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Interviewees: Charlene Martinez, Tara DeMaderios, Vanessa Johnson, Kim McAloney, and Erich Pitcher

Facilitator: Kali Furman

Transcriber: Jalen Todd

KF: Kali Furman

CM: Charlene Martinez

TD: Tara DeMaderios

VJ: Vanessa Johnson

KM: Kim McAloney

EP: Erich Pitcher

[00:00:00]

KF: Alright, hello everyone. Thanks for joining together for this Multiracial Beavers Focus Group today. I know everyone has a busy schedule so I appreciate everybody making time. My name is Kali Furman, my pronouns are she/her/hers and I'm a PhD student in Women Gender and Sexuality Studies here at Oregon State University, and I've been given the opportunity to work with all of y'all on this awesome Multiracial Beavers Project this term for part of a class that I'm taking. This focus group is part of an ongoing oral histories project that's capturing the stories of multiracial students, staff, and faculty here at OSU and today we're hoping to have a conversation about the beginnings of the Multiracial Beavers, your experience together, forming this group, and thinking about its significance, and the future of the organization. So we have generated a list of questions that I'll use to help guide our conversation that I emailed out to you but please feel free to talk to each other to change your mind, to build off of what each other is saying and just go with the flow as the conversation takes us. So first what we'd like to do is have everyone introduce themselves with their name, pronouns, your roll on campus, or what your former role on campus was and where you are now, if you're not on campus currently, and then one word or a phrase that comes to mind when you think about Multiracial Beavers. So anyone can go ahead and get started, but I see Charlene's face in the big square, so maybe do you want to start?

CM: Sure. So, hi my name is Charlene Martinez, I use she/her/hers pronouns, I am associate director for Integrated Learning for Social Change in Diversity and Cultural

Engagement at Oregon State University. And a word or phrase... I'm going to go with: comfort.

KF: Anyone can feel free to jump in and introduce themselves next.

TD: I'll go ahead. Hello, my name is Tara DeMaderios and I'm a recent alumna of Oregon State University and I interned with Charlene Martinez. And I've met everyone through the Multiracial Beavers group meetings that I started attending the last year that I was at OSU. And one word that I would use would be: community. And I use she/her/hers pronouns. I forgot that part too. Sorry. [Laughs].

VJ: I can go next. My name is Vanessa Johnson, I use she/her/hers pronouns. I was previously an assessment coordinator with the Student Affairs Research and Evaluation Planning Office until last week, and I'm starting a new position at the University of Utah as a data analyst. And one word to describe: belonging.

KM: I can go. My name's Kim McAloney, I use she/her/hers pronouns. I work as the coordinator of Academic Engagement in the Educational Opportunities Program here at OSU, and one word or phrase I would use. I think I will use 'connected' for now. I was also debating between 'family' and 'connected.'

EP: Hi everybody, my name is Erich Pitcher, I use he or they pronouns and I'm associate director for Research and Communication at Diversity and Cultural Engagement at Oregon State. And since the Multiracial Beavers program is actually a little bit new to me part of what I think of when I think about it is newness, but I also think about it being a highly necessary initiative. And just to clarify, my role today is mostly to just listen and help ask clarifying questions if there's time, if that's needed. So I'll mostly be on mute.

KF: Excellent. Thank you everyone. So we'll go ahead and get started with our first question and then we'll go from there. So our first question for the group is: How have you been involved with the Multiracial Beavers?

CM: I'm going to offer a suggestion, I think Kim should go first.

[00:04:55]

KM: I had a feeling that was going to happen. [Laughs]. Sure. Goodness, I'm trying to think back to 2010, Malinda Shell and I participated in Racial Aikido 'train a trainer.' And as we were going through that experience was I believe the first time that they had included multiracial as a category and I think we're trying it out on us as faculty and

staff and grad students before the next January's Racial Aikido. We had some really good conversations and I think she and I connected afterwards and talked about that was the first time that we had experienced, here at OSU, someone kind of making space for multiraciality and those of us who may identify in multiple ways. So kind of at that point, there was the two of us and one other grad student who said we need to do something, even if it's just ourselves connecting and trying to build community around this. So we, that fall, were able to start up kind of this pseudo sort of student organization club thing where we meet in Kerr, the first floor of Kerr where DCE when it was ISS, used to be. And we met kind of in that big, just open space on the couches and one time we probably had twenty people who showed up, between students and faculty and staff and folks who identified mostly as multiracial or folks who were family members of other multiracial folks. And as we graduated, that student core kind of left and fizzled out and we had started conversations about that time too about a Multiracial Aikido, did some work on that. And just with some of the other Aikido sort of relationship stuff and as those were transforming, and what not, it never really got off the ground. So it's really been these last couple years since more of you have been here, more visibility, and I think in a different space of the campus to engage in dialog and really kind of making space for more things to happen. So that's a little bit more about my history maybe with pre-Multiracial Beavers. And then I've been involved with the Aikido, primarily and the Faculty/Staff stuff too.

