

## Transcript of Interview with Kit Heintzman by Angelica S Ramos

**Interviewee:** Kit Heintzman

**Interviewer:** Angelica S Ramos

**Date:** 03/15/2023

**Location (Interviewee):** Arizona State University, Tempe

**Location (Interviewer):**

**Transcribed By:** Angelica S Ramos

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

How the idea of Kit's collection came about. The process in which ze chose their interviewees and how that evolved into a diversified collection. The personal fulfillment that interviewing queer core and afro punk artists gave them. How historical silences motivated them to collect stories of identity and perspective diversities. The evolution of their questions, the intentional chronological structure of the questions, and the deliberate intent to end their interviews with softness and gentleness while reflecting on self-care and community support. Their intent to continue collecting stories and how different those stories may be in a "post pandemic" world. Being in a funny in-between where it is too late for raw stories and too early for reflective stories. Absences and underrepresentation in their collection including Muslims and South Asians. Kits hopes for the future of their collection, the desire for future historians to see themselves in archives, and for those historians to listen to the items in their entirety. Interview ends with Kits lessons learned during the collections process.

**Angelica Ramos 00:00**

Okay, I am here with Kit Heinzman, the oral historian responsible for the most diverse collection of oral histories housed in the Journal of the Plague Year archive. Hello, Kit.

**Kit Heintzman 00:13**

Hi.

**Angelica Ramos 00:14**

Do I have your consent to record this oral history interview, and house it in our Journal of the Plague Year archive?

**Kit Heintzman 00:22**

You absolutely do. Yes.

**Angelica Ramos 00:24**

Thank you. Today is March 15th

**Kit Heintzman 00:30**

The Ides of March, 2023 (both laughing)

**Angelica Ramos 00:33**

10:46am.

**Angelica Ramos 00:36**

We are in Arizona State University. And I am just going to go ahead and ask my first question. Where did the idea of collecting stories amidst of global pandemic come from?

**Kit Heintzman** 00:52

Oh, that's such an interesting question. Because like, it was your idea I just like hopped on. I don't, I don't think that I ever would have done this if the Journal of the Plague Year. Like, call it I don't remember how it got to me. I do assume it was through an H net something. But I don't think I ever would have gotten this if it had not been put on my radar that there was this crowdsourcing activity that had come along. Yeah, so like, your answers better than mine? How did the idea come about? Y'all did it.

**Angelica Ramos** 01:39

How did you choose your interviewees, and how did you first reach out?

**Kit Heintzman** 01:45

Ah, well. I also think of my my interviewees as like, impressively diverse because of the kinds of diversity that they have. So not just the kinds of diversity that get referenced in something like DEI training, that version of diversity, but also just like, real breadth of people and experiences and ideas and ways of being and ways of knowing. And so it's kind of hard to talk about, like how do I choose them, because I think a lot of people when they talk about diversity, usually mean, usually mean it in the DEI sense or a set of kind of like identity categories that are more or less fixed, at least at like one moment in time. Or they might say, like diversity of perspectives, but not like the overlapping of those two. I was very committed to both. When I saw the call for the Journal of the Plague Year, for crowdsourced oral histories. My first thought was about how hard it is to talk to ideological fringe. And so I was trained as an 18th century-ist. I worked on the history of medicine in late 18th century France. And it's so hard to get people who are ideological. And in that context, I'm thinking of like, just like ideas about like how medicine works, how the body works, like, like what disease is. It's so hard to get access to those people speaking for themselves, or it was hard for me to get access to those people. So like, when I think about how I would like know that someone didn't like the rules that the state was implementing, around restricting movement during outbreaks in the late 18th. You get like a finger waggy municipal official talking about like this really obnoxious woman who keeps walking around with curatives and she won't like stop like bringing her cows out to pasture. I work on veterinary medicine. So like it was animal disease, not human disease. But I don't get her, I don't like I don't know why she's doing what she's doing. I really just know that there is all of the evidence I was left with is there is a person who did something the state didn't like in the state would like sometimes say like cranky things about it. And I longed for her and I longed for people like her in my archives and so I wanted future historians to have those to have to have people who think about health and the body and medicine in radically different ways than the dominant paradigm and the paradigm that's going to be most easily recorded. And the thing that's so cool about oral histories is that like, you don't just get like the content of their ideas, which I don't think it's actually super hard to find for like the fringe these days, like they publish articles, they like, give presentations that are on YouTube that are very specific in terms of how they think the body works, or viruses works, or vaccines works or whatever. Like, we actually have like, a lot of the like, guts of how they think science work. What we don't have is like their souls. And that's really what I was interested in. And so, when I first started reaching out to people, the first group of people actually reached out to were faith healers, Christian faith healers, I found a directory that was just like, hey, you're looking for a Christian faith healer in your area. This is where you go and sent a cold call email to a bunch of them. Very few wrote back, it was my first cold call email asking anyone to do an oral history ever. I don't know that it was especially like well written. I certainly didn't have, I

