

## **Transcript of Interview with Melony Hill by Kit Heintzman**

**Interviewee:** Melony Hill

**Interviewer:** Kit Heintzman

**Date:** 07/05/2021

**Location (Interviewee):** Baltimore, Maryland

**Location (Interviewer):**

**Transcribed By:** Angelica S Ramos

### **Some of the things we discussed included:**

Running a therapeutic writing workshop before and during the pandemic, working with people's hopes, dreams, and traumas. Activism related to Black mental health in the organization Stronger Than My Struggles Pre-pandemic busyness: lots of travel to speaking events and taking classes. Having received financial support from a benefactor circa 2018 to fund mental health activism, and living a life of luxury and leisure because of financial freedom. Providing COVID relief funding to parents so they could get holiday presents for children. Severe illness early in 2020 and having been diagnosed with an unidentified viral infection and having been treated with hydroxychloroquine. Canceling what would have been the second Black Mental Health Awareness tour for 2021. Experiencing the pandemic and restrictions as a kind of punishment; pandemic as "trauma on top of trauma on top of trauma". The impact of having been diagnosed as emotionally and physically disabled in 2010 on the 2020 experience; the pandemic as disabling. Difference access to healthcare infrastructure pre- and mid-pandemic. The consequences of being cut off from doctors. The harm of loneliness. Having a massage therapist come into the home twice a week. For-profit healthcare. State and municipal funding directed at vaccine incentives instead of homelessness and crimes. The rushed production of the vaccines, fear of unknown long term consequences Johnson & Johnson having prior liability cases. How mandating the vaccines in places like universities will stop people from accessing a better life. Avoiding the news as a form of self-care; pandemic apathy. Appraising risk while knowing about having a destiny and trusting God's predesign. The importance of teaching mental health and wellness to youth. That alcohol became an essential service in Maryland. Using restrictions as a metric for safety. Ending a relationship. Pandemic as a lesson in urgency; not wasting time; weighing the quantity of one's life vs. the quality when engaging in risk assessment. How coloring operates as a form of self-care

**Kit Heintzman 00:01**

Hello. Would you please start by telling me your full name, the date, the time and your location?

**Melony Hill 00:12**

Sure. My name is Melony Hill. It's July 5 2021. It is around 12:15pm. Eastern. And I'm from Baltimore, Maryland.

**Kit Heintzman 00:29**

And do you consent to having this interview recorded, digitally uploaded and publicly released under Creative Commons License attribution noncommercial sharealike?

**Melony Hill** 00:40

Yes, I do.

**Kit Heintzman** 00:42

Could you please start by introducing yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening to this what weight you want them to know about you and the place that you're speaking from?

**Melony Hill** 00:54

Well, Hi, there. I'm Melanie Hill. I'm a life transition coach and trauma survivor from Baltimore, Maryland. I'm really focused on mental health. And the pandemic really, really stretched my ability to deal with the way that I had been dealing with my mental health.

**Kit Heintzman** 01:16

I'd like to start by asking, how do you understand the word pandemic? What does it come to mean to you?

**Melony Hill** 01:25

It's become to mean some thing that spread wide and affects the nation or nations as a whole. And we didn't have we don't have any seesaw and how it's gonna affect us. It's like trauma on top of trauma on top of trauma. revisited upon people with no consent. Yeah.

**Kit Heintzman** 02:00

To the extent that you're comfortable sharing, would you say something about what your experiences of health and healthcare infrastructure we're like prior to COVID-19.

**Melony Hill** 02:09

[inaudible] legally disabled, I've had a lot of time in the healthcare system, I was able to get the help that I needed when I needed before the pandemic, it was a lot easier for me to make appointments, to see my doctors to get the help that I needed, the medicine I needed. It was just so much easier to feel like I was able to function on a daily basis because things were so accessible. And it made my life almost like, livable, because again, I have emotional disabilities, but I also had physical disabilities. And so it was very stable for me to be able to get the help that I needed when I needed it before the pandemic.

**Kit Heintzman** 03:07

And would you say a little bit more about what your day to day was looking like prior to the pandemic.

