneling those funds back into existing federal programs and new federal programs that are mindful of disparities, the history of how the federal programs crafted discrimination and not crafting that discrimination.

CB 1:01:27

That's a great segue into the government's role. Please tell me what specific actions the federal government can take to address the issues you've identified? Some potential notes to think about include FHWA/FTA/DOT – Transportation, CDC/DHHS – Health, EPA – Environment, DOJ – Justice/Law Enforcement, NPS – Parks, HUD – Housing, Dept of Education – Education, Dept of Energy – Energy efficiency and weatherization, and DOL – Dept of Labor. So thinking about what specific actions might some of those entities take to help you with the issues you've identified?

KJ 1:02:12

So definitely starting with DOJ, decriminalization of a lot of things, especially all the different drugs on the different schedules and partnering with maybe CDC and Health and Human Services to come up with a way to if people are having trouble with the side effects of certain drugs, whether they've been illegal or used in high quantities, causing issues, addiction issues, actually giving people a chance to work through them instead of having carrying records, especially now that cannabis the restrictions around cannabis have varied and different people are benefiting in very different ways. And then that could go back out to rectify, USDA has given gave some money to black farmers, approaching black communities and Asian communities and Latin communities that are disproportionately laborers without access people who have had access to land and lost it to before them rectifying that giving the money out. So offering them grants and technical assistance and training courses and paying for training courses. So that they can learn how to process the food and, and fiber, and other materials that are grown and processed on their land. I think having a federal, much like Amtrak is federal, putting more money into Amtrak doing not just

the proposed route alignments within the next 10 years, but making sure that labor has what they need unions and Labor has what they need, and the safety elements are there. And the funding is there to build out all proposed and reasonably agreed upon transit systems train extensions, I think the federal government should consider funding payer free buses and trains at the local public transit level, having a nationwide having transportation being just basically a ride just like you have Medicaid, that extension like everybody should have access to at least Medicaid. I think everybody should have access to at least public transit, and then get like a yearly grant for medical instruments, bicycles, whatever, like transportation things, instead of subsidizing I noticed some degree of like road subsidy and car subsidy, transferring that into active transportation through transportation, energy could pick it and wireless broadband internet could be free. Enter like the waterpower, all those things. I think we have the capability of generating billions and trillions and our private sector has done that more if we're not going to have universal income more of that money needs to go back so that we can provide some of the things at a base level. And then if people want to upgrade and private sector wants to exist at all, for a luxury option, it's there but a basic bare minimum of stability and provision, especially after we have this disease pandemic that does not discriminate now disproportionately affected people, but all kinds of people were infected with this live COVID-19, the actual disease or have been exposed to SARS-CoV-2 just in general, everything having the vaccine sites, FEMA running the vaccine sites, like extending some of that out and making, making things more efficient and protecting that from political manipulation, just having some things written into the essential notions of the government. So normal shutdowns, no more defunding, no more latching things, depending on Congress or executive orders to let go or change certain things.

CB 1:06:01

Please explain to me your strategic use of social media (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and, etc.) and other mediums (e.g., podcasts) to highlight and/or address inequities within active transportation as well as other intersecting issues?

KJ 1:06:33

There's so much that what you see on TV and in movies that have influenced what we do, a lot of names of neighborhoods or ways we talk about neighborhoods or in ourselves, come through advertisements, so much this concept of a suburb first showed up in real estate advertisements. In the music world, part of the reason I call myself the black urbanist on one of my platforms is that in the music world, urban is a synonym for black, which doesn't necessarily cover everything, there's all kinds of music made by all kinds of people, namely black people, but there's that issue there. So I wanted to as a media scholar, I wanted to start with addressing that because for a lot of people, they're turning on the radio and they're hearing if they're listening to the top 40 rap and hip hop, r&b tracks their station may say the best in urban radio. So over and over again, they're hearing that if they're not like in a place where there's a radio, if they're just going with Instagram and Twitter and Tik-tok, there's a lot of radical exposure to radical theories are people like Audrey Lorde, and Bell Hooks even did not happen in some of my academic settings. It happened through social media, it happened. People who were learning people, who were these majors, people who were reading these books I know recently, I know Moya Bailey's releasing her *Misogynoir*, of course, that she built that and has built that around the digital environments and the environments that come from these digital spaces. And of course, I first heard that word on social media, I first saw evidence of what she was talking about in social media, and in media in general, like print media on the TV. And I grew up in an era like post-1968, where there was a concerted effort to have black people

as reporters, and on news desks. So I grew up seeing a black woman reporting the news to me every day, I've learned about other key black figures in local newsrooms that were models that were and were allowed to kind of be themselves as the times went on that went through and got caught up in various things I'm specifically thinking about here in DC and of course, still emerged as role models, Stills, merchants, trusted individuals, like their ability to be seen. And of course, today we put people put a lot of faith in celebrities, but not every celebrity is just the barrel of empty, just like not every academic knows and can retain some of the information that they claim to retain. So for a lot of us in the black community, we're not that far removed from each other. Anybody who traces their history back knows that we started with like, right around 300,000 people that were brought to these shores and we've grown from there, and of course, the Diaspora all over the world. So this is the easiest way. It's and I can, I can say things I can influence, and people will hear my voice or read my words, and they'll sit, and they'll think with it, and then they'll start imagining, and I'm a big proponent of encouraging the radical imagination. And so I feel like I'm encouraging people's radical imaginations by planting that seed. And of course, I grew up in church environments, where the Bible is pushed. So really taking some of the positive elements of that. And of course, now I practice more like, I'm more of a Buddhist practice where you're meditating, and you're taking time to soak in what is being taught to you, therapeutic practices, all those things. And so just thinking about those methods and those means of doing things, and growing from there, and that's why I've stuck with the media, because it's still very white, the urbanist and the land use media, and the trades are very white, and they still need representation. Just like those newscasters influenced me, I want to be there for young people and others who want to see that, yes, a black person, a black woman, a black queer person, a black southerner can and does have opinions and expertise and can guide you and creating these worlds through these media platforms.

CB 1:11:13

Please tell me how CDC/Active People Healthy Nation can help communicate about equitable active living?

KJ 1:11:37

I mean, one thing they could do is like, there's a course there's a huge, big state skate culture, and I always was, my dad taught me how to skate. And so seeing all the people active on roller skates, and then my dad also taught me how to ride a bike the first time so showing people of color showing black people showing black fathers showing black gender non-conforming parents doing this and showing to two black parents or even a whole cluster like multiple generations of family. And then offering with just like your there's compensation here, just offering that, especially as somebody has to like clock out of a job. Or if you catch them leaving, like a service job, or they're afraid to say things because they don't know if they can get back to their job, or if they can get time off. I mean, my partner knows she's got college degrees, her job has her clocking in on the clock. So just creating this space. And it's suggesting that, okay, maybe making a recommendation, especially as they're recommending, and of course, now everybody's paying attention to the mask mandates, but mandating that there's not an exact start time that as much as possible, be flexible, go ahead and clock people and go ahead and pay people if they show up. And then if they don't show up, just then go deal with it that way. It's just really saying, okay, we trust you. We believe that you need compensation, you are helping us. Whenever you show up. Especially in situations like this, when we're just showing up on zooms, or teams or writing reports, we don't need to do that they are or if you're going from a phone, call the phone call person or if you're on the phone call, then you're there. If you're

making the sale, you're making the sale. So just taking that stress away. And then partnering with flexible working centers, much like you can take SAT's and LSATs at different testing centers nationwide, we should think about that. Extending the coworking, making a recommendation to extending the coworking I know what the federal government modeling telework for a lot more people. I'm hoping that that and do their contractors and through the military, I'm hoping that that will bleed down into the private sector and that we come up with a more sustainable way if we have to have service industry stuff. And if we lose a lot of employees who service the industry, we come up with a way to make that bridge to have that adjustment, providing counseling, providing reassurance, providing funding for anything from gym memberships to healthy food to something so that people feel like that the future is bringing them along. And it's not just them as a health problem them as a disparity them as a barrier to the future but them feeling like that they can grow.

CB 1:14:44

That is excellent. Do you have any final words before we wrap up?

KJ 1:14:47

I appreciate the opportunity. I like tried to share my experience and of course, I share my partner's experience because there are still disparities and who gets to be in rooms like this, who gets thought of who? I mean, even my status as a thought leader, I think has come from people's comfort levels of feeling like that they can relate. But the reality is, I have learned a lot from my elders and grandparents who people just might see as laborers and service workers, especially Southern ones. I've learned a lot from my partner, some of her friends, and colleagues that are gender non-conforming, I've learned a lot from my own experience having to be a millennial class level changing, not being able to show up at events having to negotiate differently as an employee versus as a consultant, even being seen as a consultant. So just an addendum to that white-dominated space section. There was someone at one of the major organizations I mentioned in one of the organizations I looked to that despite me having established a consultancy, told me to treat my consultancy like an internship.

KJ 1:16:04

Yeah, so, basically, humane behavior, benefited a doubt, releasing this attachment to the idea that people are going to do certain things, and then releasing this attachment to criminality. I feel like that's the core of that the holistic abolition movement. It is a public health movement. It is an idea to see people as whole people from the job and encouraging their imaginations and fixing it so that we're not having to be skeptical of each other, both inside of a home and outside of the home.

CB 1:16:41

Agreed. Thank you for your time.

Transcript: Warren Logan

Monday, May 24, 2021, 4:00PM

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, streets, black, question, space, affordable housing, Oakland, city, black lives matter, zoning, neighborhood, policy, trauma, understand, levers, type, words, permission, day, active

SPEAKERS

CB, WL

As part of SOPHE's cooperative agreement with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPAO), we will be conducting qualitative interviews to better understand Black/African American expert discussions around the historical context and consequences of inequities that have discouraged physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities (e.g., limited access to safe and accessible routes and/or destinations, feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, etc.). We would like to better understand the barriers, racial inequities, and facilitators related to activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations (routes to destinations) that influence physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities.

CB 00:03

You have been identified as an expert transportation and/or land use Thought Leader. We are interested in interviewing you to learn more about your experience and perspective. My name is Charles T. Brown, Adjunct professor at Rutgers University and founder of Equitable Cities. This interview will take no more than one hour. This information will be used to identify opportunities for CDC to embed equitable access to physical activity opportunities for Black communities into its activity friendly routes to everyday destinations strategy.

Do you grant permission?

WL 01:25

I do, I Warren Logan, do

CB 03:15

Please tell me why you chose this particular career path or journey.

WL 03:23

I am currently a policy director in the mayor's office for the city of Oakland. And by trade, I am a city planner with a background in both transportation planning and urban design. What brought me maybe not to the specific seat, but to the work that I do is a love for people. I love connecting with people, I love understanding what their challenges are and then trying to unstick those challenges. I also recognize that, throughout my family's history, which you actually see behind me, there's a lot of history actually with

land use. My grandfather, you see picture here is the first African American Board of realtors President in I think Southern California, but probably California generally, my dad here would be the second one. And one of the things that I learned, very early on as a child was that we as black people rarely have much to do with or really control over the environment that impacts us so greatly, and unfortunately, rarely understand even what are all the different levers that impact our daily lives. And I see city planning as an opportunity to both understand all those levers, challenge the system to use those levers and ideally and this is I think what I take the most pride in sharing with people. My understanding at least of how these levers work, and what gears they move in the sort of broad machine that is city policy, state, regional, you name it.

CB 05:07

Please describe your thoughts or feelings related to identifying as Black/African American within a historically White-dominated field or space.

WL 05:43

Yeah, the gravity of that question alone, I would say that just for the record, my full identity is being a very young person in my profession, I just turned 32, most of my colleagues are in their 50s, if not older, I also identify as queer. So that's like a whole other additive, and then being African American as well. I think that I approach a lot of these spaces in a number of different ways, the first of which is I mean, I know who I am, and I don't hide who that is, and when and where this attitudes, it's coming from, in meetings and in the memos that I write, also in the policies that I promote. A lot of my work, and I will share a brief history of what I have done in the past, that brings me to the mayor's office, they'll work backwards, a lot of my work is trying to understand every single aspect of the machine. And I'm going to actually use a fun metaphor that you all probably know of which blindfolded people approach an elephant, and they are all touching a different part of the elephant. And they report to one another, that they are feeling lots of different things, right, if someone's holding a tail, since , someone's touching the foot, and so on. And all they know, is what they feel and what they believe to see in their mind, and then try and report out to each other. Ideally, and this is where the story kind of goes off the rails, of course, like to get a shared vision of what it is that they are touching. And my thinking is that I want to encourage people to move around the elephant, so that they can gain a better perspective, even for themselves, about what is it their touching, so that they're not just reporting to each other, oh, I'm feeling what I think to be a foot, it's, you told me this was the foot and I actually think this is the tail, let's circle back in a second. So that we have a much clearer picture. So, with that odd story in mind, the history of my work includes managing a parking program, designing complete streets, doing perform analysis for affordable housing, managed managing shared mobility policy for the city, turn the country. And now, being the post director of the mayor's office with anything that falls into that bucket. And for the last year being the community resilience director during emergency, right. And the reason I share that with you is because the way I approach my work and especially as it's funny, I'm thinking about my grandparents right now, I'm kind of homesick now. We don't get to be and by we, I mean like black people don't get to be bad at their jobs, right? Like I didn't get here, not knowing not only what I'm talking about, but knowing what everybody's talking about, like what's the best, most succinct way to put this? , it's like, I think every black person has ever heard this, you got to work twice as hard to get half as far. And while obviously that's rooted in like, a lot of cultural trauma, there's a lot of truth to that statement. And to counteract that reality that I see, in front of me, I show up extra prepared. Like when people tell me, oh, this is my understanding of the situation. I'm like,

I've been there. I've done that twice. And that's the way that I try and approach the work that I do. What I want to be very careful of, I'm guessing the trouble, some of your questions might enter the space. I maintain a level of curiosity and I acknowledge that I could still be wrong, even though I have done or seen or spoken about or worked in the field that we're wrestling with. And I find that that that obsessive curiosity has really helped me do very well in my field of study. And it also helps me navigate what is oftentimes to be frank from a racial standpoint or even from an age to incrimination standpoint, it has helped me push back on people who often might say, I think you're wrong. Here's my opinion. Like I've been told a number of times by colleagues of mine, who are often above me and supervisors that that the policy I'm citing is incorrect or whatever. And then at the end of the meeting, we come to find out that I'm right. And so that's, that is an ongoing struggle that I work against trolls, I hope I'm answering your question,

CB 10:39

Today, let's talk about identity, including age, in terms of how you're navigating these white dominated spaces is not just a black man, but a black man that identifies as queer, and you're relatively young. What challenges might that propose for you? And how are you navigating?