spent time finessing how I approach different demographics of people and how I name my intentions with them and to them. And I didn't have any of that practice. This was just like, my name is Kit. I'm doing a postdoc because somewhere with the history of medicine and you want to let me talk to you. Very few people wrote back, the few that did said very abruptly, that the pandemic had not impacted them. Because nothing had changed for them. And that no, they were not interested in speaking with me. So the first group of people I reached out to yielded nothing. And this was circa December 2020. And so in December 2020, we still don't have a vaccine. And at least in my world, I didn't see one coming in the like, foreseeable future like this is still like that still feels so far away. That most of the political anxieties around vaccination weren't, like specific, like they were they were all so speculative. Like there was this like, there was a conversation happening in many circles that was like, there will be a vaccine, and then the despotic state will come and do a bunch of things. But it was really hard finding anyone like really doing anything with it, because it was all still like discursive predictive. So I couldn't find anyone to talk to you that would like give me any of that. So instead, I just started looking to people who had long been involved in vaccine related activism. Who many of whom, I think would be characterized externally as anti vaxxers. Very few of them would self identify as anti vaxxers. I think I've only spoken to one person who said something like, Oh, I'm pretty generally anti vax, but not even like that wasn't a medical professional. That was someone who was talking about like, in my worldview, I oppose Western medicine. And a part of that is I categorically opposed vaccination. But like, That's it, but lots of other activists who have spent like their lives, pushing against required vaccinations, pushing against what they would describe as consequences or punishments for the unvaccinated and pushing for more transparency over like all medical health related knowledge, vaccination included, which is one of those places of overlap, that we can be like, Yeah, I'm also pro more transparency. Like, I feel you on that one, I feel you. So I started reaching out to people with a sort of more like a longer activist career in that way. And as I've heard from other people who do like field interviews, it did help like once you get your first Yes, and then you have someone who has inside who says like, hey, that that was a woman named Jennifer Margulis. Maybe fact check how to pronounce her last. Pronunciation is not my strong suit on anything. Um, but she was, like, just so excited about the project. And she was like, here's a list of everyone in this movement, who I think is important. And like, these are the ones I know personally. And you can say I sent them, her name was and is big enough in that world that like some people were also just flattered. Like, oh, Jennifer knows my work. Um, and so that's sort of how that first pool opened. But then I am ending up doing something with an archive, which I don't want, which is like, I want conservative voices present, I don't want to archive inundated with a bunch more white straight people, many of whom were of a pretty secure financial position, not necessarily because people of those viewpoints are. But because of the way I was reaching out to people, people who had published books on this had long activist careers, who ran nonprofits dedicated to these things. They were people with a lot of social capital and power. Some of those conversations were also very hard. Some of all of the interviews are very hard. And I needed I needed that to not be the only thing that I was working toward having to be preserved. And they do kind of like die on the hill of how important those interviews are.

