

Transcript of Oral History of Taylor Hall

Interviewee: Taylor Hall

Interviewer(s): Emily Leiserson

Date: October 27, 2020

Abstract: Taylor Hall is an activist, an artist, activist, educator, organizer, and college student from Indianapolis Indiana. She speaks about her inspiration in community work, her family's history in the racial justice movement, her work inspiring youth, and much more.

Emily Leiserson 00:02

All right, we are recording. Hello, I'm Emily Leiserson. And I'm here with Taylor Hall. Thank you so much for being here, Taylor. It is Tuesday, October 27, at 9:08am. And we're doing this remotely, but we are in, I guess, the central Indiana area. Taylor, are you in Muncie?

Taylor Hall 00:31

I'm in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Emily Leiserson 00:33

Oh, here in Indianapolis, okay. And I am also in Indianapolis. So I am going to start by just going over the informed consent that you filled out for this project. And so, this interview is for the COVID-19 Oral History Project, which is associated with The Journal of the Plague Year, A COVID-19 Archive. The COVID-19 Oral History Project is a rapid response oral history focused on archiving the lived experience of the COVID-19 pandemic. And during this portion of the project, our research group is focused on collecting oral histories that speak to the experience of racial justice and racial justice movements in the context of COVID-19. We've designed this project so that professional researchers and the public can create and upload their oral histories to an open access and open source database. And this is all intended to collect narratives and understandings around COVID-19. And just to understand the impacts of the pandemic over time. The recordings and demographic information and the transcripts for your interview will be deposited in The Journal of the Plague Year, A COVID-19 Archive and the Indiana University Library System for the use of researchers and the general public. Do you have any questions about the project that I can answer?

Taylor Hall 02:11

No, not really.

Emily Leiserson 02:13

Okay, great, thank you. Taking part in this study is voluntary, so you can choose not to take part or you can leave the study at any time. And if you leave the study, that does not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you're entitled. Also, your decision whether or not to participate in this will not affect

your current or future relations with Indiana University, IUPUI, or the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute. Participating in this project means that your interview is recorded in digital video format and is transcribed, and the recording and transcription, as well as copies of any supplementary documents, if there are photos or anything that is referenced and want to share, and your informed consent document, all of those things will be deposited in the Journal of the Plague Year archive, and the IU library system so that they are available to researchers and the public. And also your name and any other means of identification will not be confidential. Do you have any questions on that section?

Taylor Hall 03:33

No.

Emily Leiserson 03:34

Okay, awesome. So we have your signed document. I'm going to go over the media release in just a second. But could you please offer a verbal confirmation that you understand and agree to the terms so far?

Taylor Hall 03:52

I understand and agree to all the terms in the consent form.

Emily Leiserson 03:57

Thank you so much. Okay, so then you agreed that your interview will be available under the licenses in the informed consent document. So I'm gonna read, I think you actually checked off both of them. They're basically the same. So you're okay with either one of those. Okay, so I'm going to just go with the first one, the Creative Commons Attribution, which is non commercial, share and share alike, that's just shorter. Thank you so much. Could you confirm that you agree to allow us to share your interview under that license?

Taylor Hall 04:45

I agree. I agree for you guys to share under that license.

Emily Leiserson 04:50

You have any questions on it?

Taylor Hall 04:52

No.

Emily Leiserson 04:53

It's basically just sharing for any non commercial purposes. Okay, and then one last thing on this. Will you confirm verbally that you agreed for your interview to be made available immediately?

Taylor Hall 05:09

I confirm.

Emily Leiserson 05:10

Thank you so much. Great. All right, let us get to the questions. So first of all, can you just tell me a little bit about yourself? And that can be what you do on a day to day basis. And how those experiences have changed during the pandemic.

Taylor Hall 05:35

My name is Taylor Hall. I'm 20 years old. I'm a Ball State University student, and I study public communications. I consider myself an activist. I inspire activism through art. I use the different mediums of art for youth in the community to learn how to have a different emotional outlet. I work with students from Chapel Hill, with mentoring and self esteem, and teach them how to be activists. On a day to day basis. I think activism is just impacting your community where you see fits. Yesterday, I helped give out food in the Avondale YMCA community. So I think activism is just helping out where you see the needs and where you see fits inside of your community. I started activism in May, during the time of the pandemic, after Dreasjon Reed, an Indianapolis man, was killed by the police. And since then I've just been protesting, organizing, and just doing different events to bring people in the community together. I have a passion for youth. So I do different youth events and youth activities and mentorship. That's what I want to do post graduation, as a part time job, is just continuing to mentor youth.