WL 11:21

I think in every single space, no matter which space, I'm always going to be a little bit of the odd one out, right, because even in a fully black dominated space, which, frankly, is, unfortunately, the city of Oakland, a lot of our executive leadership are black, like real black. And I love that, like, it's, it makes me surprised how quickly we can get things done when everybody's talking the same way, which we discovered in the emergency in fact. But I also recognize that, and this is not true for Oakland, I'll be very careful when I say this, that in the past, I have found that often African American dominated spaces can lean more homophobic, that is not true to be clear for the space that I work in. And I found that to be incredibly welcoming, and quite lovely. So, I just want to be very careful there. I do acknowledge, though, that because each of these different identities, provides me in the margins that oftentimes, I use that to my advantage to say, well, I'm going to lean into that and say, kind of know, whatever I want to say, of course, but it lets you already know, my opinion is going to be a little bit different. I'm just going to be that person, like anyone who's ever worked with me, I'm often, carefully the one that says it like it is. And I will often tell people who I disagree with, I'm going to tell you something that is going to be need, I'm going to tell you something that disagrees with what you just said. And I find that when I tell people I'm going to disagree with them, before disagreeing with them, they seem to accept what I say next, a little bit better. But I think that I have, because I've had a very supportive family for when you when you listen back to this, you don't have this video, there are pictures of my family behind me that because of their support, I have found that I can then provide that same like compassion and love, even to the people that don't really like very much all the time. And that really helps a lot. Like it's a I like being a little different all the time. It's kind of fun. It lets me think differently. It exposes you to people who think about space, right? Like the built environment totally differently. As an example, like, if you've ever seen a drag show in the middle of the street, you realize that a street can be anything it needs to be and it doesn't have to be about mobility, like that's, that's when it really clicks like, oh, we're not using the street as well as it could be. And I think that that's something that not everyone gets to see because they don't engage in every type of space, right? So, I kind of think of it that way.

CB 14:13

Why would it be that your experiences are indeed a reality, or could they just simply be you projecting ?

WL 14:33

I don't walk into rooms with a chip on my shoulder. I am very much known for smiling a lot partly because I'm petite. But I mean, six years of orthodontia, I've worked for it. But I try to approach every opportunity to meet people like and I said this kind of at the top of our discussion. I love people I look like if I could spend my day just meeting new people of mine and everyone's a little bit different. Right. And fortunately, in my line of work, you get to meet a lot of different people. And I have encouraged both myself and myself at all times to go out and find people that we don't normally talk to, because oftentimes, their voices are most marginalized and forgotten, and we need to really be helping them. And third, they might have a solution we've never heard of before. And that gives us a strength then to find more and more innovative solutions. And that sort of brings me back to your question about the chip on my shoulder, I actually think that the diversity that I bring to the table is what makes my ideas my innovations, might I, policy solutions, whatever that much more innovative or interesting is because it's not the same idea over and over again. And in fact, I've been praised for that. So, I guess it kind of works. Well. I think if it didn't work, well, I guess I would have pivoted.

CB 16:03

Please describe how, if any, the pandemic has affected your physical activity opportunities or your views on being physically active in general.

WL 16:28

I would say that, personally, for the last year, I did not go to the gym, and that was challenging. I've just started going back. I will zoom out slightly, because I recognize that I am far more privileged than the average African American male in Oakland. And so, I want to relate both my specific experience to what I understand even if my neighbors in West Oakland, which is that for many families, and I don't want to paint a too broad brush, but for many of the black families in Oakland, black and brown families, they have shared with me that they've shared with me that COVID has not actually changed their lives in the way as disproportionately as their white counterparts. And what I mean by that is, before COVID, the streets were still dangerous. Before COVID, you didn't have access to a grocery store, the clinics were clipped and like a lot of the things that people are now feeling like ,oh, the economy's finally reopening and, and I can go back to the parks and feel comfortable and hang out with my friends. A lot of that was not really available to our low-income communities. And then by extension, because unfortunately overlap. I mean, when are people gone? Right? And so, you all might have seen this joke on Twitter or whatever we're for the folks who were like, as we went through the waves of COVID, opening, closing opening, quote, that kind of more restricted, less restrictions, that for the people who said, oh, no, this doesn't feel different. And the recourse to that was it should have felt different because you should have been in your activities. That's true for affluent people. And specifically, white people, I think, across the country, it is not true that that criticism is not true for our POC neighborhoods, especially in cities like Oakland, that have always struggled to get to the park, either because the park is too damn far. Or because it might only be a couple of blocks but crossing that one street is so dangerous that you would just prefer to not go to the park. And, and I use that as an example, like in reality, but like the program that we launched during COVID was to help people literally cross the street, central places, whether that's clinics,

grocery stores, cleaners, youth about like, just, it's, it is surprising to me, it compared both my own experience and then what I understand about people who would otherwise identify in a very similar way to me, that people get any exercise when you're either working two jobs and on your feet the whole time. or God forbid, you just want to jog down the street safely and not get hit by a car and I don't say that lightly. Or you want to go to a park where it's not well maintained. You don't feel safe or secure being there. Or the times you have free of which is might be limited to go do those things you do not have and that's where I think I circle back to you in my own experience where a major reason why I was unable to exercise and even enjoy the day was because I was working two jobs at the same time. And the impact that that has not only in my physical self-right, but I also gained quite a bit of weight and fortunately lost it. But really my mental health is something that, Jesus, like just wow, like, sorry, I'm just reflecting back on like how rough this past year was from a mental health standpoint. And I, when I'm well off, I cannot imagine imagine how challenging this year was for people to be socially disconnected, physically disconnected, both from other people and from the activities that they love. It's just shocking to me.

CB 20:54

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements:

15 minutes cities

WL 21:20

Land use, but very briefly, my frustration about 15 minutes cities is that it often is about the transportation improvements that are needed to make it like available for you to go 15 minutes at a time in any one direction in any one type of mode. But what it often fails to consider is why is it that you live so damn far away from the resources you need? That should be 15 minutes away? And so, the root issue is access to affordable housing. And like, I would say redlining, frankly.

CB 21:57

Calm streets?

WL 22:03

Safety and I say that because, calm streets require safety improvements that are not sexy. Like, the multimillion-dollar corridor improvements, but the bread-and-butter bull belts, stop signs, speed bumps.

CB 22:26

Slow streets?

WL 22:35

Innovative. Because we were one of the most aggressive cities to have slow streets program. And I think that we were pretty innovative in doing so, so quickly into the pandemic.

CB 22:49

Safe Streets.

WL 22:56

This is two words; I'll make it a compound, crime prevention. One of the major feedbacks we got about our associates program was that we might have made them traffic safe, but we didn't make them safe for lots of other social impacts. And so that was a major note for a bunch of my team, including myself, like, just because you traffic calmed doesn't mean that people aren't gang banging down the street. The reason people are speeding, is not just because they want to see it's because they're speeding away from the crime that happened two blocks that way. So, there's an intersectionality there.

CB 23:34

Open streets?

WL 23:40

Pedestrianization , typically when I think opens streets, I think close to car traffic open to people. And what they're doing is, up for debate,

CB 23:52

Play streets.

WL 23:55

Oh, youth, we really want to do a play streets program, because our kids need to get aside up to this last year. I think of youth development. One of the things that I've learned, especially this last year, but I think, as just being seats in transportation planner, is that we teach people from nearly childbirth, who they are, for better or for worse, and how the city and the county in the state and how the government feels about them, and what their worth is. A number of our high-profile collisions happen outside of schools, and they happen at the same time that school is being let out. And so, it's not just that a parent and their child for example, crossing the street is hit by a car and killed it's that every other five- and six-year-old just saw that happened. And that type of trauma plays itself out on a very regular basis, even just from a traffic collision standpoint, such that when I then go and try and make my job right, and have my staff engage with folks about what we can envision for their streets or their spaces, when you get into the pushback, and the feedback that people provide about bike lanes, or wider sidewalks or whatever, right, it's that they don't believe there's anything we can do to make this street safer, because all they've known is that kind of trauma their entire lives. And so, I think about how to impact that type of trauma, like before it starts, right like before those children see their friend get hit by a car. Right? Because that influences then their ability to imagine and demand, not just like safer streets, open streets, slow streets, whatever, but to imagine a better use of public space and public rights of way that they deserve. But if we teach people from zero, that you don't deserve safe streets, then they're never going to want safe streets, and are in fact, probably to push against them. And that is something that is like, every damn day here in Oakland is people who, when you get down to it, I'm like, are you really pushing back again, safety and like, well, not saying that, but it's never going to happen. It's like, okay, let's like, let's unpack that.

CB 26:39

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements:
Complete Streets?

WL 27:05

Bike lanes, and I say that just because typically people think of complete streets as adding bike lanes to the street. And I'm very happy that Oakland has started broadening that into like, what is the land use needed along that street? How can we use that street in a celebratory way? Right, like, that's what Flex streets is about, which is our shared streets program here in Oakland, where turns out traffic calming can happen when you add a parklet or close the whole street for a cultural bizarre.

CB 27:44

Vision Zero?

CB 27:48

Enforcement, and I say enforcement because Vision Zero used to be, education, engineering, and enforcement. And now folks are saying, okay, we got to take that last bit off, because of the ways and understandably the ways in which police enforce, enforce, traffic. etc. Right. And so, we are now trying to rethink, but what that even looks like, yeah.

CB 28:24

Master planning or comprehensive plans?

WL 28:37

Summary between comprehensive because at the end of the day, we need a comprehensive vision that ties this stuff together. It's not effective for the government to be like shooting at the hip. And at the same time, another word on theme, but it's limiting, because it means that governments, and I think we even do this in Oakland, sometimes hide behind what's not in the plan, so we can't do it. It's like, well, sometimes plans have to change. So maybe troll's the third word here, sorry, you're going to get three words out of this one, it's inflexible. And that that spells out some of the need for how to address the challenges they just share.

CB 29:19

Safe routes to school?

WL 29:28

Absolutely necessary. Here, like we just like, people should be able to get to their schools, because this goes back to my youth development point, right? If you're teaching somebody from 800 mommy and daddy has to drive you to school and you're going five blocks away. And I am showing you that even these few blocks aren't safe for you. Let's, let's address that.

CB 29:58

Single family zoning?

WL 30:04

Racist, it's a remnant really of a way to keep people out of certain neighborhoods. And along with that, and this might be one of your other words is like, neighborhood character. And just every single time somebody wants to tell me about single family zoning, it's like, you're taking my home away, and like, our entire tax code. And virtually every law surrounding it, is about protecting single family homeowners. So,

like Crimea River, like we've been signed, like, let me do one more professional, we nearly bend over backwards to make single family homeowners happy. Even use that as a quote,

CB 30:56

Inclusionary zoning necessary.

WL 31:02

We absolutely have to rethink the way in which we zone our land, which we're not making any more of it, we'll keep making more people, if anyone else has noticed that. You notice that right? There are more people and the same amount of land. And I'm not entirely sure how we, because ultimately, the goal of inclusionary zoning is to in my mind, at least is to see a mix of incomes, either in the same building and or in the same neighborhood. How do you get that there's a lot of different ways to do that? But it requires allowing a greater amount of density, and a variety of building types in a neighborhood where, for example, I live in a single-family home, but on a parcel that was split in the share price with somebody else across the street from a loft that has 40 different units in it, right? All of that is in the same zone. But there's a there's a lot of different mix in our community

CB 32:17

ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units)?