**Kit Heintzman** 11:50

And I needed more than that, and I was capable of doing more than that. So I was thinking about sort of what that would look like. I was listening to a bunch of like punk music all of the time. And feeling very isolated. And thinking about like, what am I, what am, what am I going to do with this fancy like postdoc cultural capital I have for these last five minutes of this email address. If I can just like cold call a bunch of Christian faith healers and people engaged in more. How do I want to how do I want to phrase this? I've never found like the good syntax for like those who would be labeled anti vaxxers. But aren't, I haven't found a quick way to like that, but whatever that is, I'm like, what else am I gonna do with it? And I was like, what if I just emailed a bunch of like, small scale

famous, queer core and Afro punk artists, and was like, hey, I want someone to write the punk rock history of COVID. I'm, like, I totally, like, just totally want someone to write the punk rock history of COVID. And I want that to be queer and black and brown as fuck. And so I did, I like I just like, went through Bandcamp and Spotify and a bunch of like, listicles on like, who to listen to where, finding artists and reached out to dozens of them. And some wrote back and said, Yes, and those were really delightful and nurturing interviews, in ways that sort of like, brought me a lot of delight. And like, it allows me to hold another side of importance that is very real. And then, like, I just kind of ended up in a sort of, like, back and forth of, I would think of a group I would like to reach out to, and they would be, and they would usually fall into one of these like categories like some kind of ideological fringe, usually conservative or spiritual fringe, without sort of any asterix on the politics behind that. And then just trying to sort of keep in mind, like, where are my people in this archive, and how do I make sure that they continue to be there? And so like, sometimes I would go into a bunch of psychics, and I would expect that to be sort of like, some of my people, but not a fully overlapping crowd of people, I was like, I expect this to be a really like, mixed crowd. And it's super was it's super super was. Whereas I like had expected and this was mostly rightly that like more of my doulas, both the birthing doulas and the end of life, doulas would be sort of more nurturing, and there would be more easy overlap. And yeah, that's just like, like, I ended up reaching out to a lot of Ghost Hunters, none of whom responded to me, because I was watching Hellyer at the time. Like, you're like, like, like, if you have the freedom, like, I felt like I had this near perfect freedom to just be like, Hey, do you want to talk? Because I don't, I, I knew I was leaving academia. So I knew I no longer needed to talk to a hiring committee about what this had to do with 18th century French veterinary medicine to which the answer was nothing. Or like, like do they want someone who's so who takes weirdos so seriously, like to be a part of their, like a part of their department? Like, I just got to stop having that conversation and be like, Man, oh, of course, I want to talk to Ghost Hunters. Like I definitely want to talk to people dealing with all aspects of like, the idea of death and permanence. And like, how do you like, are people reaching out to you differently in moments of mass death, like to connect to their loved ones like, like, talk about like, very different stories about what a small business looks like. And like that's true for funeral homes. Also, none of whom knew emailed me back, I did reach out to a bunch of funeral home establishments, and none of them. None of them were feeling me. Like the ghost hunters. But I thought that would be like, just like such a great sort of, like, different version of sort of what's happening and I had the freedom to do it. And I also because I hadn't promised like, because no one was funding me. I hadn't promised some granting body that I would get all of these ghost hunters and they would say all of these amazing things. And so like, there were kind of no consequences. To like, just trying. So yeah, like what I was watching on TV, what someone said to me, I ended up reaching out to birth doulas, because, one of my interviewees, Alma Rodriguez, talked about a very difficult set of pregnancies during the pandemic. And I don't remember actually, if she had a doula, but I remember like, her story really anchoring me in this question of pregnancy and motherhood and going back to the 18th century part of my head that's like, alright, if you wanted to learn some cool shit about like, what birthing was like in this period of time, who would you go to, obstetrics? Nah. Doulas. I want my doulas I want like, I want my doulas I want my midwives like, they're, they're the ones who didn't make it into the archives that I wished I had. So that's where I branched, but it's like, very, like, I had the incredible privilege and freedom of pursuing curiosity, and I did it.

**Angelica Ramos** 18:39

Can you tell me a little bit about your questions, how they first came about, and then kind of the process of how your questions changed towards the end of your collection?