Emily Leiserson 07:04

That's amazing. Okay, so I definitely want to ask you some more questions about all of that. That's a lot of stuff. But just really quickly first, before that, how do you describe yourself when you think about categories, common demographic categories? So you mentioned your age, race, gender, sexual orientation? Any of that?

Taylor Hall 07:34

I describe myself as an African American female. That's it, yeah.

Emily Leiserson 07:42

That's great. That's perfect. Okay, so an activist. So what kind of art do you do in your activism?

Taylor Hall 07:53

I do all different mediums of art. So my main thing is the guitar. I play the guitar and make music with a message. So over the summer I released my first song. It's called I Can't Breathe. And it just is about everything that was going on. And everywhere that I protested, and I'm at events, I would play my song, I played my song for the first time at the State House in June. One of the events that I organized with other activists, and there was over 10,000 people at that sit in for racial justice at the state capitol. And that was my first time playing it. So then since then, I've just been playing it all over. I went to

Washington, DC and played the guitar during the March on Washington and met Martin Luther King the III with my guitar and Ayanna Pressley, and lots of other legislators and historic figures in DC. I've just been all over spreading music with a message. I also paint. As a past time, I like to do canvas painting, and then I also paint my clothes as well. For different events, I'll have pants with powerful messages or sayings. So people usually like that. My clothes are creative. And paint my guitar case. So just all different forms of the arts, but mainly painting and my guitar.

Emily Leiserson 09:20

And how do you see the arts as playing a role in the pandemic or in the Movement for Black Lives? How do you see the arts as important in your activism?

Taylor Hall 09:37

I would say that the arts give people another lens to try to understand what's going on. I'll often tell people that if you don't understand me through protesting or yelling, you might understand me song or you might understand me through a painting, because different people respond to different things. Sometimes it's easier to listen to the song and hear the words than it is to listen to a speech or listen to someone yelling with a megaphone.

Emily Leiserson 10:06

Yeah. This is super interesting to me. So I just want to ask do you find it easier to just be yourself as an artist, rather than kind of trying to work through an organization or an institution? Does that make sense?

Taylor Hall 10:27

Like just being an individual?

Emily Leiserson 10:29

Yeah, I guess. So I see a lot of artists working independently. And there are others who kind of work through, you know, a performing arts coalition or group. Do you have a preference on whether you're, you know, just doing it independently or with a group? And if you do why?

Taylor Hall 10:57

I like doing my art individually. I've always played the guitar. I've played the guitar since I was 12. Now I'm 20. So for eight years. I think for some people, it's easier to have a group to rely on or to learn from, but I think just because I just can show up with my guitar and sing, I don't really need much to just show up. It's easy to be an individual. Just kind of pack up and go wherever with my guitar.

Emily Leiserson 11:33

Yeah. Do you think it also maybe makes it easier to spread your message? The activist component of your message?

Taylor Hall 11:43

I think it definitely does being an individual. Because I think with groups, people try to like put us in a category, or a box, and control like when you put out music or what you're going to say. But as an artist, I can put out music anytime and just have music with a message and music with social justice and activism. So I think being an individual, being an activist as an individual is actually easier. And it has been pretty successful for me in the last couple months.

Emily Leiserson 12:16

That's awesome. And you mentioned your work at Chapel Hill and the Avondale YMCA? Can you tell me a little bit more about those pieces of what you're working on? What those look like or what the experience has been like for you?

Taylor Hall 12:35

Yes, so over the summer, the Chapel Hill principal actually comes to my job. I work at a gym part time. And he saw me at a protest and said let me know if you ever need anything, or if you ever want to work with our students. So after the summer kind of died down a little bit, I wasn't out every day organizing, I reached out and just presented him my activist plan. It's Artist, LLC. And my different pillars, which are art, activism, self esteem, diversity and inclusion, and education, and the different topics I'd be talking about to students. So I had a six week series with about 20 girls. And we just talked about those different things and about what's been going on in the world and how they feel about everything and different questions they have. And I assign them assignments every week, that were art related, but interesting, like to write to make a poem or to make a painting of how they feel about the world and what they think activism is. And I just finished it on October 9. And they're all sad that it was over, so I'll probably be starting it again soon. But I had a lot of positive feedback about all the things that they learned. And it was fun. It was actually fun learning. It was like therapy, but fun therapy, talking every week, and just how they enjoyed it. And I actually had a march the following week, it was a youth voices matter rally at the State House. So a lot of my students came and spoke and performed. So just, it was amazing seeing them be able to use what they learned to speak about it and about how youth voices matter and how they got to march and feel a part of the movement. And they want to do it again. So I'll probably have to organize something similar.