WL 32:25

Bare minimum, like I know that people are pressing at us, it's like the way to fix our access to housing. And I think it is one of the ways to do that. But I worry that ADUs do not provide a pathway to ownership. And this is limited thinking here. But if we stick with the same idea that like the only true investment that is stable in the United States is land. It's very hard then to own an ADU without a whole other set of policies. And so, I think it's sort of a cop out. It's not a cop out, but it is it is part of a multifaceted solution. But it cannot be the only solution. And I've seen plenty of cities say we're now going to allow ADUs everywhere. So, we've fixed that we fixed housing, it's done and like you didn't fix it.

CB 33:20

Please tell me how you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement and the Black Lives Matter organization.

WL 33:37

Absolutely necessary and misunderstood at times by people who are racist, I guess. And I think sometimes a little bit co-opted. And I'll be careful with that. Because I want to be really precise to what I say here. I come from a place of I'm going to practice, I like people who have lists, and will say like, here's what I want. Here's in which I love because the actual organization itself has enlisted demands, right? Like this is our campaign. I love that. What frustrates me is actually not about the official Black Lives Matter, but I like yes, great, awesome. What I worry is that the Black Lives Matter movement is exhibiting, or it really seemed the same type of both, like co-opting right where people like BLM and like it's not brunch, you can't just like do it on Sundays. But and I think that because so many people have co-opted and course the message is becoming diluted in a way that is unfair. And I make this comparison when you look at the original demands of the Black Panther Movement and remove the title that is the Black, the Black Panther

Movement, you just read out what those are. Most people would actually support that. It's like education, affordable housing, access to food and clean water. Like its basic stuff that people deserve. But I think because the government reframes that as like a terrorist organization, which they're not, but like, I worry that the that Black Lives Matter in the long run might end up getting diluted. And I'm trying to figure out how, even in my own life work, how to make sure that we stay on message so that we don't get distracted.

CB 35:54

Please explain how the BLM movement has impacted either your attitudes, perceptions or vision for equitable and inclusive active living in this country.

WL 36:06

It has. So, I've noticed that I grew up in a well-off family. And that is not to say that I didn't know that racism existed, that I didn't know what it was like to drive all black, like, I do all that stuff. And I recognized and understood that my family secure was shielding me from the things that they experience in their lives. But they did a very good job of telling me, we used to not be able to do this, right? Like we used to not be able to do all that right? I remember a video. And this is not exactly like I related to Black Lives Matter. But it is it makes my point really clear. There was a woman who when I forgotten her name, I'm sorry. It was right before the George Floyd protests, I think, where she's like, she's the executive director of a nonprofit, but she's yelling at the camera, about how she felt that the burning down of buildings was this and the looting and that all of that was like a symbol of a broken contract. And that we didn't break the contract. And she comes to tears, because she's like, we can't steal anything, because we don't have anything, none of it is ours, like this entire thing. This entire system isn't even ours, is built to keep us out of ownership, whatever that means ownership and really agency as well. And that was incredible, like just shows you how impactful Twitter can be sometimes and YouTube, right? Like, that made me realize a lot about even the work I do. It's like am I actually using your masters tools to save lives, and so to just give you a precise example of a difference in the way that I've heard approaching my work is: instead of just trying to learn the levers of the machine, or , move around the elephant, I'm starting to question, why are we even touching this elephant in the first place? Right? There are other animals here. Or to be precise, look at the Flex streets program. There are other people who have, there are other cities that lowered the prices on their permits, but still had a permit process. And one of the things that I did was actually require their staff make some of them automatic. We just said, fill out this form. You guys don't even talk to me. Like you're good. Just we just want to make sure that if the fire department exactly as we know where the fire hydrant is, that's it, right. And I got into a little bit of an argument with the mayor because she was like, Warren, we have permits for a reason, and like, maybe not everything in a just society shouldn't necessarily mean that there's a permit for all the things that people want, but that we are questioning whether or not it's even our place to gate keep the people's ability to do something. And a precise example is that we had three Black Lives Matter murals painted on our streets. And we have a paint the town planet where people can ask whether it's a free permit, but you got to go to this program to paint murals on the street. And the people who did the permit or I'm sorry, the people who painted the Black Lives Matter when you're on 15th Street. I knew that they were going to mount to save us the dime. Can I tell you something that you won't repeat? Yes. Okay. So, I knew that there was a painting I liked, and I alerted our deity and it's like this is happening. And in the end officially we're cool with it. And the next day, the mayor was very upset with me. She was like, Warren they should have gotten a permit. Why didn't you give them up, what's the point? I was like, Mayor, I can't, I'm not

going to give somebody a permit to put like to protest. That is unethical to the point of the of the mural itself, I shouldn't have to ask permission to tell you that Black Lives Matter. And that, to me, is sort of what underscores the last year for me it's like, why do I have, why do I warn Logan? Right, but by extension, people of color, especially black of like, why do we have to ask for permission to exist? Because that's often what it feels like, at the end of the day. You can use that part. And I'm trying to address that as the sort of like gatekeeper of like granting permission to things.

CB 41:06

Please explain if there are other organizations beside BLM that have influenced your attitudes, perceptions or views on active living.

WL 41:32

Not that I can think of right now. And partly because I don't think about active living. And that's kind of a problem, right? I think people who have access to active spaces, don't think about the fact that they like that they have active spaces or access to human rights in a way that provide them that and the people who don't have them have statistically never had them. And so, I believe, and I'm painting with a broad brush here, that there aren't very many people who probably think about it on a regular basis, because you don't have to, on either side of that dividing line.

CB 42:20

Please tell me about your views on law enforcement in the context of active living.

WL 42:39

The fact that we have jaywalking, as a sizable offense is, like I think, emblematic of where the court really needs to go. The fact that we can police people's mobility can be really challenging, right? Like, our bike plan even states that it points out that the highest number of people are disproportionately black men receive tickets for bicycling, which, like, I'll be honest with you, on its face sounds stupid. And obviously, we all know that it's just it's a pretextual stop for something else. But all the more reason than that. It's like you're trying to police my physical activity as a way to catch me on something else. Which then means, I guess by extension that if you follow that line of thinking, that wouldn't you be discouraging me from being active in the street? Right, just jogging. And I'll be frank. I won't think like now that I think about it. I like bicycling, but the few times I've jogged I have felt very uncomfortable because growing up like the idea of a black man running, what might appear at somebody or from something. Just it makes me a little bit uncomfortable. Like, even jogging at night, right? I'm not afraid to jog at night, but I worried that someone seeing me, jogging might look a kind of way that then has a very different effect on my life. I remember the day that, so we've been redoing the lake which is like our largest open space in the city. It's like a 5k around the lake and I've lived in Oakland almost 10 years now. I live on the lake for several of those years. And I remember once all the routes got redone. I was getting home late at like midnight, and I saw these two very small, light women running at night, and I'm like, go home, it's not safe out here. And then I thought to myself like, that is how this neighborhood has changed. Because they both had earbuds in and I was like, how? Who am I, to me, I wanted to stop them and say like, don't, and I was like, you're fine, like, and you just, I feel like when you say something that actually makes some sense here, I feel like we're all on the same street experiencing a very different reality? On an ongoing basis that you can operate in the same space and experience it completely differently. At every moment of the day, it's

probably a little bit of gaslighting, because your reality, what my reality is, is sort of in between those spaces where I can see how everybody might feel differently in each space. And it's and it's a little bit difficult to, to experience everything at once. Right? Because my intersectional identities, I can see how this is lovely. And I can see how this is terrible. And that's, it makes for a little crazy making good times.

CB 46:22

Please tell me what thoughts or emotions come to mind when discussing systemic and institutional racism, particularly in the context of active living

WL 46:59

Oftentimes, when I approach systemic racism, I think about I'm often somehow still surprised at how deep it goes. Like, how deep is the root? And you think for someone who loves setting policy and like getting to the heart of things, there are days where I'm like, really, that's a law? Again, I haven't looked through all of our municipal code, but having re-read some of our traffic violations and even make sense anymore, and it really didn't make sense back then. Like this, this is racist. Who are we talking about right here? So, all of that to make this a real answer? And my initial reactions are, how deep is the ocean, right? It just it seems somehow almost immeasurable. How deep systemic racism can go so deep, and it causes people to be frustrated that the way people respond to and by people, I mean, like white people, especially respond to being shown that something has, either rooted specifically an overt racism or just cause racist outcomes. And then you go deeper, and you can watch them go from like, oh, wow, I didn't know that to almost a state of disbelief and then pushing back, because it's like, if I accept this as the truth, it breaks my understanding of so many other things. It's like watching one plus one equal three. And you're like, oh, no, I know. And I think this is partly why the Black Lives Matter movement struggles, it's because it's not it's not our fault, right? It's that it's so deep. And you have people who are like, I was with you until the entire foundation upon which my life rests on, you have now called into question you were breaking my understanding of the entire world. And that is a very uncomfortable place to be in. And if you have the privilege of not engaging in that space, I can understand why people would actively choose to not want to engage in that. It's like discovering that you have a like, not only is that kind of quirky, aren't actually kind of racist. And not just racist, you did some pretty bad stuff. And you're like, oh, now I got to think about the fact that you're pretty awful. And if everybody in my family knew about this, and they'd love that on, what does that say about my family? Oh, and then you just start unraveling the sweater.

CB 49:50

Gentrification and Displacement?

CB 49:54

I think that people use those words interchangeably, and that's really dangerous because I don't believe that every "improvement" to a neighborhood here is gentrification. And I struggled personally really professionally to engage with people who say that green paints in a bike lane are a form of gentrification, because I think what they mean is social displacement, where when they see something like that, they then envision who's going to be using that space, which is probably white men. And then saying, okay, well, I'm not a white man. And if you're causing more of those people to be in this space that I thought was barely mine to begin with, you were going to be socially pushing me out. And then by extension,

potentially physically pushing me out. But and this is where I put gentrification and displacement against affordable housing, is that when those words are often pushed at me or lobbed at me, when I look at multimillion dollar capital improvements for traffic safety, and then people say, you're gentrifying your neighborhood, because your traffic calming? Like, okay, so if you unpack that, that means that I can't make your streets safer without you being displaced. Okay, well, then, are you saying that Black and Brown people don't deserve safe streets? Because that's not what you're saying? How do we address the connection that you've just made, and it's often to go all the way back again, and issue about affordable housing and housing rights and housing justice, I think that we would have a very different conversation about traffic safety and capital improvements. If people ate on their homes, or at least had enough, had access to affordable housing and felt resilient enough in their homes that they were not caught, didn't feel like they were constantly under attack.

CB 51:54

Any thoughts on land use changes within that conversation or exclusionary zoning?

WL 52:00

I think this goes back to our inclusionary zoning discussion. And we haven't solved for where people are living right now. Right? Like, people don't want to just pick up and move even if their home is to disrepair, right? Because you do have a connection to your space in whatever quality it is. And a lot of times in the bay, and I think planners run into this a lot, we're like, oh, just build more housing. And that'll solve the problem. That will solve part of the problem because market pressure, but it doesn't resolve the fact that your home might not be up to code, or it doesn't solve that there might be enough housing to move around. But there are other forces that cause you to move frequently. And that can also be unsettling. So, those are the dots that I would connect there.

CB 52:49

Please tell me what your top priorities would be if you had unlimited power and resources, particularly in the context of active living.

WL 53:15

For starters, I would build a ton of affordable housing next to our Bart stations here in the Bay. Because, having trunk line service to pretty much every job center in the Bay Area is kind of important. I would also restore our green spaces to be spaces that are more flexible. And what I mean by that is that we have a lot of parks that are not very well maintained. And this is probably true for most urban parks. Either they're not well maintained, or they're not designed to be flexible for the types of use, right? Like, it's nice to have basketball courts, it's nice to have a park or whatever. But can each day mean that you have a soccer field, but you also have an open-air market, right? Like that type of flexibility is something that is a not supported in our planning code, or zoning code. And B is not supporting the design of public space, and specifically active spaces, whether that be roadways or physical destinations. And so that's not necessarily a money issue. It's partly a money issue, but it's also like laws that discouraged flexible uses. So yeah, build more formal housing. I would say I saw this really cool treatment in another city. I think it's Seattle or might be Portland, is they mix their roads and their sidewalks with rubber. And it helps older people walk farther because it reduces the impact on their joints. And it's something just so simple, simple that like, oh, why don't people look? Oh, because it's such a walk, like. I don't think that, and I've said this

before, I don't think that our issue is that we don't have enough money. I think it's that in great power, we don't have enough creative mindset to encourage us to shift our priorities towards things that are more people focused, don't get me wrong, Oakland could use more money. But as an example, our slow streets program cost us \$150,000. That's like, nothing compared to a traffic light, like putting a new traffic light at an intersection is annoying enough to just fail.

CB 55:42

Please tell me specific partners you would want to engage to advance your top priorities.