EP: Kim do you mean the Faculty/Staff professional development or something else?

KM: So it was a Faculty/Staff community gathering that we held and were between four and six about once a month I think they were. Charlene you can feel free to help me out here. And was more really about building community and so we'd meet, I think mostly over at Happy Hour, if I remember correctly.

CM: Four years ago, so I've been at Oregon State for four years this month

[Erich, Tara, and Kim clap silently. Vanessa gives a thumbs up]

I know, amazing. And I think a few months after I got here after I had a baby, so I got here in December, had a baby in February, and started hitting the ground running meeting with different people that first year. I met with Kim and Malinda Shell, I think we were the three, I think, original people. Then the following year, Stephanie Shippen joined. And in the first year we were really concentrating on all these things, all these initiatives and all these things we could do that are finally manifesting four years later. But at that time we didn't have the capacity for various reasons. All of us were kind of in transitional places and roles and all these different things and what we realized we could do, we had control over, was our time with each other. And we just started meeting kind of periodically, I haven't been the most coordinated in the effort but

Melinda, who has also left us to another institution in this region was also kind of instrumental in just getting time on the books and the calendar. We realized how essential that was. So Melinda kind of held the container for the faculty and staff at Happy Hour which we realized, more than the initiatives, was more essential for us to sustain ourselves before we could figure out how to bolster consciousness or do the Aikido or any of those things. And I'd say the fourth force, Stephanie Shippen, is a psychologist in CAPS came with also experience – and all of us had previous experience in student organizations with multiracial students or as practitioners kind of investigating multiracial student identity development and then as practitioners, multiracial student first practitioners, development – in some way, shape, or form and so, so did Stephanie. And when she came in she brought in the element of well why don't we pair together with CAPS and just get on the books or some cultural resource center anywhere really as a drop in group for students.

[00:10:57]

So those two things kind of paralleled each other. The growing of community, staff and faculty community building at Happy Hour's and then the emergence of – which we'll be at our two year mark for those drop ins in this next coming spring here. And that's how we started to get the ball rolling. And then we finally felt like we were in a place – actually it was a white woman inside CAPS who was pretty persistent about us starting Multiracial Aikido and I'm really grateful for her persistence in getting that fire. Because we had it as an idea, but like I said, we didn't think we had the bandwidth to really pull it off. And with that little ignition we were like 'okay, let's just do it!' So we finally did it last year as a one day pilot. And my involvement has been all those things in the last four years and it's been a really awesome ride. This is really a great culmination of the first effort. Second wave, of the first effort.

TD: Well I feel like I should drop in and say something about being one of the students attending the drop in sessions. That's how I became acquainted with Multiracial Beavers, and it really was something that I just did on a whim and it became such an important part of my last year at OSU. It was a space to find community. It was a space to feel that I could connect with other people and be my authentic self. Through the drop in sessions, I also was able to meet Charlene and we starting talking about the possibility of my interning. Which I ended up creating a Canvas tool for my internship that is related to Multiracial Beavers in that it's designed – the purpose and the intention of it is to be a starting place for training people in understanding why having a space for multiracial students is so vital and critical. And how best to have those resources available to students. It was something that became really important to me and really helped me have something that I could be passionate about doing for my internship. It also helped me to find some clarity on moving forward, pursuing a master's degree, through my interactions with the group and talking with Stephanie

and seeing the work that she was doing I really decided to pursue a master's degree that would let me become a clinical therapist.

VJ: Okay so, I guess I'll go. So I was introduced to Multiracial Beavers through Kim. She was one of the first folks I met on campus when I came to OSU and then also in meeting Charlene and talking to her more about it. I've been more involved, I would say, in the Faculty/Staff gatherings and that has been – I would say that coming to OSU and being a part of Multiracial Beavers was really the first time I really felt welcomed or like in community. Because as someone who identifies as multiracial, I never felt like I fit in with some of the identities, ethnic, racial identities that I hold. It just was a space that really fit my soul and felt like I gained some wonderful friendships that I know will last for years to come and that's been my experience and I'll just leave it there for now.

[00:15:25]

KF: Great. Thank you all for sharing the origin story, a little bit, of Multiracial Beavers and how you all have been participating and getting engaged with the group. Some of you spoke to this a little bit in your answers to this first question but I want to provide space for folks to elaborate on some of the things that they were saying and build – but the next question we have written was: What is different for you because of your participation in the Multiracial Beavers group?

VJ: I guess, I'll go if that's okay, yeah?

[All nod]

So what's different for me? Well it's a place where like, I don't know, it's like this talking with John a bit, but I should say for me it's been a space where I'm beginning to explore my identity more and I really haven't been able to have a space to do that before. It's always been something I do individually but just having that space has been wonderful. I suppose because of Multiracial Beavers has inspired me to continue this community – so not only like keeping up of course with community and friendships in Oregon – but possibly starting something at my current institution. Because being an alumni – alumna? – from the institution that I'm at now, there wasn't, or I don't think there is a multiracial community. I just know that that as a student going there, that would have been so helpful, but now as a professional Faculty/Staff, also I know the need and I know what it can bring because it's really enriched my life. So I want to continue that.