**Kit Heintzman** 18:51

So I remember when Journal of the Plague Year had, I found some resource on it. That talked about like, kinds of sample questions that you could use, and I think it was probably directed at students who are doing oral histories. And I liked some of them, didn't like others. I thought a lot about what, what people would think is interesting. So like, what, what, what would someone go into this archives looking to know? And then I thought, What do I want them to find instead? I'm like, Can I do like, like, are you imagine that like, many people looking back at this moment will like, divide around a lot of things around like, who was vaccinated who wasn't and what were the vaccinated like, and what were the unvaccinated like? And I really don't care whether or not my interviewees are vaccinated or or not, I'm super interested in why they make decisions about their bodies and how they understand their bodies. And how they understand the potential consequences of decisions they're making. But like, what they decide at the end of the day is very uninteresting to me. In part because it's immutable, like that's mutable, like like they like the unvaccinated can decide to get vaccinated tomorrow, like someone's vaccinated can decide they'll never get vaccinated again. The timestamp is still useful knowledge. But it's not the most interesting thing for me. So I tried to find, I also thought that like some direct, I thought, if I thought if I just asked a question like, how do you feel about vaccination, the conversation was shut down, because it was so loaded. So what I tried to do was make space for people who are comfortable discussing such things to bring it up. Because certainly by the time we're like, when did vaccination hit the US? It was so much earlier than in Canada, I can't remember. Sometime in 2021, [Erin Craft in the background- Marchish] Marchish? Oh, God, so long before Canada, I was in Canada at the time.

**Kit Heintzman 21:20**

That like by the time we hit March, like if someone wanted to talk about it, it was on the tip of their tongue. But trying to find other question, like other questions that would situate that. I remember writing out my little list of questions, printing it out on physical pieces of paper, because that's who I am writing physical notes while they talk. Quite chaotically. I really try and remember, like, what is it? What is it that I wanted from them? And it's really hard to remember, like the beginning sets of the questions, I can talk a little bit about the sort of development of certain questions and changes over time. I knew I wanted I wanted the questions to have a particular kind of arc, not for the interview, but for the interviewee. So I wanted to create, with a subject as heavy as the one that we were discussing. I wanted them to not leave for those for whom the pandemic was an incredibly horrible period of time. And I actually think like, people who had like the roughest versions of the pandemic, those people don't talk to me, they can't. So like, I think that some of the emails for which I get like nothing but silence on sometimes that is sometimes that silence is I have other things to do sometimes that silence is I think you're a scam. And sometimes that silence is on to bereaved to get out of bed and talk about it. And it did only have one person that was like, through a connection, who had said, I really liked to do this interview, my daughter just died. And it's like, oh, man, like take like don't don't do the interview five years from now you decide you want to talk about it. You call me. Like we'll do it then but like, so. But it's still it was still very hard time for many, even if like I do think that people who are in some of the hardest places could not speak to me.

**Kit Heintzman 23:50**

So I wanted there to be a way to have some softness and gentleness towards the end. I tried to have a chronological order. So like opening, introduce yourself, who are you? And let that set the stage for what information I have to work with about them. Because one of my rules in my interviews is I don't bring up something that they don't bring up. So if I've reached out to someone who's a doula, a birthing doula, and she does not mention that, then I don't mention it. It's like I don't it's like I don't have that piece of information about her only what is like contained therein. So first question is the interviewee gives me enough information to know