WL 55:51

Well, I can tell you both specific organizations and by extension, like who I would be looking for, so I really appreciate Greenlining and transforms perspective on pretty much everything. To start there. I think there's another group in the bay, and specifically, you still can call the black cultural zone and that sort of helps me triage to the types of groups that you're looking for. I'm not always looking for your traditional transportation planning walks, your modal advocates for bicycle protection Africa teenager, I'm looking for people that know their community really well and are thick and literally look at the space differently than other people where they can look at a blank wall and say, this could be a canvas, right, that type of thinking can be applied to anything. And so, I am always encouraged to find people who are outside of the, the professional norm that we look for, and more. So, the type of thinking that we're looking for similarly, I would, I am trying to get our contracts team to agree to this is I want to start hiring, like basically social workers or folks who deal in like community trauma, as part of our engagement. Because if you start out saying, oh, I want to paint a biplane here, and people immediately go to, you're trying to push out all the black people in the city, like, we did a big jump really quick. And that to me is someone's something the government hurt you. And we got to unpack all that, and I am not trained for that. And I can and I even in my own therapy, like I can see other people's pain and like, I want to help you process this. And I can't, I can help that, but I can't be the person to do that. And I have to own that myself. And so that's the other part is layering that on. So, we've got community-based organizations, ones that intersect very closely with equity artists that look at space in a much more, fantastic and exceptional way. And then finally folks who specialize in trauma.

CB 58:09

Please tell me what specific actions the federal government can take to address the issues you've identified.

WL 58:37

Yeah, remember I said hyper pragmatist's, the funding that they provide is not flexible enough to apply to the types of roadway designs that we often look to implement. So, we have to end up getting more money. So as an example, there's a lot of FDA official viewing funding that only goes towards road widening for starters, or you can't spend it on bicycle infrastructure, you can only spend it on the portion that's for truck routes. Similarly, they have a limitation on the types of materials you can use sometimes. So, to my point about the rubberized cement, or let's say I want to put in a decomposed granite trail changing. This is the policy nerd that I am changing the eligibility qualifications for capital improvement grants is like a laser focused improvement that we can make. And better yet literally creating programs that only focus on those types of improvements so that you don't have to fight for one pot of money. Holding aside

funding that's like this is specifically for active transportation. And we're going to be prioritizing, equity neighborhoods and innovative designs.

CB 59:52

Let's talk about how we just love transportation. We're going to help now CDC...

WL 1:00:01

Skip, because I don't want to speak out of turn, like that's just beyond like the cliff of my understanding.

CB 1:00:10

Is that an issue for you, given that you're in transportation and being held when you skip?

WL 1:00:15

Yeah, so actually can kind of to speak to this a little bit, which is that our newest safety manager we got from San Francisco Public Health. And so often times, traffic safety doesn't fall into the Blitz public health buckets that people measure, which is kind of crazy to me, because they're one of the main reasons why people die early, or really at all in most cities. And so, it begs the question of, can we gain more traction with different government levers? If you start to, I'm using mixed metaphors here, but like pressing the button about, health, we had all these campaigns about not smoking. And everybody learned what a lung looks like, when I was in, elementary school, right? There was the Mothers Against Drunk Driving like all of these campaigns that talked about the Public Health app, effects of nutrition. And there were very few about distracted driving, speeding, road rage, right, all those things, we could have a public health outlook on, and I see that as a missed opportunity. And so, to answer your question, Charles, I think that my inability to describe the interdepartmental nature of public health speaks to an opportunity for growth.

CB 1:01:37

Excellent. Any other federal government branches that you would like to speak to whether its environment, justice, law, parks, housing, education, energy, or labor, HUD, is here.

WL 1:01:53

Uh, I would love to see grants for affordable housing where the housing needs to be I just speaking for California, like, I don't know how we're going to climb out of this housing shortage. And obviously zoning is going to help but affordable housing doesn't build itself. And the type and the scale that we need is so great that, like, we need federal stable money.

CB 1:02:24

Please explain to me your strategic use of social media (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and, etc.) and other mediums (e.g., podcasts) to highlight and/or address inequities within active transportation as well as other intersecting issues.

WL 1:03:02

I don't think anybody that I'm trying to reach, reads our press releases, like our official press releases from the city. So, I'm always looking for the medium in which the folks I'm trying to reach, what is going to reach them? And, and what is going to hit them the right way. So that the message comes across, right?

So sometimes Twitter is not mad. I always like to have receipts when I'm on Twitter, because people are like, I heard this. I'm like, I don't know how you got that from these 200 characters. But go off. I think that one of the challenges with social media is that it's sometimes it's so easy, it's too easy. It's very easy to respond to something without fully digesting the material. And just to give you an example, I posted a couple months ago on my Twitter, my professional Twitter that we had received, like \$30 million for transportation improvements, half for what's ultimately going to be a bus rapid transit line, and the other four, really bread and butter safety improvements and four major streets in East Oakland. And a number of people were like, I can't believe you're putting bike lanes in this neighborhood and f you this f you that. And I was like, okay, so fortunately, back to my query trauma, it's like, you're responding to the name of the grant, which is like, it's the bicycle program. Yes. And so, we prepared improvements that meet the quality, the qualities that would get us \$20 million. Yet, if you read, read this whole thing, there are no bike lanes. It's actually one of the cool things that we're spending money on is paying a bunch of locally stoke on us to create culturally competent Wayfinding signage throughout the district, which I'm very excited about. But so that highlights the issue, right, where it's easy to reach people. But then if you don't have like the perfect facts, I even still, I don't think people, I think that social media can cause people to be intellectually lazy. And that is frustrating, because I'm not entirely sure how to help people level up while also getting their attention, because you can't, you can do both. Because at some point, if you scroll through my Twitter, right, like their essays long at some point, like I've lost. So, I think about that.

CB 1:05:46

Please tell me how CDC/Active People Healthy Nation can help communicate about equitable active living.

WL 1:06:05

Oddly enough, I think Tik Tok, like, I have learned a lot on Tik-Tok, which I think is kind of sad, because I'm like, wow, my elementary school really failed me, but I think that it's the type of medium that seems to sort of catch people's attention quickly, and causes them to literally figuratively, like stitch together things. And if they, did it correctly down, like creating their entire campaign, you can generate a movement of people to see them. Hopefully, it's a Tik Tok so like, people will stitch together like, I'm going to add to this thing. So, you'll start with a video that's like, telling me without telling me that you can't ride a bike in this neighborhood, and then people add to, oh, here's the cycling that falls off the cliff. Right? It is a way that causes people to call and response by, like, showing that telling. I think that I'm going to steal that for my own idea. That's actually something I think would be really cool. The other part two is, I think I'm young, but I'm not that young anymore. I'm shocked at how quick 15-year-olds are at creating an entire movement, like the fact that you have people who like basically took advantage of social media to trick the president United States in thinking that he was going to have a sold-out event. This is Trump, by the way, not Biden, like, is fascinating to me. Like, wow, so it tells me that if I know how to use this tool, it can be super powerful. But it also means that you have to have the right people using it correctly, which requires hiring 15-year-olds to create I mean, and I don't mean like literally, I mean, literally hire people who are not our age for like, oh, I know, I used to talk boop, boop, boop done. Right, our social media managers that can 22-23 which is like when you're not tweeting correctly, change these words, and you'll get better traction. Oh, like that emoji doesn't mean what you think it does?

CB 1:08:12

Oh, you mentioned Tik-Tok. Time reference, we're at the time. I want to be respectful of your time.

Transcript: Melicent Miller, DrPH

Monday, June 21 2021, 5:00PM

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, spaces, cdc, community, terms, thinking, public health, black, wanting, neighborhood, law enforcement, experiences, physical activity, individuals, transportation, impacted, sidewalks, white counterparts, minority males, safety

SPEAKERS

MM, CB

As part of SOPHE's cooperative agreement with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPAO), we will be conducting qualitative interviews to better understand Black/African American expert discussions around the historical context and consequences of inequities that have discouraged physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities (e.g., limited access to safe and accessible routes and/or destinations, feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, etc.). We would like to better understand the barriers, racial inequities, and facilitators related to activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations (routes to destinations) that influence physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities.

CB 00:09

You have been identified as an expert transportation and/or land use Thought Leader. We are interested in interviewing you to learn more about your experience and perspective. My name is Charles T. Brown, Adjunct professor at Rutgers University and founder of Equitable Cities. This interview will take no more than one hour. This information will be used to identify opportunities for CDC to embed equitable access to physical activity opportunities for Black communities into its activity friendly routes to everyday destinations strategy. In order to get started,

CB 02:30

I need your permission to record as well as transcribe this information.

MM 02:47

I give you my permission.

CB 02:56

Please tell me why you chose this particular career path or journey.

MM 03:02

So I consider myself a public health practitioner, public health strategist. And I think back over like my educational career, in my professional career, I actually didn't go into public health knowingly. Growing up, I wanted to be a physician. So come from a rural area, South Carolina where your choices were either

doctor or lawyer. And so I took the path of wanting to be physician. I was a biology pre-med major in undergrad, and through various experiences, realized that it wasn't right for me, I had an opportunity to take some special courses to internships that introduced me to public health, and fell in love with it. So ultimately, it was for me, the desire to prevent disease versus treat disease, that really gravitated allowed towards public health. And so I do have a Master of Science in Public Health, which is research epidemiology focused. And I also have a Doctorate in Public Health Leadership. And so it's through the various opportunities that I have, and both educationally and professionally and then also just knowing more about where I come from, and my family background, my family health history, knowing the importance of the systems and the access issues that really do drive the trajectory of someone's health and well-being and so that's why I became a public health practitioner of wanting to be able to provide those different avenues to wellness into health, versus having sort of that back end, preventative, or I should say, tertiary, preventative approach in which you're treating disease once someone has been diagnosed. So, for me, it's primary prevention all the way.

CB 04:55

Please describe your thoughts or feelings related to identifying as black with any historically white dominated field or space.

MM 05:10

So I do identify as black, but also Asian, as well, I do predominantly refer to myself as the West African American female, which in and of itself is challenging to navigate being that I'm also a woman. So there are many challenges that come with that. And so that is also one of the reasons why I pursued a doctorate. Because sometimes it's not just your education or experience, you have to have those credentials behind your name in order to validate yourself in certain spaces, and to give yourself a platform, so well aware that being a double minority with respect to that, it provides some validity in some spaces, being that I do have a doctoral degree, but then also realizing even navigating those white spaces, sometimes it's not enough. But being able to, hopefully not just provide my insight and my thoughts, but also bearing the shoulders of those who, which I say and being able to share their thoughts or insights and things that are helping to promote and share their voices to

CB 06:18

When and where might you feel like it's not enough? Is there a particular experience or experiences that have given you the impression that even a doctorate at times is not enough?

MM 06:32

It is. I've noticed that when something as, I guess, trivial as using zoom, if I put doctor in front of my name, I get a certain response versus when I just have my name with no credentials. People respond differently to that. I also think that being in certain spaces, you're not comfortable or allowed to share some of your thoughts and your insights is minimized based on it, at least from my perception, based on my race, ethnicity, but then also my gender. And so there have been instances in which I've been in meetings that are predominantly white male, dominated, and have really been overlooked, or my comments haven't been taken to heart and lessons repeated by a white colleague, predominantly a male, white colleague.

CB 07:31

Speaking of gender, do you feel like your experience is different than that of a black male with a doctorate?

MM 07:40

I do, I think they're still male privilege that comes along with it, regardless of what race you have. So I definitely see that black males who have a PhD or other doctoral degrees are viewed maybe as more authoritative and more knowledgeable than a black female with the same credentials.

CB 08:01

Thanks for sharing that. Please describe how, if any, the pandemic has affected your physical activity opportunities or your views on being physically active in general.

MM 08:23

I would say, for me personally, it has an impact given that there are certain parameters that can be taken in terms of physically distancing oneself and parameters you can take in order to safeguard against the contraction of COVID-19. But in terms of a community and those that have been impacted, I do see that COVID-19 has really changed the way that people think about physical activity, things that they would have done in the past those group level activities, thinking about young men of color, who typically do sports related activities outside and that was circumvented by COVID-19. And then also thinking about another example, I think, it really speaks to the impact of something that I realized living in my neighborhood is that I wanted to visit parks and realizing that even though I come from a certain place of privilege, my educational background, my income, my neighborhood is not designed for people who don't have motorized transportation upon our truck in order to get to these places. And so realizing and wanting to participate in physical activity and not use a vehicle to get there, there are many barriers, physical barriers, safety barriers, that don't allow for that to happen.

CB 09:43

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements: the concept of 15 minutes cities?

MM 09:43

Only by definition only?

CB 09:43

Okay.

CB 09:43

Calm streets?

Yes. Okay, please tell me what thoughts come to mind. When I when I say calm streets,

MM 10:22

I'm thinking of those different types of strategies. Usually low-class, low-class strategies that are used to calm traffic. So whether it's tactical urbanism, crosswalks are installation, those types of things that are used to really allow motorists to slow down and reduce injury and reduce.

CB 10:49

Do you have any favorable or unfavorable views as it relates to concerts?

MM 10:55

I would say favorable news, I think for a lot of communities, they don't have the financial means to install major walkways and traffic lights. So it's a way one to have those installed at low cost. But then also, there's a big community engagement piece that's involved there. So bringing community members together, and where to install art beautify different spaces. So yeah, I would say I'm in favor of those.

CB 11:27

Do you express the same views for slow streets, safe streets, open streets and play streets?

MM 11:34

Yes, I think there, there are ways, again, I think the community aspect that those different types of, of events or strategies pose are helpful, I think people engage in them not realizing that the total impact and why they were designed, but it allows individuals to meet and greet their neighbors. So there's that the sort of, I guess, way that they're looking at reducing social isolation that comes with that. So I think overall, as a strategy in terms of transportation and safety, it's great, but then also thinking about the need to connect with our neighbors in the need to connect with our community members is also important.