CM: For me what's different is that this is my fourth year, going into my fourth year, and I feel like I finally have hope in being able to live in Oregon for more than four years. So I think that says a lot. My first three years were extremely rocky for many

different reasons. But I think the hope – and what I mean by ‘the hope’ is what I’ve been able to see grow and I know it’s value here in Oregon now. I’ve been involved in multiracial communities since undergrad at UC Santa Barbara since 1998, my sophomore year. But I didn’t understand how necessary it is until I got to Oregon. It was a little bit more of a luxury in terms of my being involved in the communities before – not a luxury, I don’t know. I found those communities they existed etc. Here, because we don’t talk about race, because whiteness is centered, because we’re in a predominantly white state, because we’re surrounded by red regions, I think it has become more necessary to distinguish and to carve out space for people to, not only unpack their multiracial identities, but to see, particularly in students who are emerging as multiracial or whatever, or who have been able to pass as white but are people of color, for them to really find their own agency. I feel like it’s my calling to provide that container for that to happen. So I think that’s what’s different. Three years ago I didn’t see hope here and now I do. And I think that’s largely due to this community.

[00:19:40]

TD: Listening to you Charlene, it made me think of something that was really profound for me and was different after being in Multiracial Beavers and that is being able to read through Maria P.P. Root’s Bill of Rights for Multiracial People. That really affected me at a deep level and it felt like validation for a lot of things I’d always felt but didn’t really have a way of expressing. For the first time after reading that I felt like I don’t have to justify who I was any longer or justify myself to other people. Which is, really, I think one of the biggest challenges that I have faced around my multiracial identity. So that for me is probably the biggest thing that changed as part of being in Multiracial Beavers.

KM: I think for me, I connect a lot with what all of you have said and maybe a little more with what some of the things Vanessa was saying. I think Multiracial Beavers to me, I feel like, allows me to be in a community and connected with other people, that I can feel whole. And I don’t think I ever experienced that pre-this. So I feel like I can bring my whole self, I feel like – I don’t know. There’s so many things with that, right? So I think when I’m with other folks who are part of this community as Multiracial Beavers I feel like it – it’s hard to explain. Like, I feel like [sighs]. Like I don’t have to explain who I am or things like that, but I think it goes deeper. I think it frees up a different sort of space for me to be able to think and work and do a more critical level of thinking maybe in a way that I haven’t been before. If that kind of makes sense.

[All nod]

KF: Thank you all. I want to pick up on a thread that Charlene brought up in her response which is how the Oregon or Oregon State context may be different from other

contexts where you've lived or worked in and to hear folks' thoughts about the specificity of Oregon or Oregon State University and your experiences as multiracial people and with Multiracial Beavers.

KM: I can take a stab first, I guess. So I moved to Oregon from South Georgia. So I went from a place where we had to—the rest of my family is white—where we knew exactly where our family stood because of my race. That, we had to make sure we always had gas in the car and the car was working well because Klan meetings that happened weekly, you know, if we were going to where we lived which was usually outside of town in more rural areas and with the Klan being so heavily, I don't know, so prevalent, you know, if something happened to our car the three of us, my mom and my sister, could just disappear, right. So I came from this space where I knew my place, if you will, because of my race. I came to Oregon where there's this Pacific Northwest niceness and the ways in which whiteness shows up here I think it's just incredibly different. So I think for a long time that was really hard. I think about some of the things I've experienced as microaggressions that others experienced too and I think in this space—particularly during my teenage years—like what does this mean and what is happening, is this unique to me, is this all in my head, is this all in my head? All of those things and ways I hadn't had to deal with before. So I think some of the ways that whiteness and white supremacy and the history of Oregon I think really have been very different from my former, previous experiences. And I think that shows up, through OSU also, as a product of being here in this state. I think that's where I'll stop.

[00:25:06]

VJ: I can go. So I moved from a PWI and a red state to Oregon and I think also it's such a small town feel too. So I like, without—I don't know if it eventually would have happened, I would hope it would have—but through knowing, getting connected with Kim and Charlene. I don't know if it's like we gravitate towards one another and just try to hold each other because it is really hard being in such a small town, even though it's like 56,000 [people] but it's still so small. Dealing with the Pacific Northwest chill and the nice and politeness and I don't know. It was really hard when I first got there and I didn't know if I would make it next year but I think it was because of knowing folks like Kim and Charlene that really helped me get through that first year and my second year, being able to be more involved, kind of thrived. But I would say... I don't know how to explain the sense of latching onto one another and holding one another. I didn't see that, again, I was in a different—like I was a student at my institution so I didn't see that necessarily and it was very much a commuter school so folks just came and left. But here, I don't know, it's just—I don't know if that plays a factor into the success of, like Charlene had mentioned earlier, having been a part of multiracial groups that existed, here at OSU it just felt so necessary to thrive and do well in our work to have that personal nourishment from Multiracial Beavers.