**Melony Hill** 03:14

Prior to the pandemic, my day to day life was actually a lot. It was a lot vary depending on the day. So I live a different life than many people do. Again, I'm legally emotionally disabled, and I'm actually on disability. But because I run my organization stronger than my struggles, I ran into someone who wanted to greatly impact the way that I was able to help trauma survivors like myself. And that gave me a different lifestyle than the one I had been living for so many years with my disabilities. So my days were so varied because I was able to travel shop, dine out, I was living a life of leisure and luxury and between my doctor's appointments and the way that I was helping my clients, I was always on the go. In fact, people call me the ebony goddess on the go. And it was like every other week, I was flying somewhere I was traveling, I was speaking at events, I was helping survivors

across the country while I was attending some kind of class. And then it's just it was such a freeing experience because I had been so deep in my disability for so long, that when this benefactor came, and the money that they provided was able to change the quality of my life. I was able to live again freely in a way I hadn't lived for years. I was living for like three years like right before the pandemic hit, like better than I lived in years because I've been disabled since 2010.

**Kit Heintzman** 04:46

Would you provide a bit of context for anyone listening to this about what stronger than my struggle is?

**Melony Hill** 04:53

Sure, so stronger than my struggles is the organization that I started in 2017 basically to help myself I deal with the trauma that I had experienced when I walked into my therapists office one day after seven and a half years of therapy. And she simply said, I no longer take your insurance. I thought that like life was over. And then I realized that I had to be stronger than my struggles, including losing my therapist. And it made me realize that we needed a place where we can have people who listen to us cared about us, connected to us. And it wasn't about the money. And so with me, starting stronger than my struggles, it was a way to connect to trauma survivors, and people who suffer from physical and mental instabilities like myself, just to let them know that there was a place that they could go, and that someone would care. And they didn't have to worry about us walking away because of the money. And so I've started you know, being able to coach people and I have classes and I've actually just paired up with Morgan State University to teach my therapeutic writing shop to youth dourness, post pandemic, in the middle of the pandemic fees, I don't know what we're doing right now, it feels like we're some people that post pandemic, because we just went mask off here in the US, but well, where I am, we just went mask off. And so it's like post pandemic, but it still feels like we're in the pandemic. It's such a weird thing. But strong into my struggles has been instrumental through the pandemic because I was able to do COVID Really fun with the benefactors money, we were able to help struggling parents during the Christmas time, we bought Christmas gifts, some aid for 80 kids from here to Canada. Right now we're doing a \$5,000 scholarship for people studying in the health and wellness industries. So again, just the pandemic has been able to give stronger than my struggles, a better way to serve our community.

**Kit Heintzman** 06:57

And thinking more, sort of personally going back to the day to day living, how have you had to adapt day to day life in the pandemic?

**Melony Hill** 07:07

Well, the pandemic stole my life. As I said, I just started to live again, I was so severely disabled before 2019 That I really was not living. My life was consisting of laying around on my heating pads, my ice pads, back and forth to the doctor's, it feeling as if I was crippled. And so when the Benefactor came in 2018, and the money started to change again, the quality of my life by 2019, I was able to move differently, I was able to get around more, I was able to start living and traveling again for the first time since maybe 2009, or 10. And so I had just started to live free. My day to day life. It just changed so dramatically because of the pandemic. It went from me cancelling so many trips, like I had trips planned every other week, vacations out of the country, all types of things and things got held up and I had my tour had to be cancelled. I founded the first ever black Mental Health Awareness tour in 2019 was our first year but 2020 We couldn't do the tour 2021 didn't do the tour. And so it's just, it's like my quality of life, I could no longer go out. So many places were closed. I had gotten used to getting

massages regularly, I had a membership at the Four Seasons spa. Spa was no longer doing so just for at least three months. It just changed everything. Like it took me back to feeling stuck. Like when I was deep in my disability.

**Kit Heintzman** 08:54

I'd be interested in hearing a bit about what you remember first hearing about the pandemic when it hit your radar what your initial reactions were like.