CB 12:19

As well, now to some, some more transportation related to our routes to destination routes, destination plans and policies. Are you familiar with complete streets? Yeah.

12:31

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements:
Complete streets?

MM 12:41

Sidewalks

MM 12:47

When I think, going back to the example that I shared earlier there are many people who are pedestrians, either by necessity, or by desire. And so I think one of the key things that I've noticed that has been a complaint from people that I know, either professionally or personally, is that it's hard to get to places if they're not connected. And one of the major connectors is sidewalks. And so you have many neighborhoods, especially older neighborhoods that don't have an infrastructure in place to allow for all types of mobility, including Boston.

CB 13:25

Vision Zero.

MM 13:45

Safety. In terms of the premise behind it, the purpose behind Vision Zero is to increase safety so that there are zero deaths or injuries

CB 13:45

Comprehensive planning or master planning, like a town's master plan?

MM 13:56

Time consuming. Just thinking about I can, I'll confess, I've never worked on a master plan. But whenever I think about working with our transportation partners, if it's not in their master plan, it's not going to happen. And then there's the Long-Range Planning piece of it too. And so while we're wanting to work together, collaborating happens, immediate ideas that we want to put in place, but it's not in their master plan. So we have to wait five more years in order to make those infrastructure changes. And so it's like there's the long-term time-consuming planning process, but then also thinking about when you're actually able to actualize those plans. Now, many people at least professionally have moved on. Some of those residents may have moved out of those areas, and so they don't get to see the impact of those plans once they're fully implemented.

CB 14:57

Safe routes to school?

MM 15:02

Children. I think that's a given for me because they're in school, and I guess children is not just like the small human children, but they think about all the things that come with being a child in terms of wanting to ensure they're safe and they're cared for and they're nurtured. But also want to ensure that they have jovial experiences and not having to worry about getting to and from their place of education safely.

CB 15:36

Are you familiar with Single family zoning?

MM 15:40

No.

CB 15:41

Inclusionary zoning?

MM 15:44

A basic definition, but not much. I've heard of the term.

CB 15:48

What about ADUs(accessory dwelling units at use)?

MM 15:53

I've heard the term but not familiar.

CB 15:59

Please tell me how you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement and the Black Lives Matter organization.

MM 16:07

In terms of the organization, I'm not connected to it, in terms of like membership and attending events. I do know people who have been involved in the movement. I think there are mixed perceptions and ideas about the group as a whole. And I guess it depends on race, gender, ethnicity, what you know about it, what you don't know about it? What do you think? I think, for me, BLM, I think is a start, I think it was something that was much needed and the time in which it was developed. I think we as black, we haven't had those leaders since the Civil Rights era. And I think it was an attempt in order to really elevate the voices of black people. So again, I think it was needed at the time, I think there has been some fragmentation, as different sects have popped up across the country and somewhat dissimilar ideologies. But I think when I think that the term in general is overtly positive, because it's giving a voice to the voiceless, and really shining a light on some issues that haven't been addressed, at least as fervently as this one is trying to do.

CB 17:24

Please explain how the BLM movement has impacted either your attitudes, perceptions or vision for equitable and inclusive active living in this country.

MM 17:43

I would say if anything, it sorts of echoed a lot of these conversations that have been happening for decades. It brought visibility to it, as I mentioned before, really gave a voice and a platform to share those concerns on a broader scope. I think when I think of it, it's like, it's about time, because we're tired of having these conversations. It's like we're ready to move into action. And I feel like groups like BLM have done their part in a sense to try to put action to those words and those conversations that we've been having for so long.

CB 18:21

Please explain if there are other organizations besides BLM, that have influenced your attitude reception or views on active living.

MM 18:29

I would say maybe some smaller groups. But I would say it's probably been more so like local activists as opposed to groups. So it's individuals who haven't truly organized themselves into a large movement or large organization, but it's those individuals who have a platform. So be it with nonprofit organizations, philanthropic organizations, and then some universities in health focus groups, using their title in the professional cloud to be able to share those. So I won't say that there's any particular organization but more so individual advocates.

CB 19:12

Please tell me about your views on law enforcement in this context of active living.

MM 19:44

I have a lot of mixed feelings about law enforcement in general. And it's primarily stemmed from interaction that I've had, which has been limited, but thinking about black and brown males and their interaction with law enforcement haven't been positive. I don't know of any black male that I know that hasn't had a negative and account can encounter with law enforcement. And so when I think of the purpose of them, I'm perplexed, because that's not the reality that I see in terms of engaging law enforcement. So I would say, by and large, it's not favorable, just based on experiences that have been shared with me. But I'm hoping that it can change in terms of navigating spaces, I think it's law enforcement can be a hindrance, depending upon what you look like and where you live. And some people aren't able to move as freely as they would like to, their emotions and existence are questioned in certain spaces. So I think that's all due to engagement in historical trauma brought on by law enforcement.

CB 21:05

Please explain how policing might impact your perception of safety and desire to be active outdoors.

MM 21:14

So when you say policing, are you talking about law enforcement or citizen police, like Karenisms, however you define it? Well, I guess I'll define it both people who are sworn to protect, and then those who take it upon themselves, protect or whatever their definition of it is. Again, I think like with my response with law enforcement, it's pretty much the same. People are affronted with individuals with either real or perceived authority that makes them feel unwelcome and unsafe in certain spaces, people are questioned and denied access, just based upon the way that they look. So all of those things make it difficult to navigate, presumably, I guess, presumed public spaces.

CB 22:10

So you felt the need to distinguish or further define policing, not just from the law enforcement standpoint, but also, you mentioned Karen's, why the need to do so?

MM 22:25

We've known that this has happened been happening for a while, but now there's like, actual, like, a name, who qualified in a certain way and modified in a certain way. But I think it's important because it's not just a uniformed police officer, that's policing our streets and there are individuals who have deputized themselves and feel like it's their duty to, have a deep understanding and knowledge of what's going on. And then they take it upon themselves to enforce these made believe laws and rules that they've come up with themselves. So I think it's important because both impact individuals black and brown individuals, as you're traversing public spaces, or even private spaces, or own their own homes, can be impacted by people who have taken upon themselves to have this level of authority.

CB 23:25

Please describe the emotions you feel when walking, bicycling, waiting for and taking public transportation, or hopping on an e-scooter in your community.

MM 23:53

I would say walking would probably be the best example. It's anxiety provoking. Going back to the example of a local park that's, a quarter of a mile away, which isn't a long distance, and there are literally no sidewalks, and you have traffic in both directions in there's like a goat path that has been created. But when it's raining, it's muddy. It's not, easy to, to walk through. And you don't want to walk on the grass, you want to walk on something that's paved and something that's comfortable with something that's even space. So anxiety is one thing and then the other one is just I think, disappointment, maybe another way like why does my neighborhood have those types of facilities? Who thought we weren't good enough in a sense to have that in this neighborhood? And then why funding and other efforts are put into some neighborhoods and not others.

CB 25:09

Any concerns about your personal safety with regard to traffic?

MM 25:13

Yes, motor vehicles. Not in terms of like safety of individuals per se, it's not a thing because there are no side sidewalks. there not a lot of people that are really walking.

CB 25:33

Are there other areas of town, those areas that when you're being active you feel differently in?

MM 25:50

So if I'm in specific parts, so the neighborhood usually downtown area there, there are concerns of safety, both from a pedestrian motor vehicle standpoint, but then also thinking about crime, personal person crime. So yeah, there is concern about safety. And especially, depending upon the time of day or time of night, that I'm out there are concerns about safety, especially being a woman. I think we're always guarded, when we're in certain spaces. And certain times of the day, I'm looking for one not wanting to appear vulnerable, always having some sort of weapon at our disposal, whether it's our keys, or mace or something else. But always being aware of that, in addition to that, we have to be mindful as women what we're wearing not wanting to attract attention. So it's a lot that goes on who at least my mind and in speaking to other women, the same thing that we're thinking about so many different things, not just out to a destination in how we're getting there.

CB 27:02

Please explain how your experiences might differ from your White counterparts.

MM 27:20

From a motor vehicle pedestrian standpoint. Based on the statistics, I'm more likely to be injured or killed in an accident, versus my white counterparts. In terms of crime, I'm not really sure based on my experience, I think it would determine which particular neighborhood I'm in, what the population makeup is inherently determine if I'm at higher risk, and others, especially in comparison to my white

counterparts. But I think for me, it's more of a matter of am I going to get hit by a car, or if I will be harmed, assaulted, but I never really thought about that piece in terms of my race more so my gender.

CB 28:23

Please tell me what thoughts or emotions come to mind when discussing systemic and institutional racism, particularly in the context of active living.

MM 28:40

The thoughts that come to mind, I think are probably related to some things that I've said before. I think there are things that are done to appease people. For example, they just made Juneteenth a federal holiday. So people are excited about that, but it deters us from the work that needs to be done. And I think there are instances in which that does happen. You throw a bone, but you haven't really looked at the deep-seated issues and tried to resolve those. And so I think it's the same in terms of allocation of funding in terms of resources, in terms of facilities in terms of engaging the community. I think that those are challenges and barriers that we still face

CB 29:36

Please explain your thoughts on gentrification and displacement, particularly in the context of active living.

MM 29:49

I would say that those that the most impacted by both are individuals who are black and brown. Typically, those neighborhoods who are deemed as undesirable, we know by maybe looking at them, maybe they're older, maybe they do have a little bit more incidences of crime. But I think when new development is coming in, or infrastructure changes are happening, they overlook the social capital. And those intangible things that those neighborhoods provide, the sense of community, the sense of pride, the history behind those areas, I think is just looked at, what is it? What is the value the quote, unquote monetary value, not the totality, the richness that those areas have?

CB 30:55

Please tell me what your top priorities would be if you had unlimited power and resources, particularly in the context of active living.

MM 31:41

That's tough. And I say that, because I don't think that I'm equipped to make those decisions for the communities that need it the most. I guess using those resources would determine what the communities wanted and what they needed. And then let them make the decisions on how they transform their communities. I think it's, even with unlimited resources, still the same sort of intervening on as opposed to working with. So it may seem like I'm dancing around the question, but for me, I don't think that I'm equipped to make those decisions. But I guess, depending upon what the community's needs, being able to address them. So whether it's installing sidewalks and crosswalks, these things, and solving part parks, it's beautifying their spaces, if it's education, so I think all of those things could be in that list of things that I would want to do.

CB 32:54

Please tell me specific partners you would want to engage to advance your top priorities.

MM 33:25

I'll just I'll just keep it general, because I think there are many organizations that I probably don't know by name, but outside of traditional public health, hospitals industry, thinking about planners, painting organizations, historical societies, art societies, schools, businesses. And I guess from a larger organizational standpoint, I think groups like the CDC and NACD. Government alliances, all of those would have a stake in this as well.

CB 34:21

Please tell me what specific actions the federal government can take to address the issues you've identified.

MM 34:44

Resources are number one, so there needs to be funding, infrastructure funding. There needs to be, in addition to that, minimum policies put into place so thinking about in terms of revitalization, building new developments, having policies in place that do speak to the need not to gentrify and not to displace people and to actively engage the community in making those decisions.

CB 35:21

Please explain to me your strategic use of social media (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and, etc.) and other mediums (e.g., podcasts) to highlight and/or address inequities within active transportation as well as other intersecting issues.

MM 35:55

I would say not. And there's probably two factors: one is time, but the other is resources. A lot of times, we're asked or prescribed to enact certain activities, but we aren't provided the resources to be able to do it. So it makes it challenging to tack those tasks on to your program coordinator program managers job when it's not really their level of expertise. And so because of that, we haven't been able to effectively and strategically use social media and other forms of media in order to share those messages, which is something that I do regret and wish we had more capacity to do. Personally, I would say I don't use it as strategically, usually, my posts are probably emotion driven. So if something has excited me positively or negatively. So it's like it's venting, or something really cool is coming through my timeline or experience something. So I'm sharing it. So I mean, it's all emotional, usually. But it's not all negatively emotional, if that makes sense.

CB 37:31

Please tell me how CDC/Active People Healthy Nation can help communicate about equitable active living.

MM 38:09

They need to hire local community members in order to share the message. I think there is especially during the global pandemic, there is a lot of distrust of government organizations, especially CDC. And so having someone with the title of CDC I think, is going to deter a lot of communities, those that are disproportionately impacted, like the ones that you've mentioned, black, brown, low income. So that would be my first advice. While they can work together with both professionals to develop them. I don't think it's necessary the right stuff to have them then communicate those messages. They need to be heard by people who have those lived experiences and sort of serve as those either formal or informal leadership to be able to share those.

CB 39:10

You did some work on the lack of black male representation in health, not black males, but minority males. How does that play or not putting this this conversation? What would you recommend to CDC as it relates to your findings?

