

Interview with T.C. Duong
Interview by Sharon P. Doetsch and Soph Zelizer

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Zoom

b. May 11, 1972
Saigon, Vietnam

March 11, 2022

SDK: Alright, great. So thank you again for being here, we really appreciate it, and Soph is going to take over.

SZ: Yes. So just to give a super quick introduction, my name is Soph, I'm a senior undergraduate at Mason working with Dr Doetsch-Kidder on this. But yeah, I just want to kind of quickly set the scene. So where you were in the last interview, you were living in DC with your husband, Jonathan, and it sounds like working at GLSEN at the last— just kind of at that point. So tell us what your life has been like since 2005.

TCD: Lots of change and transition actually. So, how do I describe this? So, since then— I lasted a year at GLSEN and one of the things that happened, I was fired. And they never gave me a clear reason, they just said it wasn't working out. But I do think one of the questions I was really asking during that time was GLSEN used to be GLSTN, Gay, Lesbian, Straight Teachers Network, and I was like, "Wow, we're doing all of this work with students and we have this built-in constituency from our founding of teachers, why are we not organizing teachers? I mean like there's— why are we not working with places like the NEA's LGBTQ Caucus, and we have a teacher constituency." And so I do feel like I was raising some questions that people didn't want to answer [laughs]. So I lasted a year. And luckily I think that shifted to a very catalytic job where, luckily during my time at SEARAC, I had made a lot of connections in the API community. One thing I've learned in the API community is like, you cycle through the organizations and if you're a staff with some degree of competency in a sort of experience, other API organizations are going to want you. So that's essentially what happened to me. The minute I sort of let everybody know, "I'm on the market again," Lisa Hasegawa, the Executive Director of National Capacity said, "Come work for me. We need somebody that really does what you do," which is, I coined or I— not coined, I gleefully cribbed the term for it, which was being an in-betweenie, which is essentially being the interface between a grassroots network and their national organization and I think very much similar to the role I played since PFLAG actually, and in two capacities. One was— or I would say, actually three capacities. One was building the capacity of the field, how do we get more expertise, more

learning, more funding to the field. The other is policy, which is especially— it was really nice to tie the technical assistance with the policy work, because it just gave me a way to know like, “What’s happening in the field that I need to understand, that I can lift up to the federal level in terms of policy?” And the third one was leadership development, how do I build the leadership of community leaders to actively engage with federal decision makers, both elected officials and people who work in federal agencies. And so that has been an ongoing theme of my career and essentially did that— I think really, really, really appreciate that I got to that in the community development field. I think especially now with affordable housing being the issue that it is, working from 2004 to 2008 in community development really set up my career in a lot of concrete ways, of understanding the foreclosure crisis, understanding sort of homeownership counseling and how to get people, low-income people, into a homeownership path, issues about economic security and also basic— how do we organize community development to be a voice for social justice? I think that, for me, one of the things I learned very deeply and absorbed very deeply was what it meant to be accountable to constituency. I think one of the things I really appreciated about Lisa Hasegawa’s leadership— and it was a double-edged sword, because it was one of those things where she had a deep, deep, deep commitment to the grassroots and a deep commitment to really be responsive to the network and knowing that we were essentially a trade association for social justice in the community development field. And so, really, I mean, one of the wonderful things about it was that we on staff really were able to use the grassroots as a brain trust, especially our board, which really represented our grassroots networks, we could call them up and be like, “Okay—” for me, I was like, “Okay, what’s your take on this bill? What’s the message you want me to carry?” I think the other thing that I will say that is now coming out full frontal in my current career is the power of relationships and the fact that relationships and trust is a capacity in and of itself. I was able to effectively work across different communities of color because of relationships and trust. And I’ll give you one example, is Janis Bowdler from what was then called National Council of La Raza and now it’s called UnidosUS— actually when I joined was in the midst of planning her wedding. And so I brought literally my entire folder of, “Here’s the sites I used, here’s my caterers, here’s everything,” And we spent— when we’d check in, we’d spend half an hour talking about wedding planning and the other half talking about federal affordable housing policy and bear housing. I mean she and I would do fair housing tests, where we would apply for apartments and sort of see what the response was as people of color. And we’d also— I’d check in on her and be like, “So what photographer are you using?” And I realized that there were things that— we ended up being each other’s first phone calls when the shit went down. Like, for example, there was one member of Congress who was like, “I don’t want for people to be on the hook for the HUD LEP guidance, and we don’t think they should pay for interpretation and translation services.” And Janis and I were like, “Well, we represent a constituency that’s predominantly LEP, so.” And the fact that we just naturally worked together, because we did, I helped her in wedding planning, I knew that was an enabler, I knew that was a facilitator [laughs]. And it was amazing because we did, we strategized and we were like, “How are we going to approach this? How—” Because we both represented two sides of the coin. One side we represented affordable housing

developers who were BIPOC themselves who are on the hook for that, and then on the other side we represented people— low-income renters who were Limited English Proficient. And I think the great thing about it was we really got each other and we were able to strategize, we were able to mobilize the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights around this, and really leaned on our constituency who were very parallel, hers in the Latinx community and mine in the API community, and we were like, “They know it's a burden, but they also know that it needs to happen.” And we found the win-win. We actually found the win-win, because what happened was we kind of cut the opposition at it's knees with the— sort of with the Subcommittee on Housing by getting Barney Frank to introduce an amendment on that bill that created a \$17 million appropriation for HUD to fund services for Limited English Proficient folks. So that was a win-win, it was like— it wasn't an unfunded mandate, they got the resources to do it and our communities got translation and interpretation services. And a big part of it was the trust that was built in the fact that we were friends, we had drinks together talking about wedding planning. So I think that was really something that has been carried through. And after that, my husband at the time— was Executive Director of the Capitol Hill Arts Workshop and had been kind of like— we as a couple and him had been a fixture in the Capitol Hill community. And we were both at those jobs— he was at his job for six years, I was at my job for four years and realized we needed to know more than entitled lawyers. We were like— we lived in DC, we worked in DC, all of our friends— I find DC, now that I don't live in there and it's been 16 years since I've lived there, that DC is a series of villages and it's very, very— siloed and everybody— you're defined by who your boss is. And so we really wanted a change, we really wanted a change. We saw that we were doing great work, but it was— DC's a grind, it was exhausting and culturally, we only knew one set of people. We were like, “We don't know how to change that.” And so we just said, as we were looking to change jobs, “Let's open up your job search to be a nation-wide job search and just see what happens.” And what ended up happening was that I got a job at APPEAL, the Asian Pacific Partners for Empowerment, Advocacy, and Leadership, and my husband got a job at Young Audiences of Northern California, which is essentially a nonprofit booking agency for performing artists to work in schools. And that's what got us out to California and I think in our lives, that was a great move, it was just— we did live in incredibly diverse neighborhoods, both racially and economically, we were living near construction workers and food service workers and tech people, and we just had a whole— it was really weird when you would go to a dinner party and the first question that was asked of you was not, “What do you do for a living?”, but “What did you do this weekend?” I think that was— and that was kind of what we were looking for. But those jobs that we landed in were incredibly challenging and toxic environments. We were both not set up to succeed. I lasted for three years at APPEAL and I was just like, that commitment to the grassroots that I experience at National Capacity was really not there, even though it was kind of one of those things that was very— that was kind of a, “talk the talk, don't walk the walk.” I mean I think we had an Executive Director who actively dismissed the opinions of the grassroots. There was a time where we were at the National Conference on Tobacco or Health, where there were community members, from Pacific Islanders where he was like literally holding other institutions accountable