**Melony Hill** 09:07

So it's so funny because the pandemic became something that was in my sphere of consciousness right after I suffered a severe illness. So I was traveling in the beginning of 2020. I went to New York in January I went to California in February, and early March I got severely sick and I didn't know what was going on with me. I was down for days and dementia. Eventually I had to rush myself to the hospital in the middle of the night. And for the first time ever I was so sick that they rushed me in the back before they even took my insurance and they hit me on oxygen and they're doing X rays and I had no clue what was going on. And then about a week and a half later after I had been diagnosed with unknown by infection was the first time I heard about COVID. And everyone started talking about this thing and how it had taken over New York, and then California. And I was like, I just came home from these two places. And then it was so funny, because the medicine that I ended up being put on right after this unknown viral infection, I was immediately diagnosed with lupus and put on hydroxychloroquine, which is the medicine, they were given COVID patients. And so it just was, you know, weird to me that I had this severe illness that I think almost killed me. And only to be diagnosed for a non viral infection for two weeks later there to be this disease that is killing people all around me and me to be on the same medication as it.

**Kit Heintzman** 11:01

And how is your reaction changed over time?

**Melony Hill** 11:07

I think over the, what is it been almost two years now, a year and a half of the pandemic, my reaction has changed. Probably the best way I could be equated as to the stages of grief. You know, at first, it was just like disbelief, and, you know, getting around to the point of acceptance, and then trying to get around to, you know, living your life again, and it's just the stages of grief will be the best way to explain it. It's like, we all went through like a nationwide depression at first, like, you know, we weren't trying to understand what was happening, like, we went through stages of disbelief as a nation, like, we're still gonna go do this, and this and this. And then, you know, you get the reports of families dying, because they had a party, and it just, you know, you at one point, you finally get around to being apathetic of it, like at this point, we know that people are still gonna die. Like, it's not like the pandemic is gone. But we're so tired of not living, it's almost as if we don't care, like we, so many of us feel like our lives were taken anyway, that the risk of living life is almost worth, you know, going back out, because who wants to live in a house until they die. It's such a weird dichotomy to be able to process what your life is worth, you know.

**Kit Heintzman** 12:39

In addition to COVID-19, 2020, and 2021 have been pretty big years, in a lot of respects. And I'm wondering what some of the most significant issues have been on your mind over the last two years?

**Melony Hill** 12:55

Well, I think in the last two years, of course, the biggest thing was getting Trump out of office. Having a president that we couldn't trust while going through such a huge nationwide crisis was unimaginable for many of us. I know, I myself felt as if he didn't care, and that he was using people as guinea pigs and trying to stop actual progress. So it was scary. It was terrifying, actually. So getting him out of office was a huge, huge thing this year. I also think that another huge thing was the fact that we had this vaccination being rushed and pushed at us is the scary thing, when we're so used to doctors and scientists taking such time and care with things that are going in our body. And yet they're pushing a vaccination that barely had a year to be developed and tested. And we don't know the lasting consequences of this vaccination that they're nearly trying to force on people. And it's terrifying. Those, to me, were the biggest things. Were getting back to a place where the nation felt safe, so that we could deal with this pandemic together. And then understanding that, you know, this vaccination is a terrifying thing. And some people don't have an option of being able to take it like nurses and doctors, and even now and you know, they're mandating it and colleges and universities. And it's terrifying, that some people will miss out on opportunities to better and enhance their lives because they choose to not be vaccinated. So, again, these things have been really big for me.

**Kit Heintzman** 14:53

Would you be willing to talk a little bit more about fear related to a sense of there being I'm struggling with the wording here, but the like imperative for people to be vaccinated and what that means in terms of feeling like, there's no choice, if that's what I'm hearing properly?