Emily Leiserson 14:27

That sounds amazing. So were they high school students? Junior high? What grade?

Taylor Hall 14:34

They're middle schools students, so about from ages, I'd say 11 to about 14.

Emily Leiserson 14:39

Wow, that's great that at that age, they're already getting experience and learning those empowering lessons.

Taylor Hall 14:49

Teaching them to stand up for what's right and say something when they see something wrong, I think is really important. I told it doesn't have to be about politics or social justice. Just in your everyday life, if you see something wrong, stand up and make a difference.

Emily Leiserson 15:05

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, and teaching them that they can do that.

Taylor Hall 15:11

That they can make a difference.

Emily Leiserson 15:14

Yeah, absolutely. That's amazing. All right. What neighborhood and what zip code are you in? Do you live in here in Indianapolis?

Taylor Hall 15:31

I live in like the Butler area.

Emily Leiserson 15:33

Okay. What zip code is that? I'm sorry.

Taylor Hall 15:39

46208

Emily Leiserson 15:39

Okay. And what does that area around you look like? And has it changed during the pandemic?

Taylor Hall 15:50

I'd say this area is very progressive, it's like the Broad Ripple area. So it's a lot of, I'd say, hippies, and I think it's pretty diverse. I see people- I have white neighbors, I have black neighbors. We all just kind of exist in harmony with each other; we're friendly with each other. It's a pretty good neighborhood to live in and grow up in around Broad Ripple.

Emily Leiserson 16:22

Yeah, that's great. Do you feel like it's changed during COVID? Or Not really?

Taylor Hall 16:31

Not really. Because this neighborhood is so, like the Meridian area is so diverse. It's kind of interesting, because you see Black Lives Matter signs. And you see Trump signs, and you see just different political views if you drive down Meridian. It's interesting.

Emily Leiserson 16:51

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. All right, so when you think about the pandemic, what issues concern you the most?

Taylor Hall 17:04

So many things with the pandemic. One big issue with the pandemic is healthcare, and a lot of people that have COVID. [Video freezes]

Emily Leiserson 17:26

I think we may have frozen. Okay, if you can see me, I'm gonna stop the video for a second. I'm gonna pause the recording. Hey! Okay. I don't know what happened. Yeah, I don't know. I'm sorry. Well, I'm glad we're back.

Taylor Hall 18:12

I don't know if it was my service or-

Emily Leiserson 18:16

Mine can go out too. So who knows. But hopefully it's just a one time thing. If it happens again, we can just continue to try and reconnect. So the last thing I heard was that you're concerned about health care.

Taylor Hall 18:39

Do you want me to restart?

Emily Leiserson 18:40

Can you restart? Is that okay?

Taylor Hall 18:44

Some of the issues COVID has had me concerned about is health care in lower income communities, and people with not as much financial help receiving treatment for COVID and other diseases and things that happen during this time of year. I know a lot of minorities didn't receive medical attention. So they had symptoms of healthcare. And that led to them passing. Another thing that concerns me with COVID was food distribution. A lot of different food drives and food places, like normal food donation places shut down because of COVID. So a lot of families went without getting the necessary food, and students in lower income communities usually rely on their food sources from school, and not being in school led to a lot of different food deserts and students not eating as much as they usually do.

Emily Leiserson 19:44

Yeah. Yeah, those are major concerns. So then, you mentioned when you got into activism that was around the time that Dreasjon Reed was killed. What did that process of getting involved in the activist movement look like for you?

Taylor Hall 20:14

So Dreasjon Reed was killed on May 6. I believe it was a Thursday. And there were people protesting that night on Michigan Rd. I don't live far from Michigan Rd, living like in the Broad Ripple area. And I decided to protest on May 7, so the next day. And I protested like on Michigan Rd. And I also went downtown to march. When I've protested before in the past, like I've been a part of the Women's March and different things, growing up, but nothing really seriously. So just going downtown, seeing all the people out, was a amazing experience. But I've always been like very vocal about my opinions. And how I feel, so this naturally came to me to just speak up on issues. And when I see in justices. So I usually let other activists that have been doing it, speak and like spearhead like the movements. With Dreasjon, so I just wanted to continuously support and just go to different protests. But then I didn't really see as much structure as I think needed to fit. So I just decided to kind of take a leadership role in activism and just come up with my own ideas and what I think will work and what I think will make a difference. So I protested for a couple of weeks for Dreasjon Reed, and the daily protests died down after that. And then towards June, after George Floyd was killed, I think the whole country was, that was an outrage. So everyone wanted to protest. On the day after George Floyd died, I went down to the Circle and protested with another activist in the community. Her name's Destiny Brown, and she led a lot of protests as well, over the summer. So we protested and there was about, I'd say, like, 20-30 people the day after, and that Saturday, you know, after you post something, more people want to be a part of it. That Saturday, we had about 200-300 people. And then that next week, we had a protest at the Indiana War Memorial. And there was about 4,000 to 5,000 people. And then that's when like different activists- it was a group of me and six other black women, that all came together to start organizing more protests and events. So then that next week, we had a protest, a sit in at the State House. And there was 10,000 people. It was the largest fit in for racial justice in 30 years in Indianapolis. So it went from 20 people to 200 people to 4,000 or 5,000 people to 10,000 people. So just gradually grew. And then since then, I just kind of feel like it's my job to continuously do things for the community, whether it's events or just giving back on the day to day, or talking to youth about how they can make a difference in their communities. It just hasn't really stopped. And then I went to DC in August for the March on Washington. And saw what it was like to protest in DC and heard the families of George Floyd and Jacob Blake and Breonna Taylor speak. And Al Sharpton - I ran into Al Sharpton and Martin Luther King the III, and Ayanna Pressley. So that kind of fueled me even more. To be not to be an artivist and to continue my movement in Indianapolis.