for not serving Pacific Islanders. There were other— there was a group of Pacific Islander community leaders who were trying to essentially engage him in a conversation about who he was lifting up as a gatekeeper and who he wasn't and he literally— when he would see them, he'd turn a corner and avoid them. And I was just like, "This is exhausting. This is exhausting. It's exhausting to have to play clean up for this man, it's exhausting to see the disalignment between what we were saying and how we were showing up internally and with our network." And I was just like, "I gotta get out of here." And then my career took what I would call a soft right into leadership development. That had always been part of my work, but at the Rockwood Leadership Institute, that was really foundational and that was my job 24/7, was developing and managing cohorts for Rockwood Leadership. And that work was amazing because it was really about leadership from the inside out of just like— one of the things I really loved about Rockwood was the fact that they were very clear about who they were. They were very clear about their core DNA and they knew, because— and we actually did a strategic planning process where we were like— we weren't trying to map out goals or big vision pictures, but what we tried to do was say, "What's the core DNA of who we are?" And how we defined that was, "What are the things where if we stopped doing them or we changed them, we would stop being the Rockwood Leadership Institute?" And it really helped us land on the fact that we are building leadership of people and not working with organizations. So we let go of a \$300,000 capacity building grant because it's an organizational capacity building grant, it's not one that's building up the leadership of the leaders and the organizations, it's about the organization. And there are other people, other organizations who can do that better and who that's their mission. So handing it off and I love that about them, I loved seeing people step into their leadership. My cohorts often called themselves "Camp Tears" or "Camp Cries-a-Lot," and that was definitely something when I was screening leaders— the great thing about that cohort work was the screening as much as it was the actual experience, because I could ask people, "So how do you feel about crying in public?" I could say, "Are you in a space in your life to say yes to yourself?" Those are the type of questions I was asking as screening questions that was so soul fulfilling. And really being able to see people just step into their— I mean, one of the expressions of— that we really knew who we were, were— one of the things we put into our theory of change that we shared with funders was, "We are working with people, and so therefore, if during course of their fellowship, if they leave their organization, that is a good thing." And we needed to say that because it's like, "No, we're not doing organizational development, so this organization may be up shit creek [laughs] and we just have to accept that and you're going to have to accept that as our funder, because we're not here to support that organization, we're here to support the person who's going through this fellowship process." And we've had several leaders who said, "You're the experience that helped me become an ED." And what was amazing for me about that experience, I'll give you an example, was that it just reaffirmed what I have learned, which is trust and relationships are everything. With one of my fellowship, which was the Fellowship for New California, which was building up the leadership of immigrant rights leaders in California, I mean, it was amazing because people were strategizing at like nine o'clock at night in a hot tub with a glass of wine. People were talking about, "How do we pass a domestic workers

bill of rights?" And, "My daughter's really struggling in high school." I got to foster the kind of relationships that I knew was moving policy and the kind where we got to be human beings as opposed to our positions, as opposed to the policy manager. We got to be human beings, and that was really satisfying. And once again, I was a victim of an organization that couldn't live through its values. So I was having a blast, like our trainers, I got really high marks on our trainers and I supported three women who had been harassed by one— sexually harassed by one of the trainers, I wrote a letter of support with them, I sort of supported that, I actually worked with a sexual harassment trainer who we brought in to be very clear that this training was not about understanding laws, but about power and privilege and naming that. And making sure that she knew that, although I trusted her, because she had a long background in domestic violence, that she knew the dynamics that were going on. And then what happened was that about a month later, I was put on review because I had a typo in a memo. And I went on vacation for a week and I had accidentally put the wrong date on my out of office message and they said, "You've been on review, we can't have these mistakes happen." And so I was like, "I see what's happening, and I will sign my NDA, cash out, and figure something out." And that was decent timing, because at that point my son had come into our lives. We started the process of adopting in 2012 and we had a 10 year-old placed with us in 2014, which was when I was laid off from my job. And that was a great, really interesting period of my life, because I found a part-time consulting job supporting the training system for Race Forward and so supporting— because basically what was happening was they had a— racial justice was really— the awareness was coming into place really strongly and there was a huge demand for somebody to start doing racial justice trainings and because Race Forward was kind of already the thought leader about that, they were like, "Train us." But they didn't have a training staff. They would send out their Executive Director and she would give a spiel, but it wasn't a training, and they needed somebody to support their program team to actually develop it as a system, as opposed to, "Send the staff here and they'll set up something." Like to develop it as a curriculum. And that was really interesting, a lot of fun, and it was a halftime consultant position and it was really great because here I was with a 10 year-old in my life, and it was really nice to work from home and work halftime and be the person who dropped him off and picked him up and do all those fun things as a parent. I mean, I kind of got to be super parent, I mean, I was part of the dads' club and helped do gardening in the school, I was part of the fundraising committee and planned the silent auction fundraiser that raised \$25,000. And I made some really good friends of other parents, I was so lucky to have my son placed in the school that he was, because it was a school that was in Oakland, in an incredibly diverse part of Oakland that was not just racially diverse, but there were just as many cis straight men picking up their kids and dropping off their kids as women, there were grandparents dropping off their kids, it was just really nice to be in an environment where I wasn't a unicorn because I was a primary caregiver as a cis male, things like that. It was just really nice, I mean I— but also, as much as you are prepared to parent a child, as much training you get on trauma in adoption, you're never prepared. You're never prepared on how much it's going to trigger your own trauma, you're never prepared for how extreme it's going to get, and you're never prepared for who you show up as a parent. And there are

so many times where it was just like— I was calling another adoptive parent who had to— whose daughter was 17 and they adopted— she and her wife adopted her at five and crying my eyes out she said, “Give yourself permission to hate your child.” And it still remains hard, because the path for a kid that’s neuroatypical who’s gone through trauma is not linear. My kid is not going to be graduating, he’s 18 and he’s not going to be graduating and the milestones that I am celebrating are the fact that he wants to make his own dinner or the fact that he wants to go out with me and take the dog to the dog park, the fact that I see him consistently thank me for making him food, the fact that he will proactively clean his room. Those things are huge, and those milestones— and knowing that these milestones are not linear and these milestones are not going to be like— and there are times where, I mean— I remember two months ago taking my son to see the Spiderman movie and he wanted to— it was one of those movies where they served food so we ordered dinner and then halfway through the movie he was hungry and he was like, “Let’s go to the concession stand and get food.” And I was just like, “Well, I paid full price for movie tickets, I paid for parking, and I paid for a full meal, I’m not going to give you more food. If you want, sit tight, let’s watch the rest of the movie and then we’ll eat afterwards at home.” And he was like, “No.” And I was like, “Okay, so here’s your choice: you can either sit tight, watch this movie or if you absolutely need to eat, let’s go home. But I’m not shelling out more money for this.” And then, as we were walking out, he said, “Fine, we’re walking out.” And I was like, “Okay,” I was totally prepared to be chill dad and be like, “Okay. That’s what happens, I’ve got to accept it.” And then he said, “I’m just so disappointed in you for your rigidity.” And I was like, “Dude, you used the sharpest knife in the drawer, didn’t you?” I mean, I will say, I say this to all of the therapists, social workers and everybody who interacts with my son, his superpower and his kryptonite is his massive ability to be empathetic. And he can read you and oftentimes— I mean like— go to the light side of the forest please. When he’s with my niece, his cousin, I mean those two are like two peas in a pod and they crack each other up and they love each other. And there was a time when we were visiting my sister where my dad wanted to face time with my niece in the middle of dinner, and my niece just said, “Grandpa, this is Drew and Abby time, you can’t interrupt it.” Because he just gets them and when he’s with my in-laws, and I have a frail father-in-law, he’ll be like, “Grandpa, don’t get up, let me get your walker and let me clear a path for you, wherever you want to go.” He’s just that— and then, he knows the meanest thing to say to me. And I spent 20 minutes on the drive home screaming at him at the top of my lungs, because I was just like, “I’m so triggered.” And I kept it together to be like, “Okay. That was a movie I wanted to watch, but I gave him a choice, he took a choice, and I have to accept it.” And then he said that and I was just like— I lost my ever freaking mind. So I don’t think anybody is prepared for that kind of parenting journey. Career-wise, what happened was, then I— when my consultant contract had ended with Race Forward, I had joined with one of the trainers at Rockwood in his consulting practice around racial equity for social change organizations. And so I was somebody who was helping develop the contracts, developing curriculum, just being his right hand and second brain. And that was really, really satisfying, but also I could tell that the business model wasn’t really strong and I was like, “You can’t support all of us who are working for you.” So what was great was— what ended up happening was that one of