MM 39:33

It plays heavily, because in my study, my findings were one that there is not adequate representation of minority males in the public health sector. Which is a disservice because we are very much community oriented. As an inane public, we interface with the public a lot and it's challenging to work with the public and gain trust in the public if you are not representative of them. And so by having a large deficit and the number of males, it's hard to connect with specific members of the community because they don't feel like we are of them, and we are for them. So I think that there is a lot that can be done to share more about public health and what the wide variety of careers are the multiple pathways into this work, and the various different things that public health impacts, I think, at least in on a personal note, when I tell people I work in public health, they say, Do I inspect pools? Or do I inspect food, and that's it, they have no idea that public health can really touch everything. And so I think being able to share all the different career paths and include lanes into the field are important to draw up interest, generally, but also to really get more minority males into the field.

CB 41:07

Excellent. That concludes my interview for today. Thank you.

Transcript: Courtney Williams

Wed, 7/14 12:20PM • 1:09:50

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, bike, space, streets, pandemic, black lives matter, organizations, black, bike lanes, engage, cyclists, white, point, brown, folks, structural racism, feel, opportunity, safety, cars

SPEAKERS

Charles T. Brown and Courtney Williams

As part of SOPHE's cooperative agreement with the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Division of Nutrition and Physical Activity (DNPAO), we will be conducting qualitative interviews to better understand Black/African American expert discussions around the historical context and consequences of inequities that have discouraged physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities (e.g., limited access to safe and accessible routes and/or destinations, feeling unsafe in their neighborhoods, etc.). We would like to better understand the barriers, racial inequities, and facilitators related to activity-friendly routes to everyday destinations (routes to destinations) that influence physical activity among Black/African American individuals/communities.

CB 00:04

You have been identified as an expert transportation and/or land use Thought Leader. We are interested in interviewing you to learn more about your experience and perspective. My name is Charles T. Brown, Adjunct professor at Rutgers University and founder of Equitable Cities. This interview will take no more than one hour. This information will be used to identify opportunities for CDC to embed equitable access to physical activity opportunities for Black communities into its activity friendly routes to everyday destinations strategy.

Do I have your permission to record and to transcribe today's conversation?

CW 03:05

Yes, I Courtney Williams give permission for recording and transcription.

CB 03:17

Please tell me why you chose this particular career path or journey

CW 03:42

I definitely chose it. My career path started out as volunteerism that was somewhat self-motivated. In that I moved to New York City after Graduate School in 2009. I purchased a bicycle I wanted to ride it as much as I thought was safe for me, as a black woman to be at. So, within New York City itself, you know, everything is pretty much built up and getting outside of the city with me and going to Yonkers and Long Island in places that have a not quiet history of hostility for black or brown people. And so, I then started volunteering for a National Black Woman's organization that was labeled as self as a movement and things like that. And so, I started organizing for the goal of trying to connect with more women of color like myself, so that I would not be by myself, and enabling myself to go into further geographies and enjoy my passion for cycling even more. I sought out professional opportunities within the traditional bike space. So, the nonprofits that advocate and organizers of things and safety organizations that were lobbying me, as I was doing all this organizing the black and brown women, they in my face, they would be, oh, you're doing such a great thing, yada, yada, yada, but then when I would see their job descriptions and apply for them, no one would actually hire me. So, to that end, you know, I decided to stop organizing for free because I was putting in more work than the founder of that organization. And when I realized, I couldn't get hired, essentially the old guard, or the still president guard of these organizations, I said, well, I recognize that there was a disconnect between the knowledge that black and brown people had of organized cycling. And then, from looking at the organizations who I was trying to work for, who would do these giant events and go through into black and brown neighborhoods, I recognized that they weren't trying to engage, or were failing to engage. So, I said, all right, I know both sides of this coin, let me be a help in that I can bridge the outreach.

And I can, you know, I already brought a network of black and brown cyclists, I can bring them to this to this opportunity. And I can help these white organizations do better. And so that's when I founded the Brown Bike Girl, and the name is rooted in the identity that when I was trying to get started, and, you know, really understanding this paradox, last paradigm, that I was oftentimes the only simultaneously brown and female person in the room trying to do advocacy. So that's my professional career. So, I think I registered in 2016, and really get going 2017. I am formerly a consultant. But in being a consultant, I tell people, I if there's a solution to a problem, I fix it. So, for black and brown communities, and this will be my first formal gig, I actually organized the bike tour, like a bike tour, with 17 people's first, eventually, the 200 people, you know, it's the thing that I go back to every year for black and brown neighborhoods. And yeah, that's a pride point for me. But then most recently, last year, because of the work that I do, some colleagues around the nation in one is South Africa, nominated me, or suggested that BYCS, headquartered in Holland, the Netherlands, nominated me to be the bike mayor in New York City's first biking mayor, which is a citizen advocate role. And I just continue to do what I do. But I actually didn't want to go deeper into it, because I didn't want to deal with angry white men who were going to be upset that they didn't get the title for fact of being here longer. But we had the pandemic hit. And nobody from any of these very large organizations were offering any clear guidance to help the inevitable and now realized bike boom of cyclists, no one was giving them knowledge on how to cycle where to cycle, just safety tips that I felt were very, very necessary for the influx of 1000s of people now moving through streets. So that's why when and why to go the wrong thing.

CB 08:51

Please describe your thoughts or feelings related to identifying as Black within a historically White-dominated field or space.

CW 09:10

The irony is I haven't had to, but at the same time I do work with a lot of white people. It's just one of those things as a Black person, you already know that you're going to go into essentially a space of potential insincerity is really what white dominated space in the bike world is symbolic of to me. At the same time, most of my supporters with whom I have regular engagement I'd like to point that out because I don't know the entirety everybody because on social media, but I would think between my Patreon patrons and folks who I work with most regularly, most of my supporters are in fact, white folks who appreciate me for being insightful, like that's part of my, I hate to say, like part of my brand, but I mean, as other people interpret brands, yes, but even though my formal gig is consultancy, I make it a point, just for the sake of it, meaning things that need to be said need to be said. And insights need to be given. Because if you just wait for somebody to hire you to tell them to do the right thing, that's not going to happen. So yeah, I do a lot of insight giving speaking to events in trying to present proper framing, especially for the newly engaged, or newly awakened, white, or non-black cyclists or outdoor person, people in my rail, you know, so, yeah, white spaces. I'm not intimidated by them. For whatever reason, I guess I just grew up with a mother who gave me the facts on what professional life is going to be like, and also unfortunately to have gone through institutions, you know, predominantly white institutions. For undergraduate, for a boarding school, I went to boarding school for a minute for undergraduate and graduate. So, the idea of having to deal with white folks the way some people call it, like, oh, God, the white people does not dawn on me, but it does not mean I'm

overly trusting, or at all delusions about the potential drawbacks, microaggressions insincerity ease that might come into territory. I hope so.

CB 12:11

Please describe how, if any, the pandemic has affected your physical activity opportunities or your views on being physically active in general.

CW 12:35

In my own personal life, it has taken a toll. I am heavier than I've ever imagined that I would be in life. You know, I think the pandemic inspired rightfully so a lot of fear and people and uncertainty about how they should physically engage with their space and their neighbors. One of the pieces of guidance I was trying to give in the beginning of the pandemic as Bike Mayor as I hadn't really taken on a role and it wasn't even so much advice as a was just trying to have the conversation and keep folks up to date with what seemed like reasonable practices for how we should or shouldn't gather or how we should ride with face masks off because it just seemed like there was a lack of meaningful insight coming out of the bicycling and outdoors community. It was either full stop push them, people were kind of going ravenous because once you get used to a certain physical routine, it becomes your norm and you get that like runner's high craziness or people were just refuse, you know, to let anything become between them and their routine, which was also another extreme. So, I think people just felt uncertain. And that plus the emotional psychological toll that a lot of people feel it certainly shut me down as an individual for a while. So no, I just think the pandemic put everything in flux, but in terms of people having a plan for their physical nature everything was shit. But I do think one positive that has come from this point at which we are at now is that there's been much more conversation in like, sincere acceptance about self-care as a real thing, because we all needed to care for ourselves that we saw it like, it wasn't just like, its thing I should do, no, I need to care for myself because no one else can and I'm alone, you know, I'm in a space, that as well as body positivity. Look, your body has helped you survive, whatever the situation is, and it's going to look different, it might look different, and you know what, every fucking body else looks different, maybe. So that's also okay. So, I am pro that outcome. But I'm also pro losing 50 pounds. So, there you go.

CB 16:01

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements:

15-minutes cities?

CW 16:20

Not achievable everywhere. Yeah, that'd be nice. But no.

CB 16:24

Calm streets?

CW 16:35

Not certain.

CB 16:39

Open streets?

CW 16:43

Open streets were the things that the white people glommed on to in their urban vision to dine Alfresco. Like, that's the summary of open streets. For me, open streets, in theory would be great if they especially in New York City, had been implemented, equitably, meaning that there was a huge clan for the open streets they were designated. But the method through which they were enabled, as in like, local keepers and stuff, were only actually actionable in white areas with these safety advocates and high-income folks. In the areas where I do the bike tour. Black and Brown folks are like, What the fuck is an open street in even the police officers in the districts where I had to talk to them? They're like, no, that street is definitely open. So, the equity was not real.

CB 17:42

Thoughts about slow streets, safe streets or play streets?

CW 17:52

I think they all have the same potential; all interventions have the same potential to end likelihood to be inequitably distributed because of who has the opportunity to become a dedicated advocate. And most of the time, it's middle- and upper-class white folks who forced the issue. Not that black and brown people don't see that their streets are unsafe, but they tend to be unfamiliar with how much of a degree of power they have in the civic engagement process to move those things forward.

CB 18:38

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements:

Complete Streets?

CW 19:00

The ideal, it's the ideal thing, it's what should happen. I stand by it as a practice a complete streets plan.

CB 19:11

Vision Zero?

CW 19:16

Currently improving because of the equity , but that enforcement piece needs to be uniformly, or slash universally divorced from it for equity stake.

CB 19:32

Master plans or comprehensive plans?

CW 19:36

Not new because as an urban planner, like you should always have a master complete plan that drives your vision. But yeah, more people should happen specifically for free escape and safety.

CB 19:52

Safe Routes to school?

CW 19:56

Excellent. I wish they could. The more 15 minutes at every route could be safe for our kids. Kids should be counted about amongst the most vulnerable in cities.

CB 20:12

Single-Family zoning.

CW 20:18

Suburbs and yeah, I have nothing more to say.

CB 20:25

Inclusionary zoning?

CW 20:28

Yes, ideal. It's ideal, right, the more people we have together, the more we're able to do things like have smaller cities that can thrive off public transportation and bicycling.

CB 20:47

ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units)

CW 20:52

I don't know for some reason the word pet project comes to mind only because people fetishize tiny houses. But accessory dwelling units are absolutely something we should have more of. As our population ages, you know, like mother-in-law houses is up there actually, houses.

CB 21:12

Please tell me how you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement and the Black Lives Matter organization.

CW 21:25

Black Lives Matter movement is my life. It is just a formal way some people have put together a campaign of ever evolving points that matter. I think, as an organization, they are fine. And I do say this with awareness as a Black woman, a Black cis woman. Because in my life, I have had Black cis men being mad at Black Lives Matter for being so broad in exploring and advocating for anti-oppression. Because anti oppression altogether does cross from race into gender. A lot of black men unfortunately, feel attacked and don't wish to support the women who are at the helm of Black Lives Matter. And it's just tragic. Really.

CB 22:36

Please explain how the BLM movement has impacted either your attitudes, perceptions or vision for equitable and inclusive active living in this country.

CW 22:51

I don't think Black Lives Matter hasn't impacted me as in the sense that it's influenced me or awakened me to anything new. I do think Black Lives Matter has been good at articulating ideas and collaborating, putting together. It's just a new version, not even new version, a new iteration of the overall civil rights movement that's broadened. That's more articulate in what it's asking for in terms of, like I said, anti-pressure. Yeah. So, I have my interactions with Black Lives Matter in terms of ideologically hashtag social media is that I've had to frame my speech about using bikes and showing up on bikes and participating in protests, because so many more people are on bikes to participate in Black Lives Matter protests. So ideologically nothing has changed for me. But framing it for other people's consumption via Black Lives Matter is something I've had to do.

CB 24:20

Please explain if there are other organizations beside BLM that have influenced your attitudes, perceptions or views on active living.

CW 24:31

Yes and no, out of the past year of participate and the problem/challenge with not your question but like this whole speaking of Black Lives Matter is that is it's a movement and it's just people who come and go. So, speaking from the point of engaging with cyclists who go to protest, some of them launch some bike groups around the country, but especially in New York have essentially founded their identities out of participating in Black Lives Matter to various degrees, i.e., many of them have established themselves. Because they went to a protest for Black Lives Matter once, and then from that they've ripped into their own companies, clubs, continual protest organizations, etc. And because they now exist, and because they've successfully brought out a lot of black and brown people onto bikes, my challenge is trying to get those people who are now on bikes, for whatever their reason is to understand the greater connection with their mind, their body, their politics, all together, and how we can be powerful for active living streets advocacy together

CB 26:04

Are you speaking to co-option at all or specific demographic groups that have leveraged the Black Lives Matter movement to their benefit?