TD: I moved from the Midwest to Oregon, when I first came to Oregon 13 years ago. In August, I moved back to the Midwest and the main difference that I've seen is that racism and racial tensions and other issues surrounding race and ethnicity are a little more blatant and out in the open in the Midwest. Whereas in Oregon and the PNW, it's more hidden and covert. Along with that goes a lot of denial. So you get a lot of just completely dismissing what your feeling or experiencing. So that can be really frustrating, you never really know where it's coming from. I feel like in some ways it's a little harder to deal with than just having things be outright, blatantly overt, like the way people interact with you and what they think. Because you know what you're dealing with when people are overt, and when you don't know what to expect that can really throw you for a loop. So I think that for me, that has been the main difference between Oregon and the states in the Midwest that I've lived in.

CM: So, I'm from California – raised in California – and then I have lineage, my family immigrated to New York City. So even though my mom is Taiwanese, my dad is Columbian; it was pretty radical for them to meet and get married and they communicated in English. And I share all that because they, my mom has always been pretty outspoken about the things that matter and the things she thinks is wrong and right. So California was an ideal place for her. So was New York City, and then California also. And I experienced racism when I was young in San Diego pretty overtly because we also lived near where decedents of KKK lived. And I saw my mother being attacked for those things. So coming to Oregon I thought that my directness or – I just don't know how to sugar coat anything – and I think people, I find it pretty funny that people think I'm maybe aggressive here or maybe too confrontational. Which I think is hilarious. Back home, I mean yeah, I'm kind of direct but I wouldn't be considered the confrontational one on the spectrum of things but here I'm the uber-confrontational one. Particularly when it comes to white women. I'm the super confrontational one. So, what I find interesting about people who grew up here in Oregon, both people of color and white folks and the folks in between, where ever they identify, is that no one asked me what I was. The 'what are you?' question was huge in California, people would just like throw it around, and after awhile it became less of a microaggression to me and more of something where I'd go 'okay, it's just comes with the territory of being ethnically ambiguous.' But I've been here in Oregon for four years and I've never been asked the question once.

[30:53:00]

And I find that fascinating because I think people here are just scared. They're scared to talk about race. So we don't know what to say so if we can't say it right we won't say it at all. So we're just not going to talk about it. I find that fascinating, disturbing, because then you can't have a conversation about anything because we don't want to begin to

have the conversation. And then I think people of, sort of, “homogenous” groups of different respective ethnic and racial makeup, they don’t know how to talk about it. They don’t know how to talk about how I identify as both Latina and Asian and whether or not to invite me to things or not. I think that it’s getting better now that I know people, but certainly in the beginning it was kind of a boxing out of community. I really felt the rub of like ‘oh, are you really Asian?’ or ‘are you really Latina?’ So I would say that’s how it shows up for me with both an Oregonian context and how I move through the world.

EP: If I could just jump in for one second. Part of what I heard folks talk about – and this was sort of the way this question was constructed – was sort of the differences between environments you previously been a part of and environments you’re now a part of. But when I was listening, especially to the responses to the first couple of questions, it felt like there was a real sense of urgency amongst folks to get together as faculty and staff and I’m wondering if there was something in the environment that was making you feel a sense of urgency to get together, right? So there was language like ‘latching on’ and ‘holding each other.’ Or ‘I didn’t really feel like I could thrive until I had a community’ or, like Kim talked about, being able to sort of bring your whole self and how that sort of freed you up to do different things. So I’m wondering, what clues were you getting from the environment that made the work of Multiracial Beavers so urgent?

VJ: I’ll go first. So I don’t know if my situation was a little unique because I moved to Oregon by myself. I didn’t have a partner. I have some family that lives in Portland but I never see them. So for me, Corvallis is a very, kind of like, coupled or family-oriented place. For me, it felt really lonely at times. And I was feeling really lonely for a long time and so for me I guess that urgency was like, to be able to connect with folks and being able to feed that need for not feeling so lonely. And, I don’t know. Maybe I can think about this question a little more and come back but that was just kind of my first thought. I just felt like I really needed a community and with Multiracial Beavers I was able to find that. So I don’t know if there was necessarily things happening on campus, but you kind of just feel really, I don’t know. Being like the only woman of color in meetings or being tokenized or whatnot. That’s also maybe a sense of wanting to latch onto folks that you don’t have to explain things or that you can express that ‘hey, this thing happened at the office today.’ Or whatever, and folks get it. So, I don’t know. I’ll leave it at that.

TD: I wasn’t a part of forming the initial groups but what Vanessa was saying made me think about how everything is centered on whiteness so much and when that’s not your experience because you see the other aspects of your own personality or your own culture heritage, it can be really frustrating to just constantly be surrounded by people who don’t anything besides whiteness or white culture and don’t really understand there are other perspectives and views. I know for myself, like that has really fed my

desire to connect to other people of color, but especially multiracial people. Because there's an understanding of having to – on the one hand, because I am part white, sometimes people perceive me as [white] and so I'm granted this kind of access into white culture at points in time where I'm accepted and then other times I'm not. And then I also have all the experiences of when I'm with my family members who are much darker skinned myself. And that community and seeing the things that happen from that experience, to then have to go back into these spaces where whiteness is centered and whiteness is the only thing that is acknowledged or talked about or thought about, that's really frustrating to have to deal with.