the primary projects that I did for APPEAL was providing technical assistance to Southeast Asian groups and groups working in what was called priority populations. So it was both BIPOC communities and the LGBTQ community, and running the TA system to provide that network of groups technical assistance around addressing smoking in their communities. And so that was funded by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Minnesota. And in 2016, during the summer of 2016, the staff there just said, "We're looking for essentially a program officer. Would you be interested?" And I'm like, "Yay, philanthropy. Giving out money? Sure." I was like, "I'm going to do it, I'm going to do it." And so we all moved to Minnesota. It was a really satisfying time for me career-wise and personally as well. But it was really hard on my family. We didn't anticipate how hard it was going to be, and it was really hard not being around friends that we knew and especially at that time, where we just got two years under our belt as a family, we just got community, and then we uprooted ourselves. And trying to rebuild that in Minnesota, and Minnesota nice is a real thing, it's that— the joke in Minnesota is, people will give you directions everywhere except to their house. It's very real. So I was able to be a big fish in a small pond in philanthropy and really had a lot of opportunities there and was really able to do some good work. And after two years, the Center for Prevention, where I was working, did a reorganization and they laid me off. And so for two more years— for a period, I was like— I took a job very briefly at the Coalition for Asian American Leaders as their primary policy person, really learned a lot about grassroots organizing at the local level. But the two people— ironically, the two people who were running it, one of them was my boss when I was at SEARAC, and she had moved to Minnesota. But I like, "Oh my God, you two are still DC." it was like they would be having— we would be going to the St. Paul Public Schools school board meeting and sitting there for the entire meeting even after our comments were given because they were like, "You need to be there and be visible," and we made the community stay too, because they were like, "We need to show support, blah, blah, blah, blah." And I could tell— I mean there were weeks that were just like 12 hour day stretches for four or five days of that week, and it was burning me out. And I also could tell it was burning the community out. With every action we were doing— for the first action, it was like 200 people, the last action or the last committee meeting that I presided over was three people. Because I'm like, "We're meeting every night. We're not only doing an action, we're debriefing the action the night after, we're planning for action the night after that, and then we're going to do another action." And one of the things I'm particularly proud of was I was like, "Listen, this ask is ginormous." It's like, "support Hmong students," I'm like, "What does that mean?" And so what I'm really proud of, is I actually turned that policy platform into an ask. I said like, "We are pressing hard on the St. Paul Public Schools and they're going to need to show a win and we're going to need to show a win at the end of this process, otherwise we look ineffective and they look like assholes." And I said, "Listen, what I'm hearing the most is there are two Hmong immersion charter schools and they are only— the eligibility for attending them is only kids in the neighborhood. It means that if you're not sort of a district-wide school, the onus on getting transportation for your kids if you are Hmong parent, for example, and want to send your kid to an immersion school where they can retain the Hmong language, you're going to need to find your own transportation. And I was just like, "This is really

concrete, actually. If we change the designation of those two schools from neighborhood to district, that opens up a really huge resource to the entire school district.” And I said, “That’s our ask.” And by the end of the campaign we got it, and that was about a \$600,000 worth of busing money we got. I was very proud of that, because I was like, “I’m not hearing from the leadership about what we need to do for a win-win. And we can keep on protesting, but unless we give them something to do that’s concrete and actual, we’re going to burn everybody out and then we’re going to have nothing to show for it.” And that was two months, I lasted two months. I said, “I got my win and I’m done.” And I worked at the Building Movement Project and the idea was I was in charge of learning communities, but I think what was clear was they weren’t sure what they wanted to do with me. So I was doing all of these little projects left and right and wasn’t sure what to do, and it was two incredibly frustrating years. And so at that point, after four years of Minnesota, we were just like, “I think it’s time for us to move back to California.” And so a very similar process where we just applied for jobs and what ended up happening was I got a job at BARHII, Bay Area Regional Health Inequities Initiative. I was interviewing all over the place, I got into the sort of final round interview at the Blue Shield of California Foundation, essentially the equivalent of my job in Minnesota. And unfortunately, they were going through a staff transition with HR, so that job kind of froze. And then BARHII offered me a position and I accepted because I’m like, “Listen, I just need to get out here. We’re all anxious to get out here, let’s get out here.” It was a huge mistake [laughs]. BARHII was a hot racist mess. It was led by a Black woman who absolutely hated people of color and we all saw that. Luckily, we had each other, and I was— and what happened was that there was a day where she took all of the people of color in the room and told us— we had only been there a month, we had only been there a month, and she said, “I’m not happy with your performance. And so, even though we brought you on at a lower salary with a four day work week, I think we need to move to a five day work week without increasing salary.” None of the white people were part of the meeting, she didn’t want it to apply to any of the white people, she was happy with their performance. And the amount of work— the disparity in work that we were given was huge. The one white person who started at the same time as like four other people of color including myself, his project for his first three months was to write a white paper. My project was to plan a 300 person convening. I started in January and it was going to happen in April. And she wasn’t happy with our performance. And we all were just like, “No, no. We are out of here.” And I was just like, “No.” I saw that the position at the Foundation was still open, and I just emailed the director of programs, who had interviewed me, and I said, “Is it still open? Can I get back into the application process? Things aren’t working here.” And she was like, “Yes, we have new HR staff, let’s pick up where we left off, let me check your references.” And from there I got a job offer in two weeks and I started a month and a half later. And then I was able to get another BIPOC staffer from BARHII hired last September. And we were just both— it was a middle finger back to BARHII, because BARHII is one of my grantees. And I am relishing the meetings where I’m just like, “I’m noticing a discrepancy in this, can you please explain it?” [laughs] And this has been an incredibly satisfying job. I think there are moments of frustration of— we’re a foundation, but we’re still attached to a major insurer, so what we can and can’t say, can and can’t

do is a lot more limited than a California endowment. But I will say there are things— I have more of a voice in this organization and I get to do fun shit. I get to do things like— I organized a funder collaborative to fund Asian organizing to the tune of 15 million dollars. I was able— I’ve become besties with the other queer API program officer at the Conrad Hilton Foundation. We’re organizing ourselves, and who we call the VIPs, Vietnamese in Philanthropy, around, “How do we support racial justice organizing in API communities?” And he is supporting one of my collaborative efforts to the tune of 1.5 million dollars, and I was just like, “They’re a great bet.” I said, “They’re an insight and learning machine, fund them.” And he was like, “Oh hell yeah.” And it’s fun, it is really fun. It’s really being able— and I think the great thing about it is, one of my ethic is that— I say, “The outcome of your grant is learning and I want to know about the fabulous flops. I want to know what didn’t go well, and what you had to just completely let go of because of that, and the real success is if you know why.” And I’ve gotten really good feedback from my grantees about how much they love me and I’m sure that’s a little bit of blowing smoke up my ass because I’m the one with the money, but also they are actively reaching out to me, they’ve reached out to me to say— for a cohort I’m funding around the intersection of domestic violence and multi-sector collaboration, they were like— I tried to really respect boundaries and they were like, “No, we want you in our TA meetings, because your insights are amazing.” I’ve been able to have a platform I’ve never had before, which is mobilizing funders at the national level. So I’m part of a lot of different funder collaboratives and I get to play in a sandbox with funders like the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson, Ford Foundation, things like that. I’m just like, “We’re a 40 million dollar— you guys are pushing out billions of dollars, we’re a 40 million dollar little state funder here.” But one of the things I’m getting really, really amazed at is one of my— so to take a step back, my role at the foundation is to support work in multi-sector collaboration. And one thing everybody knows about me if they spend more than a minute with me is that I flog metaphors, and so the best way I can describe my work is when it comes to sectors working together, my job is to say, “Everybody in the pool,” and my job is also to make sure the pool is the right temperature for everybody to swim together in. And so a lot of my work is funding, how do we have a health lens and voice in other issues? One example of that is, for example in— one of my shining success stories in terms of the groups that I get to fund is there’s a coalition in Vallejo, California, that is working at the intersection of immigrant rights and housing and I funded them to really bring in health partners, so bringing in public health agencies, bringing in Kaiser Permanente, the insurer there and one of the things they realized when COVID hit was, “If we’re going to have any kind of handle on COVID at all, we’re going to need to keep people housed.” And they really framed it as a housing issue, housing as a health issue, housing— they called it the housing inoculation. And they were able to pass— because it was led by Kaiser Permanente and the Solano County Department of Health, they were able to pass the first COVID related eviction moratorium in the country once COVID hit. And it was just— it was so nice to know that, number one, this coalition build the capacity of the community to really make that ask of the health organizations, and number two, the health organizations said yes and were able to actually frame housing, affordable housing, and homelessness as a public health issue. And it got passed and I was just like, “Yes,