where I can lean into with follow ups. Pre pandemic questions. I think one of the I think like what was your life looking like pre pandemic was straight off of the list of like questions, and then how did that change? I added a not fabulous question that gives like pretty good answers once I stumbled my way through it with them. But which is the like, How, like, pre pandemic, what was your relationship with health and healthcare infrastructure like? Which was trying to situate, like, if not, if many people in a like, tell me a bit about yourself, won't tell you like things about their body and the medical establishment, this was a chance to be like, this is super relevant, what are you willing, what are you willing to share in this and then moving into like, So how has your life been changing post pandemic? And at the time, so like, in December 2020, post pandemic meant after the pandemic had started. And I remember being like, Oh, I can't use the word post pandemic anymore, because people don't like, people don't know what that like. Instead of like, instead of like, it's now it meet sounds like post war, like, after the war is done, as opposed to like, post the war has started. But then, early on, I was using that language of like, and then post pandemic, how did it work, and then that had to change. I tried to circle back again, as gently as possible to the fact that like, other things happened. And, again, like this is like, late 18th century France in me is like, you know, what happened during the French Revolution? People die of all kinds of boring shit. They lost their jobs they like. Like, all kinds of like, everyday things happened. That they still like, like those things don't go away. And so that was the sort of formation of What are some of the other social and political issues on your mind and heart? Question, which I think started very differently. I think that question was worded very differently at the beginning, but I can't remember the wording. And just trying to open some space, and I love that, like, some people took that to kind of like the big political things that I think will sort of stand out in most people's minds about 2020. Most notably, the murder of George Floyd. Like, that's the one that almost everyone names, and some spend more time with it or less time with it, but almost everyone needs it. And then there were other ones that people would name because they had just happened. So like, immediately after the shooting in Atlanta of the sex workers, I think I had like three interviewees, like the week after that had happened, name it, and then it went away forever. And then for other people, like what are some of the other issues? Like what what else has been on your mind? What else has been with you has been things have been more personal. Like, it just wasn't an attunement to that kind of like, that question for them didn't raise an issue of structure. And like, that's also cool. Like, that's part of their lived reality, like maybe the most important thing that happens to you, during all of this is that like, your child died of gun violence, like, the pandemic was just like, and like, no matter, like how much harder the pandemic may have made every piece of that going through bereavement alone, doing a funeral, all of these things like, I don't have a sense that the woman I interviewed who I was thinking of was like shaking her fist being like, I really wish this happened, not during the pandemic, like it's just not, it's just not the biggest thing for everyone. So all of that is really heavy. So like, we're in there with them. We're talking about their bodies, we're talking about like lockdown, we're talking about all kinds of things. And so then trying to find ways to remind them about resiliency and strategies to take care of themselves, which they have to be executing. Because like, they're here. So like, there's clearly some level of a capacity to like, continue to like function well enough to be on a phone with me who's a stranger who like isn't paying them or doing anything for them. So they have enough for that. And so that's where questions around like, what self care looks like for you. And for me, that really wasn't a historical question. I think it's going to be super like I think something like we're in a moment of self care and have been for some time so like, I do think there can be totally cool histories written about self care and those other things and like I'm happy if someone can use those answers for that. But that question really isn't for the historian of the future. That question was for the interviewee like, we've been talking about something heavy. What are some of the things that are useful to you? Of course, because we're all different, like sometimes people's answer, everyone's like, I'm terrible at self care. I don't. And I'm like, Well, okay, what else can I do? What else can I do? Like, okay, like, maybe we can't take care of our like, maybe we don't feel like we're doing the things

we need to do to take care of ourselves. Or there can be a kind of tyranny around the language of self care, right? Like, it becomes an imperative, like, what is the list of things you do to take care of yourself? Like, give me your checklist and do them at the end of the night, and you get your gold star. And so that's like, that sparked the evolution of the question of a question that was what Who are some of the people you turn to for support? And like, what has giving and receiving support looked like to so that like, one isn't just remembering moments of isolation and pain, but moments of care, either giving or received. And sometimes those questions work, sometimes they won't. They don't, but I did it. That's sort of how I got more and more of those questions near the end to try and just like, soften where we were. I think the other question that I distinctly remember in coming out of like, thinking about, like, how are people answering my questions? And what does that mean? Was my last question, which is the like, what do you want a historian of the future to know about now, which I word 1000 different ways. And I'm not quite sure which version of it I really mean. But I realized that like I didn't know. And so that question came for me, in terms of one of the things that I was taught to value as a historian, was what mattered to my historical actors, which isn't embracing their worldview, but is taking very seriously that if the people of the moment think this thing is important to hear and honor that, that doesn't mean it has to be the thing you're writing about. This is French Revolution, you like 250 years later, you have so much time that you're like, Okay, those things have been covered. I can go do my like weird things. Like with enough time, everything, there's there's so much room, there's so much room. But then thinking about like, like so wanting them to tell historians of the future, like what should they be doing? What should they care about? And having like, I also felt like I was helping grad students write their grant applications where they would be like, Look, this actor here said, This mattered. And that's all we need to know to know that this matters. So you're welcome. But I started wondering, like, what, what, what, what do I know about what like what most people think about when they think of history? In history, people do refer to historical acts several times. In the interviews, and when answering that question about like, what do I want historians to know? People would hint at the absences in historical narratives that had harmed them.