**Melony Hill** 15:23

Well, yeah, I mean, for a lot of people, they feel they have no choice because it boils down to them being a be their family, and not whether or not they accept this vaccine. Nation developing based on the fact that you want to feed your family, and it's like, what's your family birth to you? So that's there, but the job can force you to have to put something really untested and unknown in your body. And you have really no say, so if you want to take care of your family, because if you file for unemployment, after you voluntarily, not do what your job X is pretty much like quitting not being fired. So again, it's it's a, it's a rough situation, it's a thin line between having freedom, and being able to provide for your family. And then again, you know, if you're a minority, like myself, you know, I'm a black woman. If you're a minority like myself, you may think that things like Tuskegee when you hear this vaccination, and you may remember how much the government has done that has been untrustworthy before, and how our community I don't know if it's happening in every community, but I live in Baltimore, I live in a city where there are 400 murders per year. I live in a an under underserved at times, impoverished city, there's so much money here, but there's so many rundown homes and so many homeless people, and the idea that I live in a state where there are people who are starving, living on the streets, yet, my state is doing a lottery, where they are giving away \$40,000 per week, to two or three winners of people who have taken the vaccination and registered. And I don't understand where this money is coming from. And I don't understand how we gotten around to paying people 1000s of dollars to take a vaccination, and not understanding that there's something behind it. So it is very, you know, terrifying in many ways, if you look at the way that they're encouraging, you know, they're forcing people to do it at their jobs now in college, and colleges and universities have instituted policies where students and people can't be on campus if they're not vaccinated. And then here you have an impoverished city, finding money to give away to people just for taking a vaccination, and I'm not talking pennies. So you know, there's something that's just not right about this.

**Kit Heintzman** 18:11

I'm curious, what does the word health mean to you?

**Melony Hill** 18:19

What does health mean to me? It means the well being of my body and mind.

**Kit Heintzman** 18:33

With that, in mind, what are some of the things that you want for your health and the health of others around you? And how do we get there? What kinds of changes would we need to see as a culture for that to be attainable?

**Melony Hill** 18:50

Well, first and foremost, I want to see mental health being brought into the forefront of education, work environments, school environments, and day to day life. I think that the fact that we're not talking about mental health and wellness at a young age is so detrimental to us as a society which has been proven by the pandemic, the fact that during a pandemic, we had to make alcohol, an essential thing is terrifying, because we have so many alcoholics that had the liquor stores closed down, then we would have had hospitals to four of alcoholics going through detox, and then they were able to take care of the pandemic patients, like we literally as a country started delivering alcohol from restaurants to homes during a pandemic. That is so sad. We rather do that and deal with people mental health. So I think that in the forefront of health, we should have more mental health, education and resources. Again, along health and wellness, I think that yoga meditate and such should be introduced in the schools at a young age, we take kids to gym, and we have them running around climbing ropes, doing things that they'll never do again in real life, and that won't benefit them. However, meditation, things like yoga, things like maybe Tai Chi, things that increase their mental aspects of health and wellness along with their physical aspects of health and wellness. I want to see more public emphasis put on health and wellness that isn't based around a big sponsor having an event or Expo, I really just I want to see it more focused on day to day life and understanding how much mental and physical health go together.

**Kit Heintzman** 20:53

Thinking and sort of municipal scale of Baltimore, maybe the state level of Maryland? How do you perceive the current medical infrastructure to be handling COVID-19? Now, but also thinking about sort of pre vaccine period of time?

**Melony Hill** 21:13

I don't honestly think I can answer that, because I tried to stay away from the political aspects of things. Because again, we've had a president for the last four years that made even thinking about politics, hard and sickening. So for the first year of the pandemic, like I was really tuned out of even what we were doing locally, because I just was staying in a house. I was not aware of how our medical facilities and even we had regular like updates with COVID. But again, it was just so much and because my mental health was affected. I couldn't handle the processing of it. So I don't want to answer a question that I wouldn't really had the answer to.

**Kit Heintzman** 21:59

Thank you so much for that honesty, and I think it is. A lot of people had to tune out, I think that's a very real reaction to the moment. Would you tell me what safety means to you?

**Melony Hill 22:19**

Safety is the security of knowing that things are going to be okay. No matter what the situation, that you're going to make it home, in one piece.

**Kit Heintzman 22:38**

Under COVID-19, there's been this really narrow and small understanding of safety in relationship to the virus. I'm wondering sort of in that like, tiny framework, how have you been determining what feels safe for you? And how have you been negotiating that with others in your life?