everybody's in the pool and everybody swimming together.” And the other work that I'm doing right now is, how do I bring a multi-sector lens to domestic violence? Because right now, domestic violence is really narrow and what about, how do we bring in child protective services? How do we bring in educational equity? How do we bring in economic security and mobility? And one of the things I'm exploring right now is supporting mayors for a guaranteed income to do guaranteed income pilots with survivors of domestic violence and it's really nice because throughout my two years— because I started literally in May of 2020 in the heart of pandemic, the most satisfying thing of my two years has been being told I need to dream. When I started, I was just like, “So what's been the funding in this department before? I'll just spend my first year just renewing grants.” And my boss was like, “Uh, we hired you because you're smart and what grants do you want to fund? What are the things you want to fund?” I was like, “Is this for real?” And it has been a dance for sure, because there's some things where I'm like, “This is gonna be catalytic,” and they're like, “Sorry, not fit to strategy.” But the fact that I was even asked that question is pretty profound. And the other thing that I'm leading is our internal DEI work, diversity, equity, and inclusion. And we brought on the Center for Equity and Inclusion to really lead us through a process of creating a shared language and defining what we mean by equity, and what is our north stars around equity, and why do we even care about equity, and what's our appetite to go beyond equity and say justice and make the race explicit when we talk about it? So that's kind of— I mean, most of that is career, but that's kind of what my life has been like since 2005.

SZ: Yeah, that's great. I know you mentioned— [audio cutting out] making that adjustment to like suddenly having a 10 year-old in— how did that change your relationship with your husband and your family?

TCD: It's hard. Parenting a child, with trauma is hard. Our relationship has taken a ton of knocks because of that, because traumatized kids are experts at triangulation, traumatized kids really know how to press your buttons better than anybody else. And it's been hard, it's been hard to— and I think one of the things I'm really trying to shift to right now is, for both of us, how do we get ourselves in a position after eight years of having this kid, he turned 18 in January, but having eight years, how do we get ourselves in a position where the majority of what we do with our child is love him as opposed to manage him? It's been so hard, of just doing IEP's, getting supports, filling out paperwork, advocating for our son's needs. I mean, I think the hardest part is— losing sight of that human being who you've taken into your life and only seeing the problem that's in front of you. And what that does to your relationship, especially when you're coming at things from really different viewpoints and really different family structures, I think that it has— I think, for me, it's been hard, because my parents have— it's been hard and good at the same time, because my parents have kind of kept my son at an arm's length, but other parts of my family love my son to death. Again I use that example, my sister and brother-in-law really love my son, the thing that has really

emerged amazing is my son and his cousin, his six year-old cousin are like two peas in a pod and whenever they come to visit he— it's one of the double edged swords of screens, [laughs] is he gets his iPhone out and they start watching YouTube videos together, but they're together and they're connected and they're— but I do have this really funny story of last summer, we spent a week in Santa Cruz and I have this great picture of my son and his cousin making sand castles and in the background, my mother is in a beach chair with her phone up like this [holds hands in front of face] and I'm like, "Um, and they say kids are addicted to their screens?" But what it's really showed me is who's there for us and who can't be there for us. And, quite frankly, the network of people we have, our people in terms of like our son's network are other adopted children and their families. Because when shit hits the fan, everybody's like, "Okay. Time to separate and we'll see you next week, right? It's hard, but it's hard though, I mean there's no sugarcoating it. And in Minnesota, it was really useful to be part of a support group, they don't have those kinds of support groups in California for adoptive families. NAMI, the National Alliance for Mental Illness, has support groups for people who have family members who are facing mental illness, but there aren't adoptive family support groups at all. And we, in California, have really had to sort of cobble back together. But I will say I think it's been something where it's been— being an adoptive parent and a parent of a child who's got mental health issues, really, really, really is a mirror to yourself, and you have to see all parts of yourself, whether you like it or not. And you have to see all parts of your family, whether you like it or not, because you're going to have to explain that to your kid and you're going to have to explain your kid to your family and you're going to have to be the person who has to let go and it has to be an intentional thing of like, right now it's college season, where I'm getting graduation announcements and, "Look who got into this place," and I'm having to say, "Well, my son is in a transition program, he's going to stay put and that's perfectly fine. He's got his own path. He spent the first seven years of his life having to be an adult and he gets to be a kid a little bit longer." And I know that and the hard part is I know that intellectually and 65% of the time, I know that in my heart, and the other 45% of the time when my heart has to let go of it, wonders why my kid isn't as good as other kids, is super hard. It's super hard and it's heartbreaking because it also is just— it's my own failures as a parent as well.

SDK: It's so hard, T.C. It's really wonderful to hear how you talk about your parenting, though, and that relationship. So I can tell that he won a jackpot.

TCD: I think the gift that we give each other is the space to be ourselves and to play— for example, my son does not have my last name. And when we were finalizing his adoption, when we were finalizing his adoption, we were going to do this— my husband and I were going to hyphenate our last names and we would all be Darduo. And about a month before, he just said, "I'm not Vietnamese and I don't think I can be Vietnamese. I don't want to have a name that makes people confused about why I'm not Vietnamese." And I just said, "You know what? I like my name, and I

am Vietnamese, and I don't want to dilute it.” And we both gave each other permission to say, “We don't need to have the same last name to be a family. We're connected because I cook you a food, we're connected because you like my chocolate cake. I'll say, the most amazing thing and the thing— oftentimes when I do leadership trainings and they're like, “Bring something that means a lot to you,” and the thing that I bring over and over again is the Barefoot Contessa Family Cookbook. And the reason why is because in fifth grade, when my son was gaining points in his classroom for good behavior and stuff like that, as you gain points, you got a 25 dollar Amazon gift certificate, the school was going to buy something for you for 25 dollars. He chose the Barefoot Contessa Family Cookbook because he saw that was the one Barefoot Contessa Cookbook that he did not have. And he was just like— he's a smart cookie because he knows if I have more good things to cook, he's gonna be the direct beneficiary of it. But just also that he's just that— for a solid four of those eight years, that's something I lost. That's something I lost having to deal with the day-to-day issue of getting his needs met and getting the service— I was like, I can honestly say I forgot. I forgot that there's this kid who bought me a Barefoot Contessa cookbook because he knows I'm a good cook, he knows he's going to get good food, and he saw that there was that one book that was missing. And I'll say when you have to do that level of care for somebody to coordinate services and to figure out what is their best educational structure and how to calibrate therapy and stuff like that, you lose sight of that in a huge way and I still mourn that. I still mourn in that I— and I'm only recently coming back to the fact that I have a kid that's ragingly irritating but really special at the same time. And one of the things, just in terms of one of the questions that you asked about my singing is I stopped singing. I said, in 2004, I just said, I needed a break, because the Lesbian and Gay Chorus, being consensus based and stuff like that, it was just a huge commitment, not just of my time, but especially as somebody who's kind of a process queen, I couldn't be part of this volunteer organization and not be part of the decision making, be part of the design of how we make decisions, facilitate. I was just like “I'm burnt out, I'm really burnt out.” And I took a step back and I made a very smart move, where I joined a tennis team [laughs] because I was like, “I know that if I actually don't affirmatively do something that's fun in my life, I will find another volunteer gig that's going to be just as intense, so I need to find something where—” And I did and I just couldn't go back. But the funny thing is my son is an amazing singer. And for the first three years of him being in my life, I got to be a choir parent. And it was amazing because he was the kid with the solos. [laughs] He was the kid with the solos, he did a talent show, and he was just so fearless, because he— we got him this shiny copper colored leather vest and he wore kind of Bobby Brown parachute pants and gold shoes and he sang Justin Bieber's “Boyfriend” and got a standing ovation, and I was just like, “That's my kid.” And the hilarious thing was a month later in the grocery store there was some little old lady who was like, “My granddaughter's at your school and I saw you at the talent show and you're the most amazing performer ever, I love you.” And so I got to be the choir parent, I got to be the person sitting and chaperoning the kids before the performances, I got to be the one organizing the bake sale to raise money for their trip, I got to be the one ironing his shirts and stuff like that. It's very funny because for three years I was kind of his choir parent, [laughs] after being somebody in a choir for eight

years. It was nice to be on the other side and to be— just to support and it was really nice to be the parent of this incredibly talented kid who had— who continues to have this amazing voice. I mean, I think that is one of the great gifts of being a parent, is being unabashedly proud of another human being and not having to minimize, [inaudible] just say like, “My kid is awesome,” [laughs] is one of the great joys of being a parent.