Emily Leiserson 23:52

Yeah, absolutely. You're group of a handful of women. Is that called Black Women in Charge? Do I have that right?,

Taylor Hall 24:02

Yes.

Emily Leiserson 24:02

Okay. Are you guys affiliated with other activist organizations or just kind of working on your own mostly?

Taylor Hall 24:12

Just working on our own. I'd say a lot of people inside of the group kind of broke off to kind of just do our own different things now. It was 7 or 9, and now it's a group of 4 or 5.

Emily Leiserson 24:26

Got it. So it's kind of an organic-

Taylor Hall 24:29

Yeah, we just like, we just all, like Destiny, she works. She goes to Ohio State University. So she does a lot of activism and different things at Ohio State, on campus. She's probably going to be the Mayor or Governor one day. And then Tyshara. She does a lot of organizing here in Indianapolis, as well, an individual and just as individuals. We are just do different things on our campuses.

Emily Leiserson 24:57

Yeah. Yeah. Are you all college students?

Taylor Hall 25:03

Yes. Okay, so there is one person- She's a- she's a high school student. She's a senior at Brebeuf.

Emily Leiserson 25:10

Okay. Wow. That's fantastic. Amazing. So when you think about what has been motivating you to do this work, going back to the beginning with Dreasjon, up through today, what has it been? And has it changed over time?

Taylor Hall 25:33

Yes, it definitely has changed. I get asked this question a lot. Like what keeps me going. Because often times, like, in the winter time, people don't want to come out or support the movement, after it was popular over the summer. And towards the fall, people didn't really want to be as a part of it. It can get discouraging. But I would just say my faith keeps me going, every time that something gets me down, or

something is going wrong. I just get like a sign or message to keep going, whether it's like a phone call from a relative, and they're just like, I haven't talked to, and they're just like, Oh, I see what you're doing. And this just inspired me in this way. Or it's one of my students reaching out and they're saying, this is really changed and impacted my life, I'm learning this. Or maybe running into a stranger and them telling me they've seen my work and they hope for me to continue. Or getting an opportunity to do different things, or meeting different people. Or seeing injustices, I'd say, like in the community, and it's just like, okay, there's more work to be done. I can't stop now. So there's different things in my everyday life that inspire me to keep going and moving forward.

Emily Leiserson 26:48

Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, can you tell me a little bit more about how you think the movement has evolved over the past year? So you mentioned, you know, it really blew up at the time of George Floyd death. But what does that look like for you from the inside?

Taylor Hall 27:15

For me, I'd say because we were in a pandemic, and I'd the world was kind of still closed during that time, there wasn't really much to see, in June, and in May. There was no sports, there was no entertainment, there was no new movies. So all you could see was the movement, or the Black Lives Matter movement, and the COVID number increasing on the news. So that's all you could see, that's all you were worried about. The only thing really people were talking about was just the movement. And then COVID cases. I would say now, the world is kind of reopened. So there's so many different things going on between Nigeria, and SARS, and sports being back in action, and students being back on college campuses, and homicide rates going up in our communities. So there's so many different things going on, people aren't really focused. Or I wouldn't say not focused, but they're just not really paying attention to the movement. I would say that different entertainment facets try to highlight it still, like the NBA would have Black Lives Matter on the court and have shirts with people whose lives have been lost, and different sports have still been highlighting it. And so people still care. But it's just, they don't really know how to move forward with the movement. I'd say right now in November, the big thing is to vote. So it's just like pushing people to vote, inspiring people to go wait in the line. Lines are three, four hours long. So there's been lots of people passing out food and water and performing. So I was thinking about passing out boxes of food at the voting polls this week, or taking my guitar and performing while people are in line. Just different things that you can do to make a difference during this time.