CW 26:20

Yes, and no, but mostly yes. So, the problem is, I would define corruption more so as intentionally engaging with a subject matter for the sake of then morphing it into something else. I think what has happened is, and I do really credit it to a lot of generational difference in understanding politics or fidelity in integrity to causes as well as motivations for clout that have become very strong because of social media, is that folks saw after their sincere participation, what they were capable, what in quantity, they were capable of drawing out of other people. And then when they realize that they now had a pool and an audience, they reassess, how can I use basically use the momentum I have, to my own personal advantage? Not that they engage with Black Lives Matter for that purpose, but it became that.

CB 27:37

Has this hurt, benefited? Or did it in any way make any difference in your lives or the lives of other people of color, Who already in that space? Like what was the impact, positive, negative or otherwise? When you say that space, could you be more specific, so you think about those who continue the conversation that you just had about? You didn't perceive it as them co-opting what you perceived it as they had good intentions or engaging with Black Lives Matter movement. But as a result of that engagement, they saw an opportunity, they've taken advantage of that opportunity, positively or negatively. How has them taking advantage of that opportunity impacted people like you positively or negatively, we're already part of this before these people got engaged. Gotcha.

CW 28:44

I have honestly been stressed the fuck out, oh, all of last year into this year about it. Because, again, going back to what seems to be matters of motivation, and self-love the organizers of these events in clubs or whatever you want to call these gatherings of people. They, they are resistant to mentorship. They're resistant to greater community. They seem to evidence of fear of anybody else who actually knows what they're doing in this space already. So it's been a negative in the sense that I keep making this point is in a bigger sense, a negative that these folks have these attitudes of not wanting to be unified with each other, or with black and brown advocates who already have been a part of the conversation who have been moving the needle because them, they are just people who are on bikes and not to be, you know, put anybody that there are people who are on bikes, they're enjoying the use of their bikes. And because they aren't trying to be in conversation or learn anything sideways, backwards or forwards, they are restarting the conversation back at square one with these white organizations. So, whereas 10 years ago, the conversation was black and brown people do ride bikes, you know, that was the affirmative, we are here we are present. And you see us, and you need to respect us to represent us. And then now, in 2019 2021, we have managed to move the conversation into more specific things like talking about an equitable distribution of bike lanes and safety things and equity, like, how are people engaging with us or what they should be doing to empower us etc., etc. Like actionable days, these folks have come along and, in their height, and willing and their desire to ally themselves with politicians or whatever big thing comes along. There, we started a conversation in ignorance of, we're here to, we're past that, like you're sent us backwards, and it enables organizations and brands and whomever else don't really want to do real work and transform their organizations. It enables them to stay in that space and pretend that they're doing the work by having a conversation that they normally have already had before. And so that is a negative. And I do think is also a negative to every rider in that club, or whatever we're calling them. Because though the leadership is not interested in powering those individuals to the better, most of those people who are riding in giant groups are happy to be in those groups. Because they don't feel safe riding on their own. But they also never will learn how to ride on their own, because their leaders won't do the things to like, teach them the basics on how to change your tire, how to ride the street, you know. So once this trend fizzles away, I fear that we won't see individual and continue empowered black cyclists.

CB 32:21

That point about restarting the conversation, you know, and those who are doing this work in a way, that momentum because of the restarting has been lost. You know, every time you have to restart, you have to regain momentum rebuild, allies reinvest, you know, it takes additional resources, etc. There's something there, though, and I have to move on. But I want to make a point. There's

something there, though, about the masses not knowing about the work that was done prior by people like

CW 33:09

And it's all readily available. And that's the problem I feel that is available, at least, I don't know what other people in other cities have done. And I mean, I know you do have to be a bit of a bicycle street safety nerd to really be in it. But there is not one organization who might have not sincerely like tried to chase down and connect with in my city. That I know. Like, if anybody in New York City says we didn't know we had a bike mayor, we didn't know that she offered us free education for our club. We didn't know this, this map. Third, they cannot say that because I won't let that be that I failed to do my best toward

CB 33:58

pushing back on them. Okay. In respect, less so about the organizations in their awareness, but more so about the people that you felt become reliant on these mass writings, they may not benefit from the services that you would have provided to them to make them more independent. What about them in their awareness of the existence of your efforts and the efforts of others similar to you? Is it possible that on a mass scale, they simply were not aware? I do not.

CW 34:37

I do not have any feelings toward like, the fault like the followers, like the followers, right? I can't blame them because you go to leadership and with the hopes that leadership will disseminate information and do the right thing and that's simply hasn't happened. So, in my own it pays me to do this but like I feel like I have to play a kind of business poachy game where it's just like, well, sorry, I don't ride with you. And sorry, you don't, I can already tell that you're not, maybe not a fan of me, but you're not open to what I got. So now I'm going to have to spend time on individual cyclists, I'm going to have to pop up at your event, and regardless of what you're doing, I'm going to have to fly them, and I'm going to have to talk to them. And I'm going to have to co-op, what you get it. And it's not what I would prefer to do at all. But it isn't about them. And it isn't about me, it's about bigger safety.

CB 35:34

And so, if I hear you correctly, then you felt or feel the onus is on the organizations that are now in this space they should have because of their awareness of what you and others are doing, come to you. And then this be something that's done together, as opposed to them now using their power, their influence and their resources to do it independent of you're involved.

CW 36:02

Absolutely, I don't think that anybody is required to do anything because of me or with me, I want to make that very clear. No, but I believe that this is just a general theory of leadership, what a leader is, a leader is somebody who guides, their followers or whatever want to call her toward their best self. And a smart leader understands that, to sustain leadership, you have to enable these people to be okay. And on a moral level, it just really disturbs me that that someone can call themselves a leader and not care about what happens to their followers. Once they've become aware that there's more or that it's lacking, or that is a safety issue, that then becomes just negligence.

CB 37:06

Now this is a question best reserved for them, but not as good of you only for your opinion. Why do you think the process of not engaging with people like yourself was not followed? What is it? Why did they not involve you and others to the degree that they should have? Is it personal, is it professional? What do you think the reasons are?

CW 37:35

I think the people's willingness to accept to \ be outshone momentarily. That's, you know, that's just a level of maturity.

CW 37:51

that's just emotional and psychological maturity. And again, it's a theory of leadership. Some people lead by being, you know, all powerful, and they don't want anyone else to know that someone more, you know, whatever fill in the adjective is exist. They have fear attached to the thought, again, and I really do think is generational or exacerbated by the way like social media has got people's brains thinking, if I let someone else know that someone's more knowledgeable than me, they'll stop following me, they'll stop showing up for me, they'll go to them. And this isn't a matter, I just wish people would understand that it's not a matter of allegiance, right? No one gets all of their knowledge from one place or one person. And I tried my best to really frame myself as a resource to others. But I do think it's a maturity thing. I think as folks who are just folks on bikes that they don't under they didn't initially come into understanding how much these other topics matter for their own well-being. And once they had already kind of set a tone of being social and being cool, because it is very much a let's photograph it let's look sexy, glossy cut a they that they just want to continue with what they've started. They don't want to they are not yet at the place where they want to evolve into more.

CB 39:40

Please describe the emotions you feel when walking, bicycling, waiting for and taking public transportation, or hopping on an e-scooter in your community.

CW 40:21

My unique, not so unique. But again, black female body walking through space or moving through space, right is number one, from the step out of my doors. It's like what hostility slash harassment and I'm alone I going to receive for man, sexual advances, that's number one, you know, because then you have to stand around and wait for space, you got to stuff like that at the same time. Ironically, I do feel that my femaleness protects me a bit on the road, unfortunately, because people tend to believe that women are less capable. In physical activity, I think that people allow me more space and are less likely to be aggressive at me than they would if I were the male version of myself. Um, and I know for certain that it has spared me interactions with the cops when I've run a light or just been around. So, my, my version of traffic safety is not necessarily about the movement, it's about the being present amongst potential social threats, while in traffic, or entering into a vehicle that can put me in the traffic.

CB 41:48

Please explain how your experiences might differ from your White counterparts.

CW 41:57

I mean, if I was white female version of myself will probably still get the same street harassment situation, probably the same treatment, regarding beliefs about my ability to handle a bike and whatever else I'm doing. I think that white folks are not particularly concerned with the police. And if they are going to get involved with the police. Because of something they've done wrong, they'll get out of it. I don't know. I mean, it's easy, breezy. The reason he's out here, just running lights and not knowing how to bike and get being okay.

CB 42:38

Please explain how policing might impact your perception of safety and desire to be active outdoors.

CW 42:57

For myself, I'm not so I am not concerned in the traditional, you know, narrative like the police go get me if I do something out of Why? Because again, I really do think they've been training folks to just not engage with women, especially if they're like wearing skirts, or anything overtly feminine, where somebody could claim it was like, they were stopped for visible sexual reasons. But as somebody who actually bike camps, like I go far out in the woods and things of that nature, I do sometimes wonder if the police and law enforcement will protect me in a non-traditional, you know, it's not an urban space, where there's witnesses to what the interaction is like. So, I do wonder if I will be protected by law enforcement not even concerned that they're going to hurt me just will they show up for me?

CB 43:56

Are you saying like outside of an urban setting where there are less eyes, my new wonder if they would protect here? Is it about other people being present? Or is it simply the map the difference between an urban and a roll?

CW 44:16

Yeah, it's about so more specifically, just to get context, I will go upstate by 100 miles. So, these are smaller towns, there's white people for the most part of low-income white folk. I guess the idea in my mind is that the law enforcement in smaller white spaces are just townspeople. And if I perceive that the townspeople are not open and protective of black people, and that there are no liberals or not enough liberals, right, the COP is just another person with unwelcoming ideology. And so, if they're unwelcoming and don't want to be there, In the first place, should I enter an emergency situation or be lost or you know, need them? I am not confident that I will receive the help I need.

CB 45:14

Please tell me what thoughts or emotions come to mind when discussing systemic and institutional racism, particularly in the context of active living.

CW 45:27

Oh, boy, I think I do think that structural racism and active living are recently getting put together. And we're really starting to examine how does an outdoors have racism in it, other than the unwelcome spaces, you know, white spaces, black faces kind of thing. I think there's a lot to unpack. And it's being unpacked. I think specifically of like conservation movements. And who is who is not privy to be like your park rangers, or the conservators and colleges and things of that nature. But what I say

goes, active sports, structural racism, I think mostly about Native Americans is their land struggles. And it is maybe just because of the people I've gotten to know in this past two years, but like, I think beyond myself to them, and trying to work towards respecting their issues, and letting their issues inform how I engage with active sport, outside of my urban environment, if that makes sense.

CB 47:01

Please explain your thoughts on gentrification and displacement, particularly in the context of active living.

CW 47:48

Right. Well, once upon a time I endeavor to study being the distribution of facilities for activated IE bike lanes, amongst red lined, or formerly redlined neighborhoods. And versus the ones that were blue in green prefer in reserve, white folks. And, I mean, what I did find was that I had to two things. One was a challenge. The challenge and as it relates to gentrification is that so many of the red line districts at this point in American history have been taken over and made into prefer gentrified areas, right. So, it was skewing results, where you would see that actually, there were a whole lot of bike lanes, which we didn't expect in formerly read on areas, either because the city had once or twice made an effort to do an equity initiative to get bike lanes to those places. And or, like I said, a red area now a population certification area. So that was skewing things. But the ultimate result is based on the hypothesis was that there won't be as much safety facilities in red lined and formerly redlined and yellow areas. And what we did find is that bike lanes are mostly everywhere. However, the degree of the best kinds of bike lanes so protected bike lanes, bike lanes with physical barriers that will stop a car from slamming into a human. Those are actually in all white areas or white high-income areas. And so, because I don't have GIS skills and couldn't find a GIS person, by research I stopped there. But diversification definitely plays a humongous role in that position. Physical states as well as all the black people are always fearing that a bike lane is going to be vitrification is coming. And I have to always say this from the beginning is that, again, a lot of folks don't understand the long-term nature of planning and real estate, such that if anything shows up in your neighborhood, it's probably been in the works for 20 years. But they're only seeing you know what they're experiencing on the back end. So yes, by the time a biplane shows up, your neighborhood is being gentrified, but the plan for that gentrification has already been in the works for 20-25 years. And it's a real struggle to convince people of that, because it's a narrative that they're so used to believing. And it's what they feel that they're experiencing that you can't really invalidate it, you can only hope that they trust that history that you share with them.

CB 51:00

Please tell me what your top priorities would be if you had unlimited power and resources, particularly in the context of active living.

CW 51:27

So huge if I had unlimited resources, okay, so one, I would pick up all the cars and they would have to go somewhere else, like, you know what I would do? Okay, this is what I would get, definitely the cars are in the way, I am not a hater of cars, but the cars need to go, especially in New York, because we have such constrained space. And I could build like giant car parks. You have to go fit your car from wherever that is. But then I will put down all kinds of mass transit, right. So, like, you can't get on a

little mass transit to go to the place to go get your car, but you can't drive your car in the city. It's because you're going upstate you can use the car, but just not for here, because it doesn't make any damn sense. Now, of course, that there are people with disabilities, like wheelchairs, but I got that covered. So, we go have little fans and whatnot that were more effectively than the horrible accessorize, we have taken care of folks with physical limitations. Yeah, I would remove digital pass quickly.

CB 52:39

Do you feel that way about areas outside of New York as well? You know, in resources, like you can do whatever you want. So, do you feel the same about other parts of the US?