**Kit Heintzman 33:39**

So like, there would be a lot of like moments where like, I want you to know that, like people were disproportionately affected based on social positions, through structures of power and prejudice. And like, I want I want you to remember that historian. And I want to know more about like, that. That answer sounded like it came from a wound and I wanted to know more about that wound, so that we, as historians can understand the impact of silences like I feel like it can feel absences and archives and narrative and stories and feels very intellectualized for me, even for the ones that like, like, that are deeply personal, like, of my, of my veterinarians. I studied 1000s of men and I followed their lives as closely as I could get, which was pretty damn close for some of them. And like, I'd have given anything for like, one piece of paperwork about a sodomy accusation, like I'd have given anything for like one concrete, like, give me my gays, as opposed to just like, you just know, like, you just know you're there, you're sending 1000s of people, you know, your people are there, you just don't know which ones. And you don't know what that meant to them. And you don't see how it like how it impacted them. But even that, so, like, I think it more than I feel it. And asking the question about like, what you wish you learned more about history growing up, like got, people to that sense of longing. And I think it helps combat in my head, something that I hear, have heard academics say a lot, which is like, well, people don't care about history. And like, in people repeatedly saying, like, I wished I learn more about blank, or I'm so glad that like, I had a parent who like was really dedicated to teach me black history, like I like. Like, what do I wish I learned more about in school is a different question. But like, I feel like my history at home was pretty good. And like that. That felt really important to me. I'm not sure how well that answers your question

**Angelica Ramos** 36:21

Perfectly.

**Kit Heintzman** 36:22

Great.

**Angelica Ramos** 36:25

I'm so curious to know if you plan on continuing to collect stories in this climate. Because your collection is so COVID centered. And I feel like that climate has changed so drastically. So my question, I guess, is, are you planning on collecting more stories, and how different Do you think those platforms might turn out to be?

**Kit Heintzman** 36:51

So the answer is like, yes, and you hope to continue collecting. As one will see on the dates for when I like, collect, there will be periods of time where I'm like doing an interview, like almost every day a week for weeks on end, and then I'll be like three months off. Where I need a break. I'm clearly in a like very slowed down moment. I'm not currently reaching out to anyone. I am every now and then someone will blissfully write me back months after I wrote them. So my last few interviews are all people who I had reached out to long ago. And then one person that, one organization I have reached out to in December 2022. Just wrote back last week, I was like, hey, and I wrote back right away. Yeah, for sure. And then they haven't written back yet. Because like, that's how the Internet in time works. And that's cool. And like, when I have the energy, if they haven't gotten back to me, I'll nudge them again. And we'll see where it goes. I do plan to continue. Probably at a slower pace. I think it's, there's also a like, kind of recruitment strategy issue, which is, so when I was interviewing, I'm gonna think specifically of like, the queer Afro punk artists, is that like that, and that was early 2021 was when I started doing those. Like, right, and it was just before vaccination. So like, ever, like so many people were very like in stern locked down still and very isolated, and hadn't spoken to a stranger in a really long period of time. And so like, for some people, like so some people then were like, I just don't have the bandwidth to do this. Like, I'm like, I'm crushed. But some people were like, Oh, my God, I would love to talk to another queer person. I don't know. I don't remember the last time I talked to a queer person I don't know. Yeah, Heck, yeah. Thanks for remembering musicians matter. And thanks for loving punk rock, and like, you're welcome. Thanks for making punk rock. So like they're pre vaccination, people were more isolated. And for some people that meant like, had more time to talk to a stranger. I think it also feels a little less important to people now than it did then. I remember when I reached out to I was working off of the LGBTQ Religious Oral History Archive, which is how I contacted a number of this queer spiritual leaders that like when I reached out to someone from there in 2022 He was like, Oh, don't you think it's a bit like, late? And it was like it was kind of a bit late. But like you like you couldn't just as readily says, like, don't you think is a bit early to be like treating this like history? And I feel like I've been like that like, like, that's the funny place. Like for some people, I am too late. And for some people, I am too early. I've been really struggling with how to like parse. If I weren't so concerned about open ended questions, if I weren't so worried about like, having people feel like they're being put on the spot to answer like, facty things like nobody remembers any, like, the only reason I know like when things happened is because I'm so constantly talking to people about when things happened, otherwise, my memory would be a total blur as well. So I forgot where, I was, I'm just gonna let my, like my interviewees I'm just gonna, like, hang out for a minute and resituate myself. Right. So I mean, this funny in between time. I really, it if it wouldn't, if, if the risks weren't higher than the potential yield of good. I would just be like, one of my first questions would be give me a timeline of the



