

Transcript of Interview with Peter Brooks by Kit Heintzman

Interviewee: Peter Brooks

Interviewer: Kit Heintzman

Date: 08/16/2020

Location (Interviewee): Havre de Grace, Maryland

Location (Interviewer):

Transcribed By: Angelica S Ramos

Some of the things we discussed include:

Father fighting in WWII. Teaching a class for stress reduction. First having health insurance in the 1970s; being in and out of health insurance; marriage and health insurance. Trauma from Trump's 2016 election. Financial stress and a strained relationship. Reinventing oneself during the pandemic; thinking about legacy. Comparisons between grandfather's work in newspapers and the current communication through Facebook. The pandemic gives excuses to blow things off. The pandemic bringing up historical trauma around disease among Indigenous communities; 9/11 and historical trauma; AIDS starting in Africa. Feeling like one will be a target of terrorist threat. Visiting the nursery and psych wards at hospitals. Vaccination resistance; healthcare and social economic status. Family members choosing to die at home rather than in hospital. Son going through high school during the pandemic; difficulties engaging in masculine bonding; taking on a fatherly position with young people. Racism and the murder of children: unmarked children's graves at Residential Boarding schools; Black babies used as alligator bait. The ongoing genocide of Black people. Clarence Thomas ruling on the Cheyenne River Sioux. The abolition of currency. Platonic touch. Contemporary intertribal fighting. Zoonotics and domesticated animal; human-animal relationships and disease. Telling the story of bat, frog, and spider; thinking about bats during the pandemic. Media giving a platform to "insane" people; Trump ratings and entertainment. Sensational trauma; rape fantasies.

Kit Heintzman 00:00

Hello, would you please state your name, the date, the time and your location?

Peter Brooks 00:05

Peter Brooks, August 16 2020 to 8:26pm. I'm in Havre de Grace, Maryland.

Kit Heintzman 00:18

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

Peter Brooks 00:27

Yes.

Kit Heintzman 00:29

Thank you so much for being here today. Would you just start by introducing yourself to anyone who might find themselves listening? What would you want them to know about you?

Peter Brooks 00:37

Oh, wow. Let's see. My name is Peter Brooks, I was born in Washington DC. And, you know, was, was very fortunate to be born into a good family. My grandfather was extremely famous. So I had the privilege of getting a really good education growing up, and, you know, different opportunities and stuff. But I consider myself a helper, and a visionary, and, you know, activist, you know, spiritual person. And I just, yeah, try to help out when I can. What master's degree are from New York University, undergraduate from McDaniel College. And, you know, it the, well, we'll deal with the pandemic later, I guess. But I used to be a college professor for many years and was a filmmaker as well. And now I teach a class and stress reduction for veterans, here in Maryland, pretty much work for the state. Helping people to chill out. So.

Kit Heintzman 01:20

Tell me a story about your life during the pandemic?