Emily Leiserson 29:17

Yeah. Yeah, absolutely. Have you had COVID or has anyone close to you had it?

Taylor Hall 29:28

No. Not that I'm aware of. I'm pretty sure I have not had COVID, and no one in my family has had COVID. I try to stay pretty safe. I am around a lot of people like protesting, but everyone always has on their masks. And I didn't touch people or touch anything.

Emily Leiserson 29:48

Yeah. And you've been mostly outside it sounds like, at least, yeah, as much as you can. Yeah. Okay, so has it, I guess has it been a worry for you being exposed?

Taylor Hall 30:10

I think COVID definitely is important. And it's a big thing going on, and it's dangerous, but just with my age and my health, I haven't really been as concerned. I've been taking precautionary measures and being safe, but I'm pretty healthy. I've never been sick. Really, I've never had the flu. I eat well, I drink lots of fluids I work out. So I haven't really been as scared of getting COVID, but I still take precautionary measures.

Emily Leiserson 30:41

Yeah, yeah, of course. No, that makes sense. Okay, so have you seen, while you're protesting, have you seen different types of protests or protesters? What have those looked like?

Taylor Hall 31:00

I think the different kinds of protesters are so cool. I don't know how else to say it. One time I was at protest. And there was a skateboard protest. And there's, I was downtown. They were riding past the Statehouse. And it was probably about 200 to 300 skateboarders with like flags, holding their fists up. And I was telling my friend, it was whoa, that's so cool. Like, you're there doing what you love to like, protest and like to shed light on this movement. So I've seen skateboarders protest. I've seen bike protests, like, especially for like the older communities. I've seen, like drive protests, like parades, not parades, but just like honking horns, being in cars. I've seen different like things in the arts. Like a lot of artists, they made a mural on Indiana Avenue, for Black Lives Matter. On Indiana Ave. And then with me, I do music. So we had a, we had an arts kind of protest, we had like, people that play the cello and violin and string instruments in honor of Elijah McClain, who played the violin. So just highlighting the different arts in the community. So I think it's cool. That's why I started Artist and becoming an artist, because you can protest through so many different forms, and it's just whatever is close to you. And you can use that to shed light on the movement or to make a difference.

Emily Leiserson 32:41

Yeah.

Taylor Hall 32:41

I've had DJs, like DJ for me for free, just because they wanted to help the movement. I've had photographers and videographers like capture the moment and make many documentaries of the movement. And that's a form of art, because it's just like, Wow, this is amazing that we're going to look back on this in 20 years, and just see this movement, like from this lens. Because back then, like in the 60s and 70s, there was cameras, but not like this high quality of cameras and videos.

Emily Leiserson 33:17

Yeah, absolutely. I know, that is exciting. I agree with you. Have any of the protests you've been to - have you ever seen violence? Or have they all been peaceful?

Taylor Hall 33:35

Most protests that I've been to I've been peaceful. I would say late at night, sometimes they get violent. Like in June, when there was protest every single day, all day. And I remember one evening, there was tear gas and some confrontation. But I usually don't stay around, like with tear gas, or with people hitting]the police, the police hitting people, back and forth. Or when people vandalize or different things. Especially since I am, I'd say a known activist in the Indianapolis community, I think it'd be easy for the police or government to find me if I was a part of any rioting or looting. At all the protests, we told people to say peaceful, and to bring calm. I know probably the summer was people not knowing how to differentiate protesters from rioters. And we've had lots of peaceful protests, like a whole day or a whole week of peaceful protests, and then a group could come out one day out of the seven days and break store glass windows, and they'd say, oh, all the protesters are looting and rioting and negative when you just had a whole peaceful day.

Emily Leiserson 35:03

Right. How did that feel to you? When that happened?

Taylor Hall 35:11

I would say that activists, and I'd say some news stations did a really good job on differentiating protesters from looters. I'd say some stations, they try to make the narrative like, Oh, it's all negative and all that, but then some would highlight the good and also like, showcase the bad, but in different lenses. So just think what media stations give the full story and don't. I think a lot of community members notice that, so they don't really support on different stations that paint the picture in that way.

Emily Leiserson 35:50

Yeah, that makes sense. I'm just checking through a few questions here. How has the pandemic affected other communities you might be a part of, like school or church? Has it changed the way you interact with family and friends?