**Melony Hill 23:03**

Excuse me? Well, I think in the beginning, you know, well, I'll say again, that it moved in phases, like dealing with the stages of grief. So in the beginning, I was hyper vigilant, you know, I was like, I'm never coming out the house. I don't want to associate with people. However, I noticed that I was still door dashing food and pretty regularly. So I was still taking calculated risks. And I found that food was worth the risk for me was hanging out with my friends wasn't. And then I started to move closer to wanting to not be so alone, because my mental health was being severely affected. And so I started to pick and choose, like, a few friends that I didn't mind spending time with unmasked, because I was not very keen on way mass. And I didn't go anywhere for a long time that I had to wear one. Like, it was very weird, but it felt like being punished. You know, again, I was living such a free life before the pandemic, I just started to live again. And so, you know, it was hard for me to just go into this, what felt like a cocoon and stop living. And so I started to take more calculated risks during the summer, especially because the first summer during a pandemic, they made it feel like it was safer to go out. And so I did a lot more in the summer. And then as it got colder, you know, I was starting to shy away from my friends again and not go out the restaurants was still close. But as things started to open, I started to take again more calculated risks. And so it just it was based on how my mental state was doing at the time how much interaction I felt I really needed and when I needed to get out the house and away from my own thoughts, you know, I would take help Believe it or is based on where I was in my personal journey through COVID.

**Kit Heintzman 25:07**

I'd like to follow up on your use of the word, feeling punished, could you talk a bit more about what it was that made it feel like a punishment?

**Melony Hill 25:19**

Well, there was just so many different rules. And, you know, at first, they were like, curfews and they were lying in the sand and stores, you know, it just, it was such a weird thing, because I've never experienced it. And again, me being a woman who had moved into a place of being a lady of leisure and luxury, having the things that I wanted, when I want, it had become my norm. So having to cancel all of my trips, I having to deal with the fact that money was just being, you know, moved around and on hold and feeling as if I had no control over these things. Being stuck in my community where I was, again, traveling every other week, but now I'm stuck with my neighbors. And, you know, they're not the type of people I would normally choose to spend my time with. So I felt punished, and who I had to keep company with, because they was the closest people to me, and it just it everything, like not being able to go to your favorite restaurants, not being able to go out to eat when you want and dance. And, you know, it just it sucked. It felt like you were on the worst punishment of your life. And the threat was if you break this punishment, you'll die.

**Kit Heintzman 26:43**

When you started making the calculated risks, to spend time with people as a part of social need, what kinds of conversations would you have with them to determine sort of who you felt safe with and what that interaction would look like for you all?

**Melony Hill 27:07**

Well, I definitely wanted to know what kind of lifestyle they had been living during the pandemic, how often they had been spending time with people outside of their homes, if they had a stable work life, because again, I don't work, I'm legally disabled. So I'm not as exposed to so many people as a lot of other people. So I definitely wanted to know, if they had a regular work life and how many people they were exposed to how risky they had been in their personal interaction with others, that was really a deciding factor, or how I interacted with people.

**Kit Heintzman 27:43**

You had mentioned earlier that stronger than my struggles and other parts of your philanthropic work have expanded and changed over COVID-19. i And talking about that, in terms of cancellations. I was wondering if you would say something about the importance of services such as yours, during a pandemic?

**Melony Hill 28:13**

Well, you know, I realized exactly how important we were. Because again, there are so few mental health resources. And then they're so tied up because there's so many people who need them. And with there being so few resources, and so many people stretching them to the limits, there has to be these ancillary things that comes to that come to the community and allow them a place to be heard, seen, and know that they're not alone. In the gap of getting therapy, even I started going back to therapy during a pandemic. And the first thing my therapist did was apologize to me, because there was going to be such a long time in between our initial visit, and our next appointment. You know, and it's a sad thing, but that's what made me again, realize just how important people like me and my organization are. Because it really needs to be things that stand in the gap. And we as a community need to be able to help each other and to see each other and their pain. Because as a community, our pain all effects on another. And so we need to have these resources.

**Kit Heintzman 29:28**

What does community mean to you?

**Melony Hill 29:36**

It means a group of like minded like action, people who support one another.

**Kit Heintzman 29:49**

I'd love to hear how you're feeling about the immediate future.