[00:36:30]

CM: Well I think I was angry. I was angry and lonely. I was angry that the people of color communities didn't embrace me and I'd worked, whatever, fifteen years to get good with myself and my identities and then I get to a place where it's like 'well, let's put you through the authenticity test again.' And I was done with this, right? And then I was lonely because I couldn't find communities that, I think both what you're saying Tara and Vanessa, ring true around people who just wanted to stay in the binary. Like we had to reinforce binary here in Oregon because of the history here and the context. And it took me three years to understand that and empathize with that, like I get that now. That's a necessity because when people are trying to strip you of your culture, you hold onto it. But then people want to essentialize. So, your dark enough, you definitely belong in this group. And then the other aspect of the urgency was I witnessing a lot of what I consider people of color, mixed race white folks in some way shape or form, questioning whether or not they were people of color. And in California, I don't feel like that was a thing, if you're a person of color, you're a person of color. Yeah, skin tone matters and hues matter and that's a whole discussion about that, clearly. But I have never heard so many people deny or just not even be able to associate because they had white skin privilege. Again, centering this discourse around whiteness and white skin privilege, equating that as whiteness and 100% European ancestry. So that was really – I was really struggling with all those things at the same time and it got very clear that the only thing I could do was to start organizing and bringing people together.

KM: And I think I echo the binary piece. And the sort of – yeah, I might come back to this later. I would echo the binary piece as a really strong component for me.

EP: Are you meaning like a – how are you using the term binary in this case?

KM: I mean the racial binary. So race: whiteness vs people of color sort of piece.

CM: And I actually mean, not just racial binary, but I also mean like gender binary, political binary. Like, we just want to make sure that we know what a person is or what

their categories are. So I think my allyship into gender identity stuff comes a lot from this being able to navigate the in-between and seeing the in-between and understand that in a way I think there are some similarities – clear differences, but some similarities in those kinds of binaries as well.

EP: Thanks for indulging me and my pesky questions.

KF: Something that I want to delve into, because I think we can hear and some of the answers that y'all were giving to Erich's question is, when you think about how the Multiracial Beavers formed, what was most exciting about that process? I hear the various feelings of need from folks and finding this community and finding each other. So, what was really exciting about that or what does it say about building community amongst multiracial people?

[00:40:15]

CM: So I've built these communities in four different institutions, and I have seen the ebb and flow of them. And the major critique for student groups or faculty groups or whatever groups, by others and from within, is that we can't sustain ourselves because our multiraciality, or components, our makeup, our heritage, are so different and therefore there's very little that will continue to bind us over time. So I think what's exciting about this catalyzation of this chapter here in Oregon is that – I don't know, given that electoral – the election climate like, all the things that are happening I feel like there's a potential here to sustain in a different way that isn't as necessary as in California or other places.

KF: Do other folks have thoughts about the process or the process of you getting involved that was particularly exciting that you feel like you want to elaborate on?

VJ: So, again I'll just probably add to it like, it was the first time actually having a multiracial anything, a multiracial group. So for me that was really exciting. Like I, I was like 'oh, that's a thing?' Which is good. To be able to like feel like I belong because I feel like there are some colleagues at OSU that are like, 'so, are you Latina, or what?' And so just, yeah, questioning my identity and [sighs] I hate this. But I was just excited to have a space period.

KM: Yeah, I would agree. I was taking some notes and thinking about how like, how selfish I felt my answer is and kind of going through this process in my head, right? Like, I have this quote of Audre Lorde, this taking care of ourselves, right? Like it is part of the work, and so I think having it internalized, conversation and dialogue. And I echo both of my colleagues that have spoken before. You know, it was for me at a NASPA conference when I was 28 years old before I was in a room with other people

who identified as multiracial and I just remember sitting in that room balling my eyes out. I so thankful that I was an undergrad and could say that, right? I was an undergrad. There were thirty other people around the table, like, crying. And I think about my own sort of – then coming back to campus and some of the other things that I've shared about this sort of space and feeling whole and being able just to be. And what that has done for my own psyche, what that has done for my work, what that has allowed me to do and be. And I think being in an inter-racial relationship I think I also was like 'okay, there's some ways I can have community here so that my children will be able to also have a community in this multiraciality sort of space. And thinking about the ways in which because I have this space now, one of the ways that I can continue to create a space both here at work, both here in community, right? With Charlene and Vanessa, and Tara I don't feel like I got a change to meet you and I'm sad about that, but I – you know. It feels like our relationships have much more beyond just work. And what that means for my family, what that means for my future. All of those things that I think were really, really exciting for me.