Taylor Hall 36:19

I'd say the pandemic has affected every part of everyone's life; we can't really escape it. With church, I haven't been able to go inside of the church since February or March. And I really value being able to go inside of the church and get that feeling of community. I still watch it online. But it's not the same as like being surrounded by fellow believers and family and community members, like not being able to see them consistently. My family, for a while, my mom, my mom is high risk. So she didn't want us to, like go in and out of the house a lot. So it was a lot of having to stay home. And I couldn't see my

grandparents for a while. I'd call them, but I'm used to seeing and spending time with my grandparents consistently. So not being able to see them was hard. I like to travel. So I'd say it's a big part of my life is traveling. Just seeing the world. Seeing the world, helping the world, learning more about cultures is important to me. So it's been hard not being able to really go out and travel. And I had a trip planned to Africa in May, and that had to get canceled.

Emily Leiserson 37:42

What part of Africa were going to visit?

Taylor Hall 37:45

Uganda.

Emily Leiserson 37:46

Wow. I hope you're still able to go at some point. This is another area of interest. Can you tell me, if you're comfortable, what the experience of faith or worship has looked like during the pandemic, when you're not able to go to church? I mean, you mentioned doing it online, but you know, what- are there other things about that that stand out to you?

Taylor Hall 38:21

I would say I have a close relationship to God. And my faith, I'd say is strong. My grandfather was a pastor for majority of my life. And now he's the president at a seminary, and I'm very close to my grandfather. He's very into, I'd say, the movement, and also his faith. So my grandfather, I'm going to talk about him in almost every interview. He went to seminary in Boston. And when he was in seminary, they called his university and told him that they needed security and people to go down to Selma to march with Martin Luther King. So my grandfather- I'm biracial, my mother is biracial. And she's adopted by two white parents. So they needed Caucasian males to, like be bodyguard to Martin Luther King. So him and some of his colleagues from university decided to go down to Selma to march with Martin Luther King. So they marched with Martin Luther King when he was in college, and then Martin Luther King came to Boston for the Housing Acts rights, and he met Martin Luther King and spoke to him, and there's pictures of them together. So I was just growing up hearing those stories. He'd tell them at my school. He'd tell them at churches. He'd always incorporate faith into what he does. And I'd say I try to do that as well. I'd say that's why I can be so sure as a person and still have love for people who hate me. So I live by Matthew 5:44. Love your enemies. Bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, pray for those that spitefully deceit and persecute you. So I live by that. So just going to protest with that mindset of not to spread hate but to spread love. That's also a line in my song, don't stand for a stand for love. And to remember to stay positive during these times. So I would say that's the foundation of my activism and me as a person is to love your enemies and bless those who curse you and to live by lived by that in my everyday life.

Emily Leiserson 40:31

Yeah, thank you for sharing that. That's amazing. So your family has been, it sounds like, involved in the area of racial justice for many generations. Has it changed for each generation? Or does it stay pretty consistent?

Taylor Hall 40:54

I would say that it's changed. I talked to my grandfather about this, the difference between the movement now and the movement then. The movement then, they had certain issues that they would focus on passing, whether it was housing acts rights, and having affordable housing, good communities for African Americans, or making sure African Americans have civil rights and different rights that they were pushing towards. And I'd say now, one of the biggest differences is how many different things that we need change. But at the same time, there's so many different things that are going on, not just in America, but in this world. So we're worried about the Black Lives Matter movement and those facets, but then we also have COVID-19, and you have to worry about the pandemic. And protesting and organizing is part of the pandemic for one, but then for two, you have to focus on providing food and health care and fluids for people who have been affected by the pandemic. And then you also have to worry about climate change in the world. California was on fire, there's hurricanes in the south, there was so many different natural disasters going on simultaneously. While we're protesting for the movement. So it's like you have COVID, you have natural disasters, you have the election, you have the movement, we have polite brutality within the movement. And then protesters being taken and targeted. So it's just so many different things to focus on.

Emily Leiserson 42:33

Right. Right. So has that been a challenge, do you think? Because there are so many different things, it's a little bit harder to boil it down to one message. I don't want to put words in your mouth. So what are your thoughts on that?

Taylor Hall 42:51

It's definitely been a lot harder, trying to do anything I'd say during this year during 2020.

Emily Leiserson 42:57

Yeah.

Taylor Hall 42:58

I think what I tell people now is to find something that you're passionate about, and then just work towards that and pursue that. So it doesn't have to be necessarily the Black Lives Matter movement, or climate change, or the women's rights movement. It can be anything that you're passionate about. At my event, I had students speak about climate change and climate strike, because that's what they're passionate about. And we need people that are leading that movement, and getting other people for that movement. I had people speaking about health care, and we need people that are leading that movement.