**Melony Hill 29:56**

I'm hopeful. I'm hopeful that this pandemic is one down. As I said earlier, here in Maryland, we've gone mass free officially, as of July 1, there are businesses that have the right to steal requests that people wear masks and things like that. But the governor has allowed us to have some freedom. But again, they did this last summer. You know, last summer it was, you know, so it's weird, but I'm hoping that we're moving out of the pandemic. Finally, I'm



starting to travel again, I'm getting on the first time, in over a year, this month, I have trips planned for the next four months. So I'm hopeful that I'm not risking my life just to travel again. But at the same time, we have to start moving towards you know, our future at some point, we can't just sit still. And so it's just, I'm hopeful that we're moving out of this and towards normality again, so that we can start to live because again, I had been so disabled for so long. And just for the year and a half or so before the pandemic started, I just started to live again, I just started to feel free, I just started to understand who I am, I'm in at this point in my life, and to be forced to sit back down for the last year and a half and down my growth in so many different areas was, again, as I say it felt like a punishment. So I'm just hopeful that we're moving out of the pandemic so that I can start moving towards this future that I've been building for myself and moving towards being able to have normality again. Yeah.

**Kit Heintzman** 31:50

Can I ask where that a helpfulness is stemming from? So? Is it feeling safer for you to travel now than it was earlier? And if so, what's what's providing that feeling of safety?

**Melony Hill** 32:09

I don't even know it for or it is feeling fed up. I don't know what it is, is just, it's time. I don't even I can't honestly answer. You know, why July, not June, you know, there's no real answer here is just time. And I think I got to a point where I finally decided that whatever God wants is what's going to happen. And I can't keep hiding from my destiny, if I'm gonna be taken out by COVID I'm gonna be taken out back over if I'm being taken out by flight, I'm be taken out by flight or a car, or whatever. Because I assumed the looters. A woman believes in having a destiny, I believe that everything that I do is ordered and ordained. And, you know, it's weird, because I've been through so much. But I really feel like everything that I do was already pre designed, and I'm on my destined path. And whatever is supposed to happen is going to happen. It's like I said earlier, you know, I stayed in the house for the duration of the pandemic, however, I DoorDash food almost every day, if the pandemic was meant to hit me, it couldn't hit me by whoever invited to my house to drop off food. So you know, I just to be cognizant of the idea that I believe that my life is predetermined. I can't keep hiding because people tell me to

**Kit Heintzman** 33:41

what are some of your desires for a longer term future?

**Melony Hill** 33:49

I want to travel the whole world. I want to see every continent as specially want to go to Africa. I'm planning to go in the beginning of 2022 to this place called giraffe manor in Nairobi, to be able to take stronger Mr struggles. Further, we already have a glow. Community of my goal will come in the pack the world. In the mental health field. You don't have to have a certain level of education to people in the health and wellness industry. And to bring this more into a community based thing. I really want to see myself become the glamor diva that I've always known I was. And again, you know, I used to question how I was born into a life that did not fit who I thought I was. And as life continued to happen and I'm on my Preedy I've been through so many different versions of me, but never did I imagined I'd stop at this version of myself where, you know, finances are an issue. There are no limits, life is abundant. And I'm moving closer towards this version was even when it seemed impossible, because it was predetermined. So, you know, I just, I'm prayerful that I'm able to step into everything that I was meant to be.

**Kit Heintzman** 35:30

You've touched on some of this already. But I wanted to create a little more space asking, what are some of the things that you've been doing to take care of yourself over the last two years? And like, how have they been working, so not just the what, but kind of the, the why behind choosing those methods and what the benefits have been?