[00:45:07]

TD: I am listening to you all talking about what inspired you to begin the group and it's making me [laughs] think that I need to look into starting some things here where I live, because I've moved away. But I really appreciate this model and I appreciate the friendships I've made through it and the mentorship. And I feel that moving forward, whatever I end up doing, is going to definitely be informed by my participation in the group and that's really exciting for me. Like thinking about the future and what I can cultivate in the space that I have found myself in, in another state.

KF: I'd love to jump into another question from that Tara in thinking about what are some of y'all's hopes for the future of Multiracial Beavers here at OSU but also, Tara thinking about starting a group elsewhere or the future of multiracial work on college campuses or in communities?

VJ: Well I'm so excited for OSU Multiracial Beavers because I know the good people doing the work there. I don't see that going anywhere so I'm just super excited for folks, new folks coming in and folks that maybe haven't yet been reached out to or something, to join because I know it's such a wonderful community with folks who are passionate and genuine. Like, I not only found professional support, community, but just like, I made some really great friends. People I consider best friends, just really great folks. So that's my hope and love for OSU Multiracial Beavers. And then for me, at – [what] on Monday will be my current institution I don't know how hard it will be or how easy it will be. It'll be interesting. I don't know. I'm curious to just test it out and see if it might be something that can happen and I don't know. Maybe OSU's just really unique in that it's... I mean, it sounds like it took, like, three to four years and now we're at this really

great place. And I don't expect something to happen overnight at my current institution, but I'm hopeful. And, if anything, I know a few people at OSU I can call and talk to and have a community and that means a lot to me. So I don't know if I'll find community at my current institution, but I know that I still have community even though they're afar. Anyway.

CM: Kim, I know you need to go soon, do you want to finish with this question and then just the question about what advice you would offer your younger self?

KM: Oh my goodness. Yeah, thank you. I think I'm hopeful—I was writing furiously some notes about some of the things that I was thinking. I think I'm hopeful that in the future for OSU will fund support to Multiracial Beavers in ways that allow us to—I think about our existence. So some of the things that we talked about around binaries, particularly, I think about our existence and our creating space is, I think, activism, right? Like, it's challenging those binaries in ways that make people uncomfortable and I think that's good and I'm hopeful about that. Because I think that's the work that—I think a huge part of the work that we need to do. And it's part of the work, right? And hoping that we can then engage in conversation and dialogue about that, and comfortability and how we move forward and how we get ourselves as an institution out of the sort of binary way of being. So as I think about my hope too for the sort of funded support that that could be this place that could take us in really cool ways. That we don't have to --- it's not necessarily that we need a center for multiracial students on campus, but one of the ways in which we can think beyond, and think about other possibilities and other ways of being and operating as an institution. So that brings me a lot of hope. And the—what was the last [checks question on computer]—advice to my younger self. Oh my goodness. I should have thought about that question more. You know, I'm not sure, actually, what advice I would have for my younger self because I feel like I would not have gotten to where I am now, both in how I identify, both in terms of the work that I'm doing, had I not gone through what I'd gone through so I'm not sure. Maybe just to hang in there [laughs]. Because I think about, if there were things that I could tell myself I don't know if I would have been in a place where I would have really heard it. So, yeah. That's what I think.

[00:51:25]

CM: Before you leave, could you also share how you identify racially?

KM: Sure. I identify as multiracial, I identify as black, I identify as biracial, I identify as mixed. It kind of depends on the day and the circumstance and who's around. Yeah.

CM: Thanks.

KM: Yeah, thank you all. Thank you so much.

[Charlene, Tara, and Kali wave. Vanessa and Tara make a hand heart]

It was amazing to be in this community. Vanessa it was so good to see you. Tara, nice to meet you. I love you all [makes hand heart] sorry I have to go.

TD: It was nice to meet you, thank you.

[Kim leaves group call]

TD: I was listening to Kim and I was thinking about what I hope from having this group moving forward. Both at OSU and where I'm at, and really anywhere that there are multiracial groups coming together and providing this community for one another, what I hope is that it creates a space for community and self-love and self-care because doing the work of being empathetic and social justice minded and trying to affect change in the world, and trying to talk to people and any of the work we do in these areas is hard. Emotionally exhausting, it's taxing and we need those spaces to come together and be together in community and give each other that healing space. So I feel like it's really important, if for no other reason than just to have that space to connect with other people and have community and have healing space. Because when you are faced with all of the challenges that we face right now, especially with this election, and I know all the work we're going to be doing is going to have to be exhausting and challenging. And my hope is that Multiracial Beavers and multiracial groups of people getting together will be able to give each other that ability to go back and have the energy and the drive, the self-care, to do the work that needs to be done.

CM: Can you also share how you identify, Tara?

TD: Yes. I identify as multiracial, biracial, mixed black, and although I will admit that I am also, that part of my family is white, I don't identify as white. I do think that there is a very distinct difference between whiteness as an identity and everyone else [laughs]. So I draw the line at identifying as white. I don't feel that I am. It's a part of who I am, but that doesn't begin to describe the culture and background that I carry with me so that's where I—yeah.