And just different movements that you can be a part of. Or you can be a part of lots of movements. For me personally, I'm passionate about activism. I'm passionate about racial equality and racial justice. And I'm passionate about youth. So I try to incorporate all those things into what I do, and try to stay in front of that lens.

Emily Leiserson 43:53

Yeah. Using the arts as media medium to do that? Is that how you think about it?

Taylor Hall 43:58

Yeah. The other thing that passionate about is my guitar and music and also painting and clothing.

Emily Leiserson 44:06

Yeah. So forgive me, I'm thinking out loud here. But it seems to me like traditionally arts have been perceived as, you know, just this very kind of siloed thing that lives in, you know, an ivory tower. And the art that you're trying to do seems not like that at all. You know, it's very responsive and engaged in the community. Do you feel a connection to like older, kind of traditional art forms and art institutions, or do you feel like it's important to do your art in a new way? Or is it both? Do you think there's any way to bridge that gap?

Taylor Hall 45:03

I would say personally, I'm very like non traditional, nonconformist. So I like doing it in a new way, in a new lens. I would say we learn the arts from the past, and we learn how to paint and how to perceive art. But I think anything can be art. And I think if you try to like, put a bridge on it, or try to put like a ceiling on it, it'll stop the creativity. So it's just telling people anything you do can be art. You can paint your face, you can paint your clothes, you can make a poem, you can make a song, you can do a dance. Because I'd say the art community is usually pretty progressive and creative. And I think, as a society, we love art. We love music, we love paintings, we love clothing, we love the arts. So just using that, as a medium, I think really connects with people that do those types of things.

Emily Leiserson 46:08

Yeah. Are there things that you would like to see in our city that would make it easier for you to do art in the way that you're doing it?

Taylor Hall 46:21

I would say that our city has done a pretty good job, considering, like with the pandemic. Between different murals, like on Mass Ave in downtown, I thought that was amazing. Just seeing all the Black Lives Matter, human rights matter, downtown, or like the Indiana Avenue mural, and on different things. I'd say it's pretty limited with COVID. Not as many live performances, and things like that. But I've done a lot throughout the summer, just with different artists, and using music or whatever mediums. I think after COVID, it would be good if we had more art displays and artworks. I know the Indiana State

Museum is having a Black Lives Matter exhibit. And I donated some shorts and posters to the museum to be a part of the exhibit. So I think that's great that they're highlighting different things from the movement in Indianapolis.

Emily Leiserson 47:22

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. What do you think you would like to see from leadership in regard to the pandemic? Has your experience this year.... Sorry, let me start this question over. Has your experience this year changed the way you look at leadership? And if so, how?

Taylor Hall 47:56

My experience this year has definitely changed the way I look at leadership. I've worked with a lot of different leaders in the community, just being an activist. I've worked with legislators, the mayor, community leaders. I think they say they want to do more, and they want to help out in ways that they can. But I think there's so much more that our leaders could be doing. I know no one will ever be satisfied. But just whether it's reliefs, or more funding for different, I'd say, organizations or things that are giving back to the community. There's so many people without housing, without healthcare, without food inside of our communities. Just going downtown, you see like the increased rates of homeless and food deserts and more gas stations and grocery stores. So just those types of things, whether it's like a day to day thing, where it's just like feeding or having a budget to feed people inside of our community. Or it's making more grocery stores and more events and opportunities for the community to come together with like more things for the community to do. I think there would be less violence if there was more things for youth to do, for community members to do. With COVID, I think a lot of places shut down, so like, homeless people couldn't go there. Students couldn't receive food distributions. Families lost jobs. And so you lose your job, you don't have any money, and then students are not in school. So your bills are going to go up, and you're not going to have, they're not going to be eating what they usually eat. So I'd say more funding from the government and more opportunities for lower income communities.

Emily Leiserson 49:47

Yeah, absolutely. What do you imagine your life being like in a year or two or five years?

Taylor Hall 50:08

I think life has been moving so fast for me lately. Just over the summer it's changed so much. Just working this new work that I've started. I think that I've found my calling, I'd say. My purpose. Which is to advocate for those who can't always advocate for themselves. I don't know if I want to have a job with the government or with civil rights, or if I want to just continue to do my own thing. I really enjoy- my major's public communication, and I really enjoy speaking. So I could see myself doing motivational speaking, or continuously working with students and traveling and talking to, whether it's college students, elementary-age students, helping thinking about racial equality, racial justice. I'm graduating very early. So I have not that much time, a couple months to figure it out. But I started my own LLC,



Artivist LLC, over the summer. So I've started like doing work within that. I'm working with schools. I'm starting a nonprofit, just to do outreach. So I have different things that I am doing, and I can continue to do. I love my music. So I think I'm going to pursue that as well. I can see myself moving soon, to pursue it more, because it's something I've always been passionate about. Not a definite answer, but it's a lot of different things.