SDK: Well and trying to shoehorn these neurodivergent kids into these institutions is super stressful, right? Because they're not— it's trying to shoehorn them into stuff that is probably not supporting what's best about them, right? And so that, you recognize, as you said, that he's on his own path and the institutions may make it hard for him to shine, but your recognition of that will help. I have a neurodivergent kid, too so I'm in tears a little bit listening to you [laughs], I'm feeling your struggles. We're not quite there yet, mine is 15, but.

TCD: We're— I mean, we're never going to be there in that sense, but I realized— I mean, I'm never going to be there with myself. I think I would have never said 15 years ago when you interviewed me that I would be in philanthropy [laughs].

SDK: It's been quite a journey. It's been fun to hear about it.

TCD: Yeah. I mean, I will say, I just so appreciate the gift— and I cried when I read that transcript, because I was just like— as a parent, things are fricking hard, and I didn't lose myself. There's so much that I recognize about myself now that I saw in that transcript that I said— and I'm sure that's the hardest thing for any parent, even when you have a super easy kid, is to be you. Because your life is reoriented around the needs and the growth and the pathway of this other human being who you taken responsibility for whether you adopted them or gave birth to them and I— to me that was one of the biggest gifts that was ever given to me, was just this reminder of who I am and how much I haven't changed and how much I have and some of the ways that I've grown and some of the ways that I've gotten bazonkers [laughs] and some of the ways that— I mean it was huge, it was so huge to read all of that and to read my answers and to have that documentation. And I feel like this conversation is a gift, I was just like, “Oh my God, I have the rare opportunity to talk about 15 years of this path, and these paths that I'm on, where I can say, how did I go from being an in-betweenie to funding the in-betweenies? What got me there?” It's huge.

SDK: It's wonderful, it's a great story.

SZ: Yeah, it definitely is. And I have to say as a neurodivergent kid, I also definitely relate to a lot of what you were saying, it definitely— it's a really challenging situation and also a really, really special one. But yeah. I don't know, professor, if you have any questions? I have a couple more.

SDK: Well you mentioned your parents and I wonder if you want to talk a little bit more about how things are going with them?

TCD: I think things are going a lot better. I think one of the things that got a lot better— my relationship with my sister has gotten a lot better. I think we had, at the time I talked to you, an incredibly antagonistic relationship. And what happened was she met a really kind man and she and I are now close, really close, we talk like two or three times a week. And one of the things that has really helped was I planned her wedding and I ruled it with an iron fist [laughs]. And literally it was just like, “Every contract goes through me I'm gonna like—” when she initially got the proposal from her caterers and the venue I had like 16 questions each and I said, “You need to ask them this, and this, and this, and this, and this.” And my parents got a front row seat to that and realized I'm an adult, and a competent one at that [laughs]. Because I literally said— I got there a week before the wedding and they hadn't written their wedding vows and I said— I made them dinner, and I said, “You're not leaving this dining room table until you write your vows.” And I think my parents got to see me in my full power. They got to see me really hyper-competent. And it's very funny because the other thing that brought my sister and I together was my mother was actually really disorganized and for the rehearsal dinner, she didn't have a headcount, she didn't ask for RSVP's. And so luckily, we ordered enough, because it was buffet and it was in their backyard, but there weren't enough dishes and we had to carry out dishes from their kitchen [laughs]. And we kind of— afterwards kind of were critical of my mother and she just started crying [laughs]. And the joke we had together was, “I think we broke Mom.” But it was just something where— I mean, in couples counseling I've learned really— for any two people or any group of people, healing for the group comes from being able to experience things together in a way that is not just about your own experience, but about everybody's experience. And being able to see the experience from their lens and them being able to see from your lens and the fact that my sister and I could just look at what— us being assholes to our mother and being like, “How come you didn't know this?” And realize and just laugh about it, “We broke Mom. Because of that, my parents have gotten better. I think it is a constant source of sadness that my brother has two kids, one— the niece that I have, my sister's child, she's six, and my brother also has a six year old daughter, and he also has a two year old daughter as well. And seeing how they dote on those kids is really hard because my son is— it's hard, because they are trying to— I see how they try and see how it's hard for them. And I see how it's so much easier when the kid is a baby and they can't talk back. But it's hard when it's like,

here's this kid who comes 10 years old, who has a mind of their own, who has likes and dislikes and things like that, who they're not holding. And it's really— I think it's hard, but I also think one of the things that has shifted fundamentally is my parents realizing that I am a competent human being and an adult because I planned my sister's wedding, they had a front row seat to that, I also planned the rehearsal dinner for my brother. And actually, one of the most frustrating things but also something that— was that they, again, keep getting reminders about that I'm a competent adult is that the night of the rehearsal dinner, my brother pulls me aside and says, “Hey, we want to have an after party for our wedding.” And the wedding was the next day. “Can you plan it” And literally my husband, my son and I went to Costco and just cleared out cheese plates and wine and things like that and got plates and napkins and just put a spread, wrapped it all in plastic, and said, “We're not going to be there because we're now exhausted and the wedding hasn't even happened, but all you have to do is uncork the wine and take the plastic off the platters.” And I think the other thing is, within my family structure that has been something that's more on the table is that my— we've been able to step into our power with my father. We have been able to say, “You know what, you're talking a lot and it's exhausting.” There was a time where he literally— there was a Thanksgiving that my brother hosted in terms of he had it at his house, but I cooked everything. But then, as we were cleaning up, my brother told my dad, “Hey, it's fine that you're wiping up, but use this cleanser instead of this cleanser.” And my dad, because he's just got a huge fragile ego, like lit into him and screamed at him and said like, “You think you know what's best, and you think you're like a tech entrepreneur but you're nothing without me.” And I was just sitting there and then on the drive home, I said, “You want to stop having a relationship with your granddaughter? Then keep doing what you're doing.” And the fact that I could say that to my dad, the fact that I could say, “Bud can cut you off and he will,” and the fact that I knew that Bud wasn't going to put up with that, and the very next day, my dad called my brother and his wife and apologized to them. I think, while my dad is my dad and he's still going to do that, our ability to step into our power and say, “You want to lose a relationship with the other granddaughter that— maybe granddaughter that you have? Keep doing that.” I think that has changed. I think part of it is having this— one of the things that's really helped has been— also really because we have cousins in the Bay Area, we have four cousins and their significant others, before the pandemic, we did have cousins dinner once a month, where we'd get together and one of my cousins, three months ago, had a baby and I've been dropping off— every other week— food, so this week it's spinach and feta quiches and a vanilla pound cake with homemade jam and a crème fraîche Crème Anglaise. And so the other thing— and it's the other kind of narrative that if I were ever going to write my autobiography, what I really— other thing that I think my life's mission is, is to set a table that everybody can feel comfortable at. And that means with both working in philanthropy and being able to sort of be somebody who— I essentially am an enthusiast for my grantees and say like, “I'm so impressed by blah,” and be the person who says, “I see you and I honor your struggle and where you may be stumbling.” And that's what I honor as much as I honor the successes, and I want to know about the struggles, because I think oftentimes for me as a funder, it gives me direction. “How I can support you and I can support the field.” And also, I love throwing dinner parties, and I really am good at it, I

remember, at the end of the sort of LGBTQ advocacy fellowship that I ran, where the second session, the closing session was in Northern California in Sonoma, I just told the cohort, “If any of you are staying—” it ended on a Friday— “If any of you are staying over, feel free— I'd love to have you all for dinner.” And I did a five course plated dinner for 21. And I kind of already knew people were going to stay over [inaudible] so I knew and I'd already made dessert ahead of time and things like that. So it's just one of those things where, if I can set a table that people are comfortable at in every context, I think I am living my life's mission and vision.