[00:55:05]

KF: Charlene, do you want to share any thoughts about hopes for the future?

CM: I love what everyone has said. Like, yes, yes to self-love, yes to sustainability, and institutional funding and infrastructure. Yes to all the things. I think this has largely

been a love project, It's not written into my PD, it's not written into anyone's PD. It's funded, generously, by DCEM and my supervisor who's been very supportive. But I think that component of figuring out what institutionalization looks like because, I agree, it doesn't necessarily need to be a center or a space. But it needs to be integrated into all our professional – particularly student affairs professional staff. So that if you don't identify as the community, you can still provide healing and support for whoever's sitting in front of you. And that includes be being aware of who could be potentially sitting in front of you. So I think for me, my hope is that what we're doing is building a community of people in-group who can be affirmed and validated but also, this could be integrated so that no one sees – so no one's looking through mono-racist glasses. That we can all see the complexities of identity as in this realm of race and ethnicity but then across, also, all of our other salient identities and whatever those may be, and how they impact and effect one another. So, yeah, I love all those ideas, but my hope would be – I don't want to necessarily hold, have to hold or be the holder of this powerful container. I would love other leadership to be able to step up as well and/or figure out a more sustainable model so that we have a real chance of long-term success. Whatever that means.

KF: Great, thank you. So one of the last questions on our list that Charlene prompted Kim to think about is what advice would you offer your younger self about your multiracial identity? And for Charlene and Vanessa – who also haven't shared yet – if you didn't mind, sharing how you identify? It's a hard question so, you know, whenever folks feel like they have an answer jump in.

VJ: I'll go. I don't know, I mean, I'm trying to figure out what age to be like tell your mom to – don't stop speaking Spanish to you because you're on the cusp of learning it and don't let those teachers tell your mom that it's a bad idea to speak Spanish to you. Or when people ask you about your skin color or 'what are you?' – I don't know. I'm just like, because growing up your just like 'oh that's weird and now you've made me feel different.' I don't know, I guess I'd be like: 'Just be like embrace yourself. Embrace all of you. And that it's okay and there are others who identify similarly as you' and, I don't know, 'it's going to be okay. You're going to figure it out, you're going to find wonderful people later on in life who you'll be able to connect with.' But I don't know. I kind of wish I had the vocabulary or the tools earlier on to be able to like challenge folks but I didn't. Didn't even really talk about, out loud, my own personal identity as a multiracial person until grad school. And even more so at OSU and that kind of makes me sad. Being 31 and going all these years, like we never talked about it in the home. So that's what I'd say to myself and I'd also say, 'you're enough.' You are enough and you don't need to be – embrace your curly hair and don't worry about looking like the other girls at school and you're beautiful like you are and that probably would have helped. Growing up in a very white, middle class, also very Mormon community. So. And then as far as how I identify: multiracial, mixed, biracial, my mother's Peruvian, my father's

white with heritage from Denmark. Right now, I'm comfortable just sticking to I'm biracial or multiracial. I'm still exploring what it means to just – not just, but to identify as Latina and also acknowledging that I have whiter skin and that privilege and so it's still exploring that and myself. Yeah.

[01:00:25]

KF: Thanks.

VJ: Yeah.

CM: Let's see. So I identify as multiracial, Asian and Latina, and that's important to me for all those things to be combined. Let's see, Vanessa, I really resonate with the comment that you made about just telling your younger self that they're beautiful. That made me teary eyed. It made me reflect about how the ten-year-old Charlene hated things that were different, hated my lips, I hated my body. I wanted to be desired. And I would have told myself, this is all a game. Like, this is *all* a game, you're part of this pawn in the game and to know, basically to come in consciousness eight years earlier. That would have been awesome. I would also have told my mother – or, I would have told myself not to tell my mother that I didn't want to learn the languages of my parents' native tongues. [Tearing up] I can't imagine how much that must have hurt them to hear that their child wanted to dismantle their entire culture and they had to. They had to do a lot of things to assimilate so I would have told myself, yeah, 'you're amazing, you're beautiful, you're not weird,' you know.

KF: Thanks Charlene.

TD: I have to agree with Charlene and Vanessa, that I would have told myself that I don't have to meet the standards of white beauty. That my hair is perfect the way that it is. That my olive skin tone is beautiful and just been a little less harsh on myself and embrace – I wish that I could have told myself to embrace who I am and just love myself the way that I am. That's the beauty that I have now at middle age is embracing who I am and seeing myself as beautiful and not feeling that I have to meet those beauty standards that I'll never be able to meet. It's been very freeing to realize that and to have that acceptance and that acknowledgment. But I would also tell myself to question history that's taught to me, the white washed history, and to learn as much about black history and native history that I could and learn about my ancestors and read from the scholars of my cultural heritage. Because as an adult I'm mad that I don't have that background and that knowledge and information and that I'm having to learn it now. And I feel like I'm so far behind. So that would have been something really important for me to have that foundation, that scholarship. And that's one thing I would have told myself to do much earlier.