CW 52:57

Stark, New York. I really don't think about. Let's see, let me think about home if I were home, which is Northwest Indiana. I think public transit needs to come back period. I think if people could be bought out of their cars, their leases and whatever, whatever goes with the car, that would be the most sane thing to do. Because also these ozone action days, and the climate change is so horrendous. Yeah, I would just buy everybody out of the cars and put cars in a designated space. And you know, you got to introduce a bit of inconvenience enough inconvenience to make people not even want to have a car and enough convenience that they don't need it. So, I would make that happen. I would buy everybody a bike, and or free the bikes from the Department of Sanitation, that they just be collected and fix all those. But everybody should have options to bike to the point where people wouldn't steal bikes, because everybody got one. So, I'll stop there. You don't have to stop unless you want to stop. I don't want to own time, but no, okay. This is very important. Okay, this is the important one, okay, um, I would make I would make driver schools for cycling. Now that you have to be licensed because licenses can be prohibitive and track people who don't need to be tracked and we need to look we'll say, but I would definitely put more I'll put more money into Departments of Transportation that do it then do exist currently. And I would enable them to have bike education and somehow get the DMV to do more bike education in dry auto driver education. Be shutting down some streets. And or no, I would build bicycle highways, the whole point is separation. But such things in the air are cool. Build some bicycle highways. So that bikes are separated. And if I could knock down things that were not historical, I guess, to make, make more separation on the streets, which is a super important issue right now. I believe the modes of transportation need to be separated by their speed or their potential for speed, as well as some other factors, but it needs to be worked out. So right now, we have so many different types of e-bikes. On the streets, we have throttle rooms, we have pedal assist, we have blah, blah, blah. And the scooters. Like I know somebody who sells scooters, I go 70 miles an hour, those things should not be close to each other. And they shouldn't be close to a walking human being, they should be close to a human being who's mostly exposed because they can hurt them, knock them over. So, if I have the ability to open up space wide enough to safely separate modes of mobility, I definitely would priority. That's a huge priority.

CB 56:26

Please tell me specific partners you would want to engage to advance your top priorities.

CW 56:50

I want to be honest; this is so I mean, y'all can know this. But it's such a fatalistic view, like part of my approach to being vice mayor. And the one of my platform points is educate like, education, education, education, right. And the reason that I'm so pro education is because I think it's important to empower the cyclists. So that no matter what circumstance they find themselves in, they are their best protection. And I say that in relation to the fact that I don't think that government will ever move fast enough to provide the cyclists that exist and will exist, adequate facilities in America. And even in New York City, even though we lead in the number of bike lanes, etc. Like the quality of our bike lanes are crap often. So, I don't dream of partners, I simply get done what I think is going to be the most expedient way of saving a life. And for me, that is empowering the individual.

CB 58:11

Please tell me what specific actions the federal government can take to address the issues you've identified.

CW 58:47

Um, I think the government does a lot to incent different industries. I think there needs to be incentives for getting rid of cars have sort of like my buying out people's cars, I think there needs to be more incentives for sustainable modes of transportation, that don't even involve batteries because that battery got to go somewhere, eventually. I think that we definitely need to be investing in trains and being comprehensive about it, right? Because if we want folks to be reliant on manual and micro mobility, these are small things that people want to take with them. They want to experience it in different places. We got to think across agencies and sectors how do people live their lives and make it practical. I know one of the big issues for Adventure cycling, for example, that people tour America with their bikes, but they're a partner with like Amtrak, but Amtrak won't let you take your bike on all the Amtrak. So, it's just like, you know, we keep making good transportation policies or like, inching toward better transportation policies, but they're always so separated. We need to think of a full-service experience of life. I mean, that's just the paradigm. I don't have any very specific policy lessons. I feel like I'll have to go for.

CB 1:00:52

Please explain to me your strategic use of social media (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and, etc.) and other mediums (e.g., podcasts) to highlight and/or address inequities within active transportation as well as other intersecting issues.

CW 1:01:42

I use the said I've used social media, especially Instagram to reach the people I recognize has, of course, age limitations as younger and younger people prefer to talk which I refuse to do, because I'm just old.

CW 1:02:03

But I do post the majority of my events, announcements, I have a link tree, they got somebody to benefit. So basically, it's like a personal page that has all of your links for various registrations, or anything that you want to highlight on my page. And while my own business page has been messed up, this has been extremely useful for people to find that on there also is my like donation buttons, if you would like to donate to me anything for those causes. But I don't think that I would be at all

effective. Without social media, it has definitely also enabled me to have a national reach versus just a regional or local reach. So, I mean, it was like not having a computer at this point. It's essentially utilitarian technology at this point, so and I do find myself trying to make, it's not just information dissemination, because the nature of social media is still entertainment oriented to a degree that people are looking for inspirational, and educational little bites. I do create such things that I wouldn't necessarily if I was just advertising myself.

CB 1:03:35

Please tell me how CDC/Active People Healthy Nation can help communicate about equitable active living.

CW 1:04:03

I think all people inherently think government is uncool, because often it is, I think people do appreciate. Just as I said, these little information bites, people want information that is small but useful, and can apply to their recreational life or their aspirational life, right? Because that's really what people are consuming on social media site. You're following accounts of people who you admire or aspire to be. And whether people recognize that or not, they're looking for motivation. So, in that vein, you know, if the CDC whomever else comes along and says, this is a way you can do this better. This is the way you can do it faster. This is how you can be more productive. You know, I'm not just coming at it straight from be healthier, you know, not dictatorial. But this is a lifestyle, people are searching for things to complement their lifestyles. So, if they go that route, I think there could be lots of success. And then, you know, every so often you got to work on ratios, right? But what's fun, what's interesting, what's useful, and then you put up that opportunity to sign this policy or petition, because it helps support that thing that you already wanted to put in there. So where do you go for inspiration? Don't tell I am so focused on just moving forward. Sometimes I forget to look for inspiration, which is why I had to take all of me off, calm the fuck down. My inspiration is actually going back and reconnecting to things that I like, beyond bicycling. So, this pile over here is actually my sewing projects that need to be finish. Because, you know, inspiration isn't always something you outright seek. Sometimes inspiration comes to you while you're not thinking about what you're trying to accomplish. So yeah, relaxing. Relaxing, is where I'm trying to get my inspiration.

CB 1:06:45

Are there any final things you want to say?

CW 1:06:51

I feel like somehow, I should have mentioned the Big Fix in some kind of way, I'm sure y'all figure a way that it applies. But, what's the Fix? The Big Fix is my first and only in-person philanthropic event. And I mean, of course, this is limited by the pandemic. So, everything else I do is essentially philanthropic because I don't have to do it. And it's dope. So, the Big Fix was an event that it's a pop up, mass bike fix. So last year, I fixed 150ish bikes in six hours, I think it was with the help of eight mechanics. And I specifically took this initiative to high COVID diagnosis, high death rate, communities of color. Because my objective was to help people have alternative, you know, have autonomy over how they had to move. Black and Brown folks are the majority of essential workers, they don't have an option to work from home. They don't have options because of the geography of where they live, to not get on a crowded train or bus when we still weren't figuring out exactly how

transmittable things were. And you know, even though every day they came by, I'm not an I will bike in different kinds of weather, but some stuff just isn't practical.

CW 1:08:36

but regardless of that, I wanted to repair people's bikes, where I know that it might not be reasonable or affordable for them to otherwise do anything else. So that's what I did. We fix a whole bunch of people's bikes, a whole bunch people, helmets, fair people because it all goes together. And that that was a thing. So, it's my Bike Mayor initiative, I'm supposed to do another one. I wanted to take this one to the Bronx, because everything happens in Brooklyn. It's true. But the Bronx in East Harlem are still our hotspots for COVID diagnoses. It's just that I got the hate to say snagged by money to have personal time, because I really do want to execute this at the beginning of summer, you know, but as philanthropic get it done as given done, and it will help people regardless of what time of year that it happens. So, yeah, I'm looking to do big fix number two, sometimes so hopefully

CB 1:09:46

Awesome.

INTERVIEWS WITH BLACK SCHOLARS AND THOUGHT LEADERS

AS PART OF SOPHE'S COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT WITH THE CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION'S (CDC'S) DIVISION OF NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY (DNPAO), WE WILL BE CONDUCTING QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN EXPERT DISCUSSIONS AROUND THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND CONSEQUENCES OF INEQUITIES THAT HAVE DISCOURAGED PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AMONG BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN INDIVIDUALS/COMMUNITIES (E.G., LIMITED ACCESS TO SAFE AND ACCESSIBLE ROUTES AND/OR DESTINATIONS, FEELING UNSAFE IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS, ETC.). WE WOULD LIKE TO BETTER UNDERSTAND THE BARRIERS, RACIAL INEQUITIES, AND FACILITATORS RELATED TO ACTIVITY-FRIENDLY ROUTES TO EVERYDAY DESTINATIONS (ROUTES TO DESTINATIONS) THAT INFLUENCE PHYSICAL ACTIVITY AMONG BLACK/AFRICAN AMERICAN INDIVIDUALS/COMMUNITIES.

YOU HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED AS AN EXPERT TRANSPORTATION AND/OR LAND USE THOUGHT LEADER. WE ARE INTERESTED IN INTERVIEWING YOU TO LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE AND PERSPECTIVE. MY NAME IS CHARLES T. BROWN, ADJUNCT PROFESSOR AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY AND FOUNDER OF EQUITABLE CITIES. THIS INTERVIEW WILL TAKE NO MORE THAN ONE HOUR. THIS INFORMATION WILL BE USED TO IDENTIFY OPPORTUNITIES FOR CDC TO EMBED EQUITABLE ACCESS TO PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OPPORTUNITIES FOR BLACK COMMUNITIES INTO ITS ACTIVITY FRIENDLY ROUTES TO EVERYDAY DESTINATIONS STRATEGY.

CAREER PATH/JOURNEY

Please tell me why you chose this particular career path or journey.

WHITE DOMINATED SPACES

Please describe your thoughts or feelings related to identifying as Black/African-American within a historically White-dominated field or space.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Please describe how, if any, the pandemic has affected your physical activity opportunities or your views on being physically active in general.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC: RECENT INTERVENTIONS

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements:

15-minute Cities

Calm Streets

Slow Streets

Safe Streets

Open Streets

Play Streets

ROUTES TO DESTINATIONS PLANS AND POLICIES

Please tell me what thoughts come to mind when I mention the following interventions and movements:

Complete Streets

Vision Zero

Comprehensive/Master Plan
Safe Routes to School
Single-Family Zoning
Inclusionary Zoning
ADUs (Accessory Dwelling Units)

BLACK LIVES MATTER (BLM) MOVEMENT

Please tell me how you feel about the Black Lives Matter movement and the Black Lives Matter organization. Please explain how the BLM movement has impacted either your attitudes, perceptions or vision for equitable and inclusive active living in this country. Please explain if there are other organizations beside BLM that have influenced your attitudes, perceptions or views on active living.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Please tell me about your views on law enforcement in the context of active living. Please explain how policing might impact your perception of safety and desire to be active outdoors.

TRAFFIC SAFETY

Please describe the emotions you feel when walking, bicycling, waiting for and taking public transportation, or hopping on an e-scooter in your community. Please describe the emotions you feel when friends or family members walk, bicycle, or ride a scooter in your community. Please explain how your experiences might differ from your White counterparts.

PERSONAL SAFETY

Please describe the emotions you feel when walking, bicycling, or hopping on an e-scooter in your community. Please describe the emotions you feel when friends or family members walk, bicycle, or ride a scooter in your community. What about public transit? Please explain how your experiences might differ from your White counterparts.

INSTITUTIONAL AND SYSTEMIC RACISM

Please tell me what thoughts or emotions come to mind when discussing systemic and institutional racism, particularly in the context of active living. Please tell me your thoughts on how our current system reflects historical inequities.

GENTRIFICATION AND DISPLACEMENT

Please explain your thoughts on gentrification and displacement, particularly in the context of active living. Please tell me what potential policy, systems or environmental changes are needed to prevent or mitigate the unintended consequences of gentrification and displacement.

Potential Nudges:

Land Use changes
Affordable Housing
Exclusionary Zoning

EXPERTS – WHAT WOULD BE YOUR TOP PRIORITIES?

Please tell me what your top priorities would be if you had unlimited power and resources, particularly in the context of active living.

Please tell me what you would do to advance your top priorities.

PARTNERSHIPS

Please tell me specific partners you would want to engage to advance your top priorities.

GOVERNMENT’S ROLE

Please tell me what specific actions the federal government can take to address the issues you’ve identified.

Potential Nudges:

FHWA/FTA/DOT - Transportation

CDC/DHHS - Health

EPA - Environment

DOJ – Justice/Law Enforcement

NPS – Parks

HUD – Housing

Dept of Education – Education

Dept of Energy – Energy efficiency and weatherization

DOL – Dept of Labor

COMMUNICATION

Please explain to me your strategic use of social media (e.g., Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and, etc.) and other mediums (e.g., podcasts) to highlight and/or address inequities within active transportation as well as other intersecting issues.

Please tell me how CDC/Active People Healthy Nation can help communicate about equitable active living.