SZ: Yeah. And I think, just a lot of this stuff that you're dealing with kind of reminds me of what you had mentioned in your past interview about how important spirituality was in your life. So what role has that played in your life since 2005 and are you still involved with the Quaker Church?

TCD: I'm not. When we came to the Bay Area, we did go to the Friends Meeting in Berkeley and it was so different. This is where being in Washington D.C. was so helpful because, I mean, when we were in silent worship in D.C. and people would be speaking out of the silence, it was really about, for example, “I'm trying to see God in the George W. Bush administration.” “I'm trying to see how I can be present at an injustice.” Whereas I felt like in Berkeley, because it was removed from the center of power, so to speak, there wasn't the, “For what?” of what the spirituality is about and we just fell off. So I am deep into mindfulness practice that I got from the Rockwood Leadership Institute. At work, I lead a Zoom every Friday morning at nine where we do mindfulness practice, and I do guided visualizations around sort of— I started in the new year and among things that I did was, “What does it feel like in your body to be enough? What does it feel like in your body to say yes to yourself? What does it feel like in your body to be recognized and be seen?” That's kind of more my spiritual practice now, of that mindfulness and really being present with myself and present in community with others, I mean, I do a lot of mindfulness work that I think feels very spiritual for me.

SZ: Yeah. So, I'm just looking at the questions. Do you think the ways that you've engaged with race and sexuality in your work has changed?

TCD: Yeah, it's a lot more explicit. It's a lot more— because I have actually worked with organizations around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, I have a toolkit as opposed to just frameworks and values [laughs]. I have— I can name dynamics, I think I— for example, one of the things that's really important to me around racial justice and equity is that I now, especially as a funder, I now see it as a capacity. And one of the things I am funding, that I'm creating actually, is

an equity and collaboration toolkit that includes an assessment for collaboratives, because oftentimes a lot of equity tools are focused on organizations, but it's not focused on collaboratives, organizations working together. It's funny, I call it essentially the Cosmo quiz of collaboration equity, because the whole idea is that collaboratives fill it out and it's kind of the modality of having both the backbone, the lead organization in the collaborative fill it out, and also the organizations in the collaboratives and identifying each of those organizations by position and power of, "Are you a lead organization? Do you contribute money to this collaborative?" Things like that and just sort of see. And what's been fascinating for me is that technical elements of that, of like, how do we weight things, how do we— I'd love— maybe I should tap you all in [laughs] because I'm like— it's really interesting because I'm like, "Oh, we need to figure out a weight system because, in a way, from my experience in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion work, we need to find out if it's a white led, predominantly white organization and they give themselves high marks, they should be ranked lower than a white led, predominantly white organization that gave themselves low marks, because the one that gave themselves low marks are much more aware of where they need to go and where their weaknesses are than the ones that gave themselves high marks. And it's been so much fun to kind of wrestle with that technical end of how to make equity happen [laughs]. The phrase I use that makes me look really smart is, "What are the 'dog in the bed' questions?" And I don't— have you two heard of the term 'dog in the bed' question? So essentially what I learned from question development, and this is just me knowing enough to be dangerous, [laughs] which is I found out that Purina did a study about who's going to buy premium dog food. And they found out when they directly asked people, "Would you buy your dog premium dog food?" About 65% of the people who said, "Yes, I would buy my dog premium dog food," actually bought their dog premium dog food. But what they found out was when they asked people, "Would you let your dog sleep in the bed with you?" 95% of those people bought their dog premium dog food. So when it comes to this equity assessment, we're always looking for 'dog in the bed' questions, because we're finding out we can't ask people, "Are your practices equitable?" Because everybody's gonna say yes. But if we ask people— one example of a 'dog in the bed' question is not even, "How do you make your decisions?" But, "Where do you make your decisions? Are they in a meeting where everybody's present with notes being taken out and shared? Or are they one-on-one that happens before the meeting and it's a recommendation from an executive committee?" That tells you a lot more about equity and power than, "Do you have an equity statement?" [laughs] So I think that's been fun. I've been having so much fun around it, but it's also— especially my internal work, ragingly demoralizing at points, of just saying like, "We are— our organization, literally, there is only one cis straight white man, there are only two cis white men, and as an organization, we have horrible practices. We have horrible practices. We get horrible ratings on our "Great Place to Work" survey when it comes to people feeling micromanaged and whether they have a voice or not. The only part of where we do get high ratings is on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, because they really appreciate the work that I am doing as the Chair of that work. And it's because I've been incredibly inclusive in the process and incredibly deliberate in the process of— I started off with a work group saying, "What scares you? Where do

you feel burnt? And what do you think—" I asked questions like, "What's the one thing around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion where if it changed, it would make all the difference?" And we did that as a work group to build trust and build alignment and we also did that as a staff and we had the staff— we gave quarterly reports to the staff and had— one thing that we did as co-chairs that was very deliberate was the first contact of our consultants at the Center for Equity and Inclusion was the admin staff who would have to do all the scheduling. Because we were like, "If we aren't modeling that this work happens from the ground up and those most impacted— and it was really them, the admin staff, the schedulers who were most impacted, if they are not the first touch, we're doing this wrong already." And it's where me being a raging left-wing liberal and a process queen at the same time has converged, and it's where I get— it's both crazily exhausting and sometimes I leave the process in tears, because I'm just like, "Why does our leader, who is a woman of color, not get it? Why is she constantly talking about indicators and benchmarks when I'm like, 'Okay, did you not go through the same white supremacy training as I did when we were talking about how perfectionism and worship of the written word is a sign of white supremacy?'" But it's also realizing that that work, the ultimate goal of that work isn't necessarily for us to— I shifted that ultimate goal of the work from my own goal, because it's connected to this whole idea of setting a table where everybody can be comfortable, but like with the DEI work, the real goal is for us to be authentic and human with each other. If we do DEI right, we get to be human beings with each other. And that's where— it's both the fun, the hope, and the promise, and it's also the frustration, because I see where we're falling so short and it's really frustrating. And I see where we're falling so short, not because of our intentions or our values but because when we look at things from concentric circles, number one, here is us in the Program team where we get to be community facing and fund— I get to fund really radical work. I literally gave a \$300,000 grant to Urban Habitat for their boards and commissions leadership program to get BIPOC community leaders into boards and commissions. I get to fund awesome work. But then when you get one circle out in the leadership it's like, "What are the measurables? What's the deliverables? What's the indicators?" And I'm like, "I don't have indicators, but I have wins. I have the first eviction moratorium in the country." And they're like, "Is that a trend? Has that been peer reviewed?" And I'm like, [grips head]. And then from that circle out, it's also the DEI work, from there, from the Blue Shield side, is about equity and they don't say racial justice. It's about— quite frankly, it's not even about equity, it's about diversity. Their focus is on supplier diversity, "Do we have enough diverse suppliers?" "That's good, but do your suppliers have— are your suppliers union? Are those BIPOC leaders of your suppliers paying their employees a fair wage? Are you willing to go there?" And the answer is no. And then from the out— and then the circle about that, when the outer ring, outer ring in terms of the US is, we have a Democratic Party who can be completely incremental because Joe Manchin has a bigger voice than Ilhan Omar and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. And beyond that— and one of the things I'm doing around narrative change, because I'm also funding work around census and redistricting is, it's because we have a white supremacist Democratic Party that says, "You know who's more valuable than the millions and millions of BIPOC people and progressive white people who get us elected are a tiny sliver of white moderates." Why the hell is