pandemic, like so like, let's let's just start like as a memory exercise, not because whether or not you get things right matters, but like, so that people sort of go through that, like, Oh, these are the things that happened. That mattered, like, give me a timeline. But I am just too worried about putting, like making people feel like the interview is like a test with right and wrong answers. So I don't think it's worth it. But I do think it would help. I will continue to try and sit with like, How can I like, maybe find a gentler or more open ended way to do that. But it is it is tricky to like, talk to people about like, like, in this real moment where like, I think a lot of the people I speak to are also kind of ambivalent on the question of like, is it over? Like some people like it, like some people were like, oh, yeah, it was 2021 already? I mean, like, Oh, awesome. Okay. Like, like, this is why the timeline question would help in terms of understanding how different people wait, people have been perceiving the timeline, but I am I am struggling with that and struggling with which questions still make sense. In which questions like might not make so much sense anymore. I'm quite happy to lean into more questions about memory. I just haven't started doing that yet. And if you know any ghost hunters, I will absolutely like, like, I'll talk to them right away. I don't I don't have plans for a new demographic. But I'm always happy to talk to the ghost hunters.

**Angelica Ramos** 43:09

That perfectly leads me into my next question. [speaking to Erin Craft- were good? Okay]. Your collection seems to have touched almost every demographic. Do you think there's a perspective you might have missed?

**Kit Heintzman** 43:22

Yes.

**Angelica Ramos** 43:22

And how do you rectify that?

**Kit Heintzman** 43:25

Oh, God. Yes. So I think I only interviewed two Muslim people. So that's like, and like that feels like like just such a glaring absence. And I had done more outreach, but it is like that's one of the absences that sits with me that I'm like, very underrepresented, very underrepresented in my collection. And my collection did work so hard to get religious and spiritual diversity that like that omission. Like, like to have so much of that diversity workout. So well for that like subcategory, and then have like a giant chunk missing. Really pains, like, hits me with some hangs. So that's like the big one that really sits with me. I'm thinking about like, other kinds of demographics. I'm very aware that there are very few South Asians in my collection. I'm thinking in that context in the diaspora, I like don't have a particular attachment to geographic location, I did reach out at one point to a bunch of healthcare professionals in India. So, in terms of the I don't like answering my own questions, but in terms of like other social and political issues on my mind and heart like Canada, took, Canada got its vaccination batch out of a set that had been that was supposed to be protected for countries with less economic world power, including India. And it meant that Canadians who were very grumpy about how long we were waiting to get vaccinated behind the Americans, were also taking it. Were getting the vaccines in the summer of 2021, when like, the death numbers in India were so high, like it was just so high. And so like, that is, like, a place I would like to go. Because it is like, it feels very deeply personal to me, it feels like my structures chose my survival over theirs. And like, that's a shitty feeling. So thinking both, like very aware that there's an absence of South Asians. In the archive, I collected thinking, diasporically, but also like the importance of someone getting that really, really matters to me. Other absences, this isn't an absence, but it is a cheat sheet for those of you listening on how to find diversity. The

reason I am able to tag so many people that was for the LGBTQ+ collection is because I asked them, and like that's a freedom I have to do not just because I am queer, and but like, I also look really queer. So like, it might not feel the same to have someone else say like, do you identify as and I explained like this is because we have a special collection for it. But that, like also feels really connected to the, like 18th century part of me where I'm like, okay, so many of you, so many, like, I can't have this many historical actors and not have so many of you. And we are in a world where it's more socially acceptable to ask, so I just asked. So I think I'll continue to sort of like, go find there. I think I don't know that an archive can feel like it has enough trans people. I don't know that an archive feels like it could have enough queer people of color.