Peter Brooks 02:11

Well, you know, it was, it was a confluence of many difficult things happening. You know, my son was in high school. We were, were very, very traumatized by the election of Donald Trump, we just couldn't believe the American people would do that. And they did and sustained it for some time. So that was, that was a very difficult thing for us. And I was working in a, in a really dead end job. And of course, with no money, your marriage is always strained. And it was in senior living, I was a temporary worker. And I remember, you know, before the pandemic, one of my co workers had said, you know, like, what are you doing here, you know, and it really just struck me, because I didn't know what I was doing there. I mean, you know, the economy was crashing, it was really hard for, for people of color. You always, I always really wanted to do something great with my life. But it seemed like working a corporate job, you're not going to get a chance to do that. It's about you know, other people having that opportunity. But I always felt I had so much to share. So, you know, I was working in this clerical job when the pandemic hit, and it was in senior living. And I remember at the time the CPAC conference was going on. And some of the executives that I worked closely with had been to that conference. And sounded to me, like, you know, his voice was changing, like, he may have been sick. So I was panicked. I thought I really, I had been exposed to it. I didn't know what that meant, and everything that goes along with it. I thought it was you know, highly contagious. It was like the movie, you know, where the people are on the docks, and they're all getting sick and turning into something or whatever. And so I had said to my family, that I needed to probably isolate myself, because I felt I had been exposed. And I don't know, I just never went back to work after that. You know, just I don't know whether it was the way that the job handled it. You know, I thought, I guess they did a good job. But they were getting frustrated with me because I was getting so incredibly bored at the job. So that was really helpful. And what happened was I use the pandemic to kind of reinvent myself and do more of the things that I wanted to do. Because, you know, I was confronted with the idea that, wow, if I die, who's going to take care of these people, what's going to be my legacy? You know, how will I be remembered? What will what will I have accomplished, and so on? I started to take those questions really seriously. And I knew that you know, you know, sitting around pushing papers, or, in this case pushing Excel files, or what have you, you know, wasn't gonna get you anywhere I needed to be out and, you know, use my energy and feel like I was making a difference and doing important work and something significant. And so it wasn't affording me that opportunity. And then I knew also if I was because I'm a kind of a bold person. So if I was going to do some kind of activism or something, you know, it was, it was a good chance, I was gonna get in trouble. I didn't know how far you know, I was, we were extremely fortunate that the Trump and, and the right wing, and maybe it's not true that they were not that organized, because it would have been really easy to find me, you know, as a very strong anti Trump left person, I

was constantly, you know, communicating information about that I see myself, my stepfather was a newspaper publisher, it really had a big impact on me, especially when Facebook came out, because it was like, this was that man's dream, this was my dad's dream, you know, cuz we putting out the paper man, it was so much work, you know, like three o'clock in the morning waiting for the color ads to come down and stuffing them in the paper and running them into the car, delivering them out to the places they had to go, and everybody running as fast as they can, finding people to get in there and do the job. And oh, my gosh, laying out a paper and the reporters and how many words and do have a photograph. And I mean, it's just so many things where, you know, coming together, it was a huge operation about, I guess, a sixth floor building, and all six floors, were just running the newspaper, including the printing press, which was, you know, huge, loud monstrosity. So, compared to how clean Facebook is, and efficient, and how you can reach specific audiences and things like that, that would have been his dream come true, I think he would have been horrified by the attention span. But other than that, and so I began to see that too. And I thought, you know, this is my generation, this is my time, Facebook is what my, you know, people came up with, or what's the most popular thing right now. So, you know, I'm going to leverage that it's, it's, you know, if you're, if you're going up in these different areas, like my dad fought in World War Two, and that was just his era. And he did, he volunteered. And he did that just because that's what he felt, you know, his generation was responsible for doing. So that was what mine was mine was to try to leverage Facebook in order to change the world. And I remember back then, before, just before the pandemic, I was trying to organize like Saturday classes. At the time, they were like, for business owners and marketing and stuff like that. And it was even then it was really hard to get people to show up to class. Of course, I was charging tuition at all, but But I think, you know, one of the things that pandemic did do is it, it's sort of, we all I think maybe maybe it's just me, but we all have a certain anxiety or fear about going to an event or social event. And I think we're all like halfway driving, they're like, why am I doing this, I really don't want to go I'd rather just go back, go back and watch TV or, or sit in bed or do Facebook. And I think in some ways, the pandemic has really exacerbated that. People are now less, you know, they have way more excuses to blow stuff off. You know, and they're legitimate, you know, my throat, so I have a sore throat, you know, and so, yeah, stay away, don't come, you know, and, you know, for an event planner, person with interested in social change. That's absolutely horrific. I mean, we need numbers, you know, when we do these things. So, yeah, so that's kind of my my pandemic story. I mean, it brought up a lot of historical trauma, around disease. I mean, I'm fully aware that so much of the Native American population died as a result of disease. And then just culture shock. And culture shock always gets me to you know, people are just like this meeting, I left people are just so snipey towards each other and trying to prove that they're smarter than someone else or that someone else has made a mistake or, or that they haven't thought this through all the way. And I thought it through and I just heard about it, you know, and you didn't think of this. And so that is always been really, really painful to me. And then you know, Even as a child, like when people when you grow up and you know, someone says, oh gosh, I just love cheddar cheese, and then some insurances. I can't. And that stuff is awful. It just like your feelings are so like, wow, how could someone feel that way about cheddar cheese, you know. And of course, that happens a lot in the arts and stuff too. But it's even worse online. And with the, you know, the zoom and the emails and stuff like that, that there hasn't been those social, like boundaries and lubricants have not really fully developed yet. of, you know, etiquette, and you know, what's right, and compassion and empathy. I think there are a lot harder in zoom and with the email and the technology and Facebook and stuff, you know, you can, you can just say stuff, the fate on Facebook is flames and all and nobody cares, because you're, you know, you're gone anyway or whatever. So because it is, it's like a flowing stream, it just, things just flow right by on Facebook. It's like watching a water. Waterfall. So, so yeah, that's pretty much my pandemic story in a roundabout way.