Iowa and Ohio a battleground state. but Minnesota, which is much more diverse and the home of a lot of anti-racist organizing— why is not, you know, New Mexico a battleground state where resources— and I will say, because middle voters, if you dig deep, not even deep, if you dig a millimeter behind what the press and pollsters say, it's a white person. It's a white cis straight person who doesn't live where 99% of the US lives, which are cities, they live in an inner ring or outer ring suburb. And I'm lucky that I get to fund work like that, but I'm also like, “My grant is for \$300,000, and you know what? The Heritage Foundation funds this shit on the ground for about 100 million dollars.” And it's coordinated and there are a lot— those organizations are allowed to fail at a scale and pick themselves back up and say, “You know what, we may have lost this election, but we got the message out and now we fundamentally changed the terms of the narrative from about—” Even about, quite frankly, “Do kids deserve the truth? Do kids deserve the truth or ‘No, we want kids not to feel uncomfortable about race.’” But nobody's asking, “Do they deserve to—” And when the left-wing responds to Critical Race Theory, their first talking point is, “It's not even being taught in the schools, so why do you have to worry?” As opposed to, “Hell yeah, it should be taught in the schools.” And let's double down on that, as opposed to saying, “There's nothing to worry about.” There is something to worry about for the right wing. It's the fact that they're being de-centered. And why don't we say that? Why don't we say, “You know what, take a backseat and listen to people with marginalized identities and you might learn something.” But rather than that, it's like, “Well, how do we design a message for a soccer mom in Fairfax?” “What about the fact that there are like 40,000 Koreans in Annandale that you could start organizing? What about the fact that there are Guatemalan and Salvadoran people all over Montgomery County who you could organize if you gave a damn about their voice and visibility?” Sorry, that's my giant soapbox and that's kind of how my— I think it's one of those things in reading the interview from those years ago, 15 years ago, where it's remained with me but it's also gotten intensified and I have more language and frameworks and tools around it.

SZ: Yeah. Definitely. I also have to say, being from New Mexico and living in Fairfax, I've definitely seen all of that very much exemplified. Yeah, absolutely. I wanted to ask, I know you mentioned just relationship and trust building being one of the key facets of your work, so what does that look like for you in both your work and your life right now?

TCD: The question in my life is harder [laughs]. Because I think part of— somebody asked, “How do you define self care?” And I said, “The tool of the patriarchy to move the attention away from systems and structures that dehumanize us.” [laughs] Because I'm like, “Dude, I have self care coming out of my ass. I run on a regular basis, I quilt, I make jam, I have mindfulness practice, and it still doesn't make the world any less shitty for me. It still doesn't make the world easy for my son to navigate and easy for me to support him in navigating.” It doesn't. It's hard that way. But I do try and bring joy to the work just even in little ways, like when I'm kicking off a convening as a

keynote speaker, I have a dance party, I put on Stevie Wonder's "Signed, Sealed, and Delivered" And I just go [dances] for a minute. And I remember at the end of a particularly intense DEI session I said, "Can we spend the last three minutes dancing to 'Love on Top?'" And I pulled up YouTube, put "Love on Top," and I was just like, "No, you don't have to join me, but this is what I'm doing." And I asked really good icebreaker questions about like, "What keeps you centered? What brings you joy? What brought a smile to your face this week?" Things like that. And I think I've really become, over the past few years, very skillful about appreciation. I just found out that an article on multi-sector collaboration that I co-authored, it was accepted in the Stanford Social Innovation Review and I emailed all of the co-authors saying, "Thanks for making me look so smart." I really get joy out of appreciation. I get joy out of just seeing other people— I have a really fun coaching relationship with one of my program managers, where we meet every other week and we start off the session with appreciation and I am very strict about appreciation. I say, "Appreciation is concrete, actionable, and uplifting. And I don't want to hear that I did a good job, I want to hear what you appreciated about that good job." And in our last one I just said, "Hillary, I just really want to appreciate the fact that when I was unpacking a really difficult interaction with another co-worker, the first thing you named was that was, 'That must be really difficult for you since you've had this trusting relationship with them and that trust was kind of eroded.'" And I said, "I've really got to appreciate the fact that you— here I was talking about how the work was getting derailed and stuff like that, and here you were bringing it back to the human piece of that and the emotions of that," and I just said, "I just want to appreciate that." And it's really nice to have that every other week space to just see the person on the other side of the Zoom with you and just say, "You're special. You're so special." And that's really joyful and I'm glad that I have the space, not just space as in time but space as in mental space, to do that. And so I think— I don't know, I think joy is less an operation now for me and more about how I show up. Because if it's about that self care thing, it's not doing its job. I mean, it hasn't made my life easier, it hasn't made the systems and structures that impact my life as a queer Viet refugee easier and the parent of a neuroatypical child easier. And so I just need to sort of say as I said before as a parent, when do I shift sort of when I notice the joy that is in my life? When can I just slow down and say, "I don't need to get this done. I can literally just watch the Gilded Age on my bed." And so now we have a dog. And I think part of it is letting myself do nothing and moving away from the guilt that I did nothing. Because that is not wasted time. It's time that has helped me feel more human and more fulfilled and more— and filling up my cup so that I have more to offer the world. And that's been really hard. I remember the first time— at the Rockwood Leadership Institute, we worked a four day work week and I'd never worked a four day work week before. And when I had my year-end review in the first year, my boss was just like, "Oh, I'm noticing you're sending emails on Fridays when the office is closed." And I was so proud, I was like, "Yeah, I'm sneaking in and getting stuff done." And she was like, "That's a problem. Can we take a fellowship off your plate, maybe find somebody else who can handle that? Because—" And I cried. I was just like, "You can't do that to me" And she was like, "You're not doing a bad job, but I'm not going to create a work environment where you have to bend the rules and work more than everybody else to get what you need done.

And that tells me you have too much on your plate.” I mean, it's that kind of thing where you need the systems and structures to reinforce that. The system and structure of like, “We're not going to be rewarding you shitting on yourself. And we're not going to punish you for shitting on yourself, but we're going to support you.” I don't know, I mean, I went far afield from the joy question but it's really about, how do I live my life in a way that's sustainable?

SDK: I wanted to ask a question about kind of systems and structures and that big picture. There's been a lot— George W. Bush was President back when we spoke last and we've had two very different Presidents since then and now into Biden. And as you said, so many of these systems are so— there's so much entrenched injustice. So I guess I'm wondering to just hear kind of your big picture view of where we are and what's happening and what hope there may be?

TCD: It's so interesting because it connects back to— one of the primary tools of oppression is it limits our ability to dream. And I've actually asked— it was like my ability to dream after spending a few decades in the nonprofit sector was smashed to bits. And when I finally got a chance to dream and being told, “No, in this first year you're not just renewing grants and doing what we've done before. What is the direction you want to go in?” I was like, “What the hell are you talking about? I just want to do what I'm told to do.” [laughs] And I think that's one of the things where it's like— one of the ways that oppression is manifesting itself at all levels, and I'm not apart from that, is our ability to dream. When Obama got into the office, those first two years we had a majority of Congress, we had Obama, and the most we could do was this ramshackle, shaggy-ass Affordable Care Act. We weren't passing like expansion of voters rights, we weren't passing free higher education, we weren't passing— and even in language, I just remember even in language, we do more to police ourselves than the right-wing does. Even in language, it was like with the attacks on Planned Parenthood— and I'm seeing that even now, when Girl Scouts are being told, “Your cookies are funding Planned Parenthood.” And people are like, “No they're not.” And I'm like— defenders are saying they're not, as opposed to like, “Hell yeah, Planned Parenthood is awesome. They're making sure people have control over their bodies. What are you for then? Are you for people not having control over—” Nobody challenges them, but people challenge— and our response with Planned Parenthood and Defund Planned Parenthood was, “Oh, only 1% of them are abortions.” I'm like, “Would you ever see a doctor's office and be like, ‘Oh, only 1% of them are hysterectomies.’ Why do you even care? It's a medical procedure.” But we never say that. Our dreams and our language and our narrative is so geared towards that, and that— I was in the room, this was what so killed me, absolutely killed me, I brought a contingent of grantees in 2016 to the Facing Race Conference and it was literally a week after the 2016 election. And in that week I had Van fucking Jones saying he wanted to build a love army to reach out to Trump voters, as we have shell-shocked racial justice advocates in the room. As much as Trump did, I'm like, Trump got the keys to the car and he created a fascist state where Muslims were under fire and Biden gets the