**Melony Hill 35:56**

Well, I had been going to the spa two to three days a week, and then the spa stopped doing all of the services. So I hired someone to come to my home twice. He did a piece of having massages for my body, two hours at a time really, because I have fibromyalgia, and I have lupus. And I suffer from chronic pain. So I couldn't allow the pandemic to steal what was keeping me healthy. One of the other things that I did was in my relationship of three years, it was important for me because it felt like it was already a dead relationship before the pandemic. And in a pandemic, it just got lonelier. And the last thing that I needed in the middle of a pandemic is to feel even more alone, when I supposedly had someone. So that was really important for me to end that relationship, and to start the healing process. So the back buying made me feel important, which I did. And another thing that I did during the pandemic, to cope was a lot of writing, I host a global therapeutic writing workshop every week. And so that's really helped me as well as others, to cope. Because we go through writing prompts and processing, our actions, and our goals and our dreams, and our traumas together. And so that's been really helpful for me. I spent a lot of time coloring too, because coloring helps me feel like things are in order, when I don't have control over other things, I can control what goes on on that page. And so I love to color.

**Kit Heintzman 37:49**

Going back to the relationship that you ended, would you talk a little bit about what partnership and ending partnership has meant to you during the pandemic?

**Melony Hill 38:03**

Well, for me partnership, it was really lacking. I think that partners are people who meet each other halfway, you know, carry each other slack, people who show up for each other, who on the same page have shared in common goals. And I just I wasn't getting that in my relationship. And so it was a constant feeling of being let down of not being heard of not having someone who had your back. And I had to, I had to let that go. Because in the middle of a pandemic, when we're dealing with a situation where we can lose our lives any day, those things are important. And so I had to hurt myself, by forcing myself to put the emotions to the side to deal with the reality of the situation. And the reality of the situation is every time I told that person, we were a team. It was a lie, because I was the only partner on that team. And it wasn't working for me.

**Kit Heintzman 39:25**

This is my second last question. And it's a little strange. So we know we're in this moment where there's all kinds of scientific and medical research that's been happening. What is it that you think people in the humanities and the social sciences could be doing right now to help us understand the social effects of the pandemic?

**Melony Hill 39:50**

Or they could be talking in more layman's terms for one like they're using so many big words and things that they want to it's more like they want to put fear and people then to ease people's fears, which is what I would think that they want to do. But it feels the opposite. And so I think that they could change their language. I think that they could have more public forums. I think instead of speaking at people, they could speak to people. I just I think

that it could be a whole different way of reaching the people. And I think that bribing people to take a medication is asinine, and negligent. Because again, we don't know the last thing effects of this. So it's like they're paying you off in the beginning to poison us. So yeah, I think that, you know, we should not be paying people to take a vaccination.

**Kit Heintzman** 40:45

And here's my last question. So this is an oral history interview. And I'd like to invite you to think of a historian far enough in the future that they never live to this moment. So they have no experiential knowledge. And if you could tell them, what kinds of stories are really important, which ones need to be told what can't be forgotten? What would you tell them?

**Melony Hill** 41:20

And modern vaccinations, this an ID Johnson, vaccination had to be pulled and stopped. So I think that, you know, we need to talk about this because Johnson and Johnson has a history of releasing products that they've been lead assumed for for damaging people. I think that we can't not talk about how each separate country handled. And again, that might have been because we had a leader in place that the public didn't trust. I think that it's important to talk about how mental health services and resources were expanded at such a large rate during a pandemic, and the fact that it was such a necessary thing, so that we never forget how important it is to take this everyday life. I think that we should not forget how people found out that we're capable of working from home and not sleeping ourselves the way that our jobs have been taught teaching us to do. We found that people were able to work from home be able to be there for their kids and have more fluidity in their lives, and not be chained to the desk in the office. And I hope that people stick with that in some ways, because it really allows people to be there for their families at the same time.

**Kit Heintzman** 42:51

I want to thank you so much for everything that you shared with me today, and anyone who might find themselves listening to this. And at this point, I just want to ask if there's anything that you want to share that these questions haven't given you the space to share to please claim that space now?

**Melony Hill** 43:15

No, I think that was a really great opportunity. So a lot of different aspects of the pandemic, especially for me, the mental health awareness around it, and how important it is to maintain these resources. For longevity, I think that anything we learned during a pandemic, is how screwed up as a nation we are, that we should not be a nation that alcohol should be essential during a pandemic. We should not be a nation where we have money to bribe people to take a vaccination, but not to get people off the streets. So I just think it's important to to look at the changes that we were able to shift and create during a pandemic, and see how we can shift in real life.

**Kit Heintzman** 44:19

thank you so much.