Kit Heintzman 11:24

Do you remember when you first heard about COVID-19?

Peter Brooks 11:29

Yeah, I was, I was in the office, I was on the computer, I was obsessed with finding out more information. I remember I probably called my brother, or my mother, you know, to talk about it. And, you know, I just I, I believed the hype. And you know, looking back, it's, it's an interesting phenomenon, how the news can, you know, just by the ubiquitous nature of it, it's, um, the presence can drive people to a state of panic. Versus things we don't know. You know, I often cite that my father moved into this area around the Great Depression in the middle Atlantic states, Maryland, Washington and stuff. And at the time, we never, he never heard of a tornado ever, ever. And it wasn't until, you know, the 70s that the first or really the 80s. Yeah, it was the, it was the 80s I think I had graduated, so probably 88 or so that we had a tornado in our area. And then all of a sudden, there seemed to be a lot of them. And so, you know, I would always say, Well, isn't this indicative of where we're going to? Now? No, it's communications, you know, tornadoes were hit before nobody knew. So I never, you know, I never quite went for that. I think that, you know, it was indicative, but, you know, the global communications, as we know, more, you know, we become more aware of the danger. And so, we're just a lot more frightened, you know, if a tornado is in your neighborhood, and of course, the news announces that you're in a state of panic, you know, should we go downstairs? Do we have the lights and data, but if there is no Facebook, if there is no news or radio, it's something and it tornadoes in your area, you're oblivious to it, you know, so the knowledge and getting information at all, can really manipulate people's emotions. And I think that happened a lot to me during COVID. Because like I said, when I first heard of it, I just remember being in the state of panic. And then when I, you know, when I lost my job, I was just trying to take sick leave off just to try to get my head straight. Because, you know, it was really similar to 911 when it took place. You know, it took me about a week before I could go back to work after 911 I was just traumatized. Because I it, maybe it was historical trauma, you know, from being part Native American part African American, part Jewish, you know, but this idea of diseases and they're not understood, and they wipe out large parts of the population and stuff. It seems really, really familiar to me. And then how so many of the diseases start in Africa, like AIDS, and, and then you see where people say later, yeah, we, we deliberately tried to get people sick with AIDS to reduce the population, you know, in places like South Africa and stuff. So, you wonder, you know, if these conspiracies are, if these things are planned, or whatever, I mean, certainly, I think, you know, COVID had a huge devastating impact on the Trump presidency. I think he probably would have been reelected if it weren't for COVID. So, yeah, it's It was, it was just a very difficult time I was sitting in an office was all by myself, for most of the day, it was one of those kinds of jobs, you know, I was looking over a fleet of vehicles that were located all over the United States and making sure they were getting inspected, and they were their car gas cards were being taken care of, and all that kind of, you know, small, detailed stuff that goes with logistics. And, and I remember, yeah, I don't know how I found out about it first may have been probably CNN, or Huffington Post or something that reported that this disease was coming out. And then I remember the President saying that it wasn't going to be a big deal. But then there were cases being reported. And, you know, it was still kind of a casual thing. But then when they said, CPAC, and then we were in the office, and they were just like, oh, such and such was at CPAC. And so it's such and such. And, and that was a deliberate infection, incident, like a terrorist incident at CPAC. So I thought, Wow, I'm in with these people, I'm probably going to be a target. You know, if this is a, a covert action, which, you know, you have to be prepared for that didn't happen until January 6, but I think a pandemic or a, you know, a national crisis, a traumatic event is a great time to follow up against the population with anything that you have planned to do. So it was really was really, really disconcerting. And I always think that we're not really prepared for, for these things. You know, as a

people, like, we're not really looking out for each other, and, you know, thinking ahead for, for what's needed. And also, I don't know.