keys to the car and we got ARPA, where, I mean, I'm working with groups to be able to have that funding be community driven as opposed to just a block grant that goes to cities and doesn't touch communities and it's such a— for that, it's such a struggle. And I just remember being in community development and having my partners do the numbers and they said like, “Oh, for one fifth of the entire plan, for one fifth of the cost of entire plan, you can just give all the people who are underwater on their houses enough money not to be underwater and you would have solved the foreclosure crisis right there.” For one fifth of the amount of money. I mean, I get more discouraged by the fact that we on the left limit our dreams than I do about the right-wing going bazonkers, because we've given them the license to go bazonkers, we've given— I mean, for example, the Women's March was the largest mobilization in the history of this country. It was— the write up was in the Metro section of the Post. A couple hundred Tea Party people gathered in front of the Capitol and it's front page news. Where I do have hope is about— I struggle with Ukraine, because the racism that's happening is so intense, but where I do have so much hope is Ukraine, and what's happening on the ground is normalizing resistance. Nobody is making anybody feel bad for a Molotov cocktail. Nobody is saying, “Oh, only love can stop hate.” No, a Molotov cocktail thrown by a grandma can stop hate. We on the left have an addiction to non-violence and it's one of the reasons why I stepped aside from the Quaker Church, because I saw that language being co-opted, and it was killing me. It was killing me, and it was killing me as a person of color who— I was like— George Floyd was killed three blocks away from where I lived in Minneapolis. One of my closest friends taught the paramedic who testified and was one of the people who said like, “Please stop, let's call an ambulance.” And one of the things that really killed me, especially from the left, was I was on a call in the wake of George Floyd with the Executive Director of the Western States Center, who said, “It was just so upsetting to see George Floyd killed and nobody was doing anything.” I was just like, “Did you see the 5 teenage girls, Black teenage girls, who were calling people on their cell phones and recording it and telling people to stop? Do not erase that.” But what I have hope around is Ukraine— if we on the left can harness that, Ukraine is normalizing resistance. Ukraine is saying it's okay when there is a force as comprehensive and as evil as Russia invading your country to throw a fucking Molotov cocktail. It's okay to burn down that police station when the police are fundamentally killing people on the street. And it's okay that our language is not nice and not designed to make somebody in Iowa, in Cedar Rapids, in a 5000 square foot home that they bought an HDTV comfortable. Like it's okay, but the only people we're organizing are Afro-Latinx immigrants, because we're important too [laughs]. All of those things where I feel like things are fundamentally shifting in terms of who get centered and who doesn't at least in how we in philanthropy are talking about it, of just like, who are we really centering? Because I have been working— we're going to be funding PICO which is a religious organizing group, and I was like, “If we're funding PICO because they have made it very clear, they want to really reach out to people who are— religious people who don't understand social justice,” I'm like, “Then we are funding literally these groups that are doing active organizing around Black Lives Matter.” And I'm really happy to be in a position to say that and do that and to say they're getting \$300,000. I mean I don't know, I think for me, the facts that Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ilhan

Omar and the new Mayor of Boston who comes from an organizing and affordable housing background, and is so completely unapologetic about it is just wonderful and I'm also like, one of the things that really killed me this week was, we are led— our President is an Asian woman, our Director of Programs is an Asian woman, we are majority API and when me and another staff person said, “We really need to write a blog post about the one year anniversary of the Atlanta shootings,” they said, “Sorry, it’s not on our calendar.” And I'm just like, if we can't say it, who is? If we can't name it in philanthropy that we are still one year later grieving about the death of API women, who else is going to say it? And time check, we've got five more minutes, but I can go to 1:15 if you need more time.

SDK: I think we just have maybe one more question, Soph? One or two.

SZ: Yeah. So what do you feel like your most significant accomplishment has been, either personally or career?

TCD: Surviving. I just think surviving as a parent, I think just staying in a relationship with my son, staying connected to him and being able to bloom where I’m rooted, of like all of these contexts, and I think really my biggest accomplishment was leaving BARHII. I think in the past, I would have said, “I'm just going to need to give this two years, three years, just to do something,” But I was just like, “I can't stay here. I can't stay here. I can't stay here in a group that fundamentally devalues people of color and I— the minute I got that sign that I was really fundamentally not welcome, I left. I found another job. I think just being able to know myself better, being able to sort of— I think, for example, when I was interviewing for a job and they turned me down, I was down to the final two and they turned me down, I felt so good about being turned down because I was really clear, like, “You know, what I really need in this job is a clear North star, is something where even if we don't have the pathway, we have a clear idea of what we're trying to do. I don't want to feel like I'm set up for failure.” And they were like, “This program is really emergent.” Because when I said, “Oh, why wasn’t I selected?” They were like, “We haven't thought through everything and we need somebody to think it through.” And I was relieved, I was like, “Good for you.” And I think that was the first job where I was just really like— it felt like an accomplishment because I wasn't just like, “Oh, they didn't pick me.” I was fully who I was in that interview, I put it all on the table, not just impressing them but like, “This is what I need if you want me to be success— and this is what I need to be happy.” And they said they couldn't give it to me, I was like, “Thank God. Thank God I wasn't chosen.” I feel like whatever happens externally with me, with my family, with my job, with what I do in the world, the fact that I— and again, I go back to the gift that you all have given me with [laughs] that transcript, and this is going to be a gift that I give to myself with the next transcript, which is knowing myself and

being okay with that and knowing that yeah, I'm going to mess up, and this is why I'm going to mess up, and it's okay that I messed up and it's okay that I need this. I think if I'd had any accomplishment, it's going to be the ability to say, "This is what I need. This is what I need to be successful. You want me to make magic? Give me the potions." And then the fact that I have a voice to say that, the fact that I can ask those questions, the fact that I know now that I deserve to be recognized as a human being, I think that's the achievement in a world that hates me, in a world that hates immigrants or that hates Asian people, in a world that hates queer people. Yeah, I know with my husband's family, they love me but I am at the back— I'm at the end of the buffet line when it comes to kind of forbearance. He's got a homophobic sister as you read and it's like— at his parents 50th anniversary, I tried to make up an honorable excuse not to go, because I just didn't want to spend time with her and his mother was just like, "Please come, it means so much to me," and I was like, "I don't want to." And it was— and then my son joined in and was like, "Please come." And I just did it and it was torture, it was utter torture, because— it was not just torture because I had to be in an unpleasant situation, it was torture because I didn't have a voice in that unpleasant situation, that I was the one who was making everybody uncomfortable by pointing out that this person's a bigot and I didn't want to be there because of that. I value the fact that even write small in my interpersonal relationships, I'm at the back of the buffet line, and the fact that I still get to eat from the buffet means something, it is an accomplishment in and of itself.

SDK: Thank you so much, TC, I really appreciate you sharing your experiences and your stories and your wisdom. It's been really, really wonderful to hear about all that you've been doing.

TCD: Well, thank you for opening up the space. I mean, I just feel like I should be paying you all for this documentation and just kind of— what's amazing to me is that I'm super excited about what you all are going to do with the sense-making of all of this, [laughs] because reading the paper from that interview, and all of those interviews, the sense-making of that was just brilliant and it was just like, "That's where I fit in, that's what my experience—" the context is everything. I'm excited coming out of this to sort of see what's the new context or what's remained the context after like these follow up interviews, so thank you, thank you.

SDK: Well, thank you. There's so much richness there. And I don't know if I'll do a big project like I did with the previous interviews. What I'm excited about this time is the students are going to be writing, so the students are going to be writing blog posts and social media, work on a social media campaign to try to let people know about the stories, so we'll be getting their reactions. But there's there's been so much richness, this is now, I think, the third one, right Soph? This is the third follow up that we've done and there's really— just yeah, it's really wonderful. So I very well may be

inspired to do another big analysis of them because or maybe just some smaller papers, because it's just really, really wonderful, so thank you so much.

TCD: Thank you, and let me know if you need anything else, this was a joy to just sort of like blather on.

SDK: Thank you. So Soph, you feel satisfied?

SZ: Yeah, great. Thank you so much for your time and sharing everything. It was really, really great.

TCD: Okay. Well, you have a good evening, afternoon for me.

SDK: The next generation. Yeah, we're on spring break now.

TCD: Okay, alright, thanks a lot.

SDK: Thanks bye.

END OF TRANSCRIPT