**Kit Heintzman** 47:49

So those don't feel like absences, but they do feel like there's always more good work to be done. Those are those are the ones that like sort of those are the ones that sit with my mind most often. I guess.

**Angelica Ramos** 48:05

I'm coming up to my last two questions. Are you proud of your collection, and what are your hopes for its future?

**Kit Heintzman** 48:17

I am proud. I'm not sure that I know why. But I am. Once upon a time, circa 2010, I was listening to Ann Fausto Sterling give a talk. And she was asked about why she spent so much time writing about these white British colonists. And she said that she, what I remember of her saying, is that she wanted to tell the history of every one of her actors with the same justice that she hoped that someone would tell her history. And I hope that historians who feel challenged and uncomfortable with pieces of these actors commit themselves to doing justice to them in the telling of those stories. I hope people who listen to them are moved. I hope that, I want like that, next generations to have more people in the archives that look like them, like, I feel like in my short lived academic career in the US, I did see in the grad student population, increasing diversity. And like, I want that to continue and grow. And I want them to see themselves and like get to do like, like amazing things with that. I want people to find like, beauty and connection. I meant to fact check this. So this is a reference to Sarah Silverman. And it may or may not be something that's true. But somewhere, so Sarah Silverman was hosting the Daily Show now that the Daily Show has been given up by Trevor Noah, and is on a rotation for comedians. And she throws some stat that said something like between 10 and 20% of Americans Republicans in demographics believe the world would be a better place if about half of the other side just died. And I don't know that that's a real stat. I know a comedian said it. In a in a, like comedic news with an asterix television show, but I think whether or not it's a real stat, I think there is like something that kind of like resonates even if like people not in like a kind of like coherent like at all times do I wish but like, Do you sometimes wish the people who hated you just didn't exist? Probably. And like that, like that, like that feeling is real. And I want people to listen to people very different from them. And find something in them that they connect with. Because like like one of the like, common themes that comes up in the interview. And one of the talking points of our moment is how divisive everything is like none of us can indure one another's existence anymore. We're all so like, quick to decide on someone's total value based on such a small piece, like such small pieces of information. So I hope people like find that and I hope you listen to the interviews in full and don't just cherry pick. I have very strong feelings about this. And because you can't do the like full personhood part if you just like, fast forward to the part where they're talking about whether or not they got vaccinated, which is not the sum totality of their personhood.

**Angelica Ramos** 53:10

And this is my last question, one that is my favorite of your questions. Oh, well, first of all, thanks for thanks for reminding me that I didn't give you the space to introduce yourself. I just introduced you for you.

**Kit Heintzman** 53:26

That's great.

**Angelica Ramos** 53:26

So it kind of goes hand in hand. Is there anything I have not made space for that you would like to talk about? I would absolutely love to give you space to do that now.

**Kit Heintzman** 53:46

Yeah, I think I'm just gonna quote a bunch of my interviewees who I don't like I can't remember because the answer is so vague but it's just like no I think we talked about a lot of things were pretty good.

**Erin Craft** 53:58

I actually have a question. This is Erin Craft and you also have my permission. What did you learn about yourself? Any good historian learned something about themselves as they're doing their work

**Kit Heintzman** 54:08

Um some of these interviews tested my compassion and I knew that would be the case, and I feel pretty good about those tests and where they've ended up um I, I learned I could cold call people like, which was just not a skill I knew I had. Um, I'm, I'm both shy and not shy. But cold calling felt like very scary. And so I learned that that's the thing I can do. I had, I had to do a lot of learning how to live with that when you cold call people. Some people will be very honored that you notice them. And some people will be very injured, that you dared to ask them for something. And a part of why cold calling is so scary for me is that second one, like I don't want someone to get this email from me and have this like, oh, yet another in my moment in my life or someone just trying to extract something from me for free. I don't get anything like this is a horrible moment. This is another like, like, I don't, I don't want to be another force of a reminder of oppression and like a cause of injury. And that is a risk and sometimes it happens sometimes someone writes me back and very angry that I have reached out to them. And I have learned that I can hold that and what is overwhelmingly more often an expression of gratitude.

**Angelica Ramos** 56:50

Thank you so much for your time.