Emily Leiserson 51:45

No. That's okay. Yeah. So you have your Artivist LLC. You have a nonprofit as well. Is that right, for your outreach and education? Okay. And then, yeah, I just wanted to make sure I understood that. What would you like - So when thinking back through this year, what do you hope that individuals and communities or government will keep in mind for the future?

Taylor Hall 52:22

That this is not a moment in time. This is a movement. This isn't something that's temporary, or that we just got angry about for a second. It's something that is going to last until actual changes are made. Black Lives Matters is not just an organization, or just a saying. It's a movement. It's just valuing the lives of those who are disproportionately targeted by the police and by different groups and organizations. I hope that people remember how passionate we all were about this at one point. And maybe people will get as passionate again in the future, but just continuously seeing changes to be made to our day to day lives, through our legislation, to communities, a lot of different things, [audio buffers] Confederate statues and different things that in the history were known as racist and known as anti- Black, anti-LGBTQ+, anti anything. So just continuously moving forward. Loving one another. And valuing the lives of one another.

Emily Leiserson 53:45

Absolutely. I want to go back a second to the things you said were your passions: the activism, race-racial justice and equity, and youth. Why do you think you're so passionate about each of those things?

Taylor Hall 54:06

I'd say well, activism [unclear]. I want social and political change. And I think that's something I've always been passionate about, just seeing changes within my community. And I've always been passionate about advocating for what I think is right. Racial and social justice and equality: I went to Crispus Attucks High School, which is a public school, which is in downtown Indianapolis, and the majority of my peers and classmates were a part of like the lower class. They had a different life than most people are used to. So just seeing how the system and how society treated, I guess, them and me, going to that school. And how people set people inside of the lower income communities up to fail. And how they just feel like they can't be more than what they see. And they don't really see as much. [That] really spoke to me. I've always had, I'd say a pretty good life. My family, I never needed or really wanted anything. But being in certain situations and seeing things firsthand, whether it's foods, food inside of like kind of worse areas, or whether it's working with students or knowing students that have

had a really hard life, like they have to work three jobs to provide for their families, or like their parents are working and they have to take care of their siblings or just different things they had to go through. While being in school. And how their behaviors changed in school, because of the things they were going through outside of school, I'd say really spoke to me. Most people could like make it up the ladder, and then just keep going. But I would rather get everyone up the ladder and get them to a higher place in life. Because I don't think anyone should have to go through what people inside of lower income communities in Indianapolis go through. They see more, they want to be more so.

Emily Leiserson 56:35

Yeah, yeah. And that ties in with your interest in youth too.

Taylor Hall 56:42

Youth at a young age. If you inspire youth. And inspire youth for the next generation. So I've had a lot of people [unclear] to me in my life, working with me. [Video freezes]

Emily Leiserson 57:05

We may have paused again. Pausing for a second. Okay, we're back. All right. So I think I heard most of your thought there before it cut out. But is there anything else you wanted to say about? About working with youth?

Taylor Hall 57:33

I think I got it out.

Emily Leiserson 57:35

Okay. Great. Thank you. So yeah, just a couple of closing questions. I guess one of them is, is there anything else that you want to talk about that we haven't talked about yet?

Taylor Hall 57:58

I don't think so.

Emily Leiserson 57:59

Okay. Alright. And are there other people you can think of who we should be interviewing? And one question I'll throw out is, even if there are people - so we've talked to a lot of young people. If there are people you can think of who are older, in your parents' or grandparents' generations, since we talked about that?

Taylor Hall 58:32

Actually. Definitely my grandfather. He's done a lot of work in his life, with his ministry. And the movement. Just meeting and marching with Martin Luther King. He was alive to see the movement then

and now. I think he's amazing, my grandfather. And then also my other activist friends in the Indianapolis community. Destiny Brown, Tyshara Loynes. I can send you their emails.

Emily Leiserson 59:05

Awesome. Yeah, I would love to talk to any of those folks who you think might be interested. That would be great. So we are continuing these interviews through December and then probably end of January. And you know, the spring as well. So we have some time. But yeah, I would love to talk to those people. Thank you so much, Taylor. Let me see. Is there anything else, before we turn off the recording, that you wanted to say? We can turn off the recording and then have a second to chat as well.

Taylor Hall 59:44

I don't think so.

Emily Leiserson 59:48

Okay. All right. I'm going to stop recording now.