KF: Thanks Tara. Thank you all for sharing.

CM: I would have told myself one more thing. I would have also told myself that everyone is damaged and that we all have work to do and that no one really loves themselves. I would have told myself we're all suffering, that I'm not alone in that suffering. So I think that would have helped me empathize, because I thought a lot of people had it together and I realize now that I'm older that nobody really did. Or does.

EP: So I was struck by the number of comments and – even though we're in a digital environment – the emotional impact of what we're talking about right now is still powerful and really palpable for me as well. I'm wondering though, would we answer the question differently if we were sitting in a group of people who were masculine or male identified or – to what extent, if at all, is it possible some of the self-love and the questions of beauty are shaped in part by the intersection of race and gender in this case? What do you think about that question?

VJ: Well, I think –

TD: I really can't speak to – Oh, I'm sorry

VJ: No you go.

TD: I really can't speak to any multiracial male experience. I don't know what that would be like and I don't know if they would have faced the same standards of beauty that women do. But I think that there is – I mean being a female identified and always being female identified from birth – having those unrealistic beauty standards that we have as females and then also being multiracial I feel that that's really a powerful oppression that we experience and I don't know how that is for males who identify as multiracial. But I feel that it's definitely a greater impact on my sense of self having also been female and multiracial.

CM: Yeah, the way I wrap my head around that too is that as a multiracial cis woman I know that I contend with the exotification microaggression a lot. Also both reclaiming – at one point wanting to be Jasmine and Pocahontas – I think I mentioned this to Tara -- but wanting to embrace those characters because they were the only ones who looked remotely like me, and then also embracing white men when they would call me that – they weren't men at the time, they were boys, when we were very young. And embracing that because I wanted to be desired, so yeah. The intersection of race and gender certainly played a role there. Like Tara, I don't know what it would be like because I don't know that experience, other than my brother. But I believe my brother

was also exoticized in very similar ways and we both look very similar. But I don't know if he ever had an issue in that way. So.

VJ: So my interview partner, we were able to open up and talk about beauty standards and what that looks like and being able to talk about those other intersectionalities because we shared that. We shared a multiracial identity and so just thinking, I don't know. I don't know I mean, I can't say it there were more multiracial men on this call, I don't think I would have probably held back, I would hope that I would say what I wanted to say. But, I think that that helped and I really enjoyed the experience of having that interview with someone who was male and also identified as multiracial.

[1:10:10:00]

KF: Thanks y'all. Are there any other thoughts, comments, questions that you all have that you want to make sure are captured in our time together?

CM: I think it's more of a statement. So, in higher-ed we're so focused on deconstructing everything, analyzing everything, critiquing everything and I'm really grateful to this – to every single individual who's been interested in multiracial identity, whether they're in-group or not, particularly those who have stuck with this snowball and really built this beautiful thing. I'm also grateful – I had a thought – I'm also grateful for, oh I lost it. So grateful to you all. Okay, it'll come back to me.

TD: Well, I want to say that one of the things Charlene and I talked about in our interviews – because we were able to interview one another – is that after stepping away from being a student - it's been a couple of months now since I haven't been in classes and I haven't been in that academic environment. And I realized that I really been discounted from my spirituality and my soul and that work is just as valid and as important as doing research and writing papers and justifying things with facts and statistics. If we lose sight of why we're doing these things, why we're talking about this, why these groups are forming, what is the point of it? It's not--facts and statistics and papers don't change peoples' minds, they don't change culture. So I just want – I'm just hoping that we'll keep that connection to ourselves, to our spiritual self, moving forward and doing this work because I think that it's really easy to get disconnected from that and to lose sight of why we're doing what we're doing and that's a really critical piece of everything.

CM: You took the words out of my head. Thank you Tara! That's exactly what I was thinking. I was thinking about exactly what you were talking about in a word, and I think I'd mentioned it in another call to you, the sentipensante, the sensing and thinking that you need to have both so that higher-ed only emphasizes the thinking.

[Tara holds up Laura Rendon's book *Sentipensante*]

TD: I got it [in reference to the book].

VJ: I need to get it. I just want to quickly share, just thank you for letting me be a part of sharing my story and this process and it's just been really – many words, right.

Validating and – that's the first thing that comes to mind. I mean, 'many words' right, and I can't think of any more but. I don't know, maybe in a way, healing. But I just, again, really appreciate all the hard work that Charlene and all folks have done into putting this together and to getting this archived, and yeah. For letting me share and use my voice because I don't always get to do that. So.

KF: Great. Well, thank you all so much for making time for this conversation today and for letting me help facilitate a conversation and it's so wonderful to have gotten to work and know all of you over the years, and I really appreciate you sharing your stories and answering questions and being a community together.

TD: Thanks Kali.

VJ: Thanks.

[Charlene begins talking on mute]

KF: Charlene you're muted.

[01:15:00]