Kit Heintzman 16:58

To the extent that you're comfortable sharing, would you say something about your experiences with health and healthcare infrastructure, pre pandemic?

Peter Brooks 17:12

I remember, when I first got health insurance, I was so proud, I actually, you know, intentionally would use it just because they were like, people looking after me and caring about me and stuff. And, and it was such a different era in the 70s, there wasn't as much panic over all in the society. And I remember, you know, as I was growing older, they started to crack down on that, they said, people were abusing emergency rooms, and they wanted to discourage them from using emergency rooms. I remember when they first started charging for an ambulance ride. And people were just shocked. They were so beside themselves. They thought it was like, the government's job to try to look after them, you know, and ambulance companies and hospitals were like, now you're gonna pay 150 bucks, at least to come to the hospital, you know, we gotta charge. And let's see pre pandemic. I was in and out of health insurance. Sometimes I had it as an adult, sometimes I didn't. There's always this sense of panic when you don't have it. I've gotten into marriages, just so that women could have health insurance. And so it was, it was always a big deal. It was always something that had to be manipulated. It was a it's a tremendous source of insecurity. I remember times in my life seriously looking at moving to Canada, or someplace like that, just so I could get health insurance. So I would have that sense of security that if I get sick, you know, I would be looked after and stuff. So without health insurance, and given my race and status and economic and all that. I knew if I had COVID There was just no chance I was not going to end up you know, feet first. I did have a doctor who I really liked who cared about me and stuff. Pre COVID I've kind of lost him since then. Just because of the health insurance thing. He is the type of guy who would probably see me even if I didn't have insurance, maybe I don't know. But yet pre I would get into it and get out of it health insurance or health care. I have a hard time taking pills, you know, even if they tell me like I probably should be taking pills now. I can't remember, you know, did I take it already? You know, it's just tough for me. And let's see. So I worked in the healthcare industry for a while because I'm the type of person who really cares about people. So that type of work was really fun for me. I thought you know, what am I favorite things to do at work, because I had like one of those badges I could get in anywhere was to go to sort of nursery, you know, and just hanging out. But I also would go to the psych ward, and people were shocked. They were like, no one ever goes to the psych ward don't ever go up there again. It was pretty scary. But I was the grant writer for the hospital. So I was like, hey, look, I got to see everything, I gotta find out potentials for funding here. But really, I just wanted to see what it was like. And then. And so I saw health care, you know, from both sides, I also ran a nonprofit that certified interior designers who wanted to work in healthcare, you know, they had to take a test and all that kind of stuff. So I saw it from both ways, it's, I've always been struck by the idea that it's a money making enterprise. And I guess everything has to be in a capitalist environment. But it just really seems at odds, you know, because, you know, I knew that as people get end of life, they put so much money and, you know, effort into them. And there's not much left, you know, mean, there's no point. But yeah, in your there's like a chart that shows how much money is spent for your hospital space stay. And the sooner you're about to die, the number just keeps going up and up and up and up. Because they're doing all this stuff to keep you alive. But it's like, you know, so I worked with an organization called the quarry, which was the patient centered outcomes research group. And that that was that idea that patients should choose their outcomes. And so I was really happy to be a part of that, because it was a radical thing. I was also a part in

interior design of what was called playing tree, playing tree was a highly innovative movement. You know, instead of it was it was breaking down classism, it was kind of a Marxist approach to the art architecture industry. With plain tree, instead of just hiring a professional architect or an interior designer, you would go and ask the people like an environmental services, and the people who do the transportation of beds and stuff and you know, your blue botanists, what do you think this place should look like? And that was the first time that ever happened that you would put a person at the lowest level in the healthcare industry at the same level as a major surgeon or something like that. And there were so many innovations that came out from playing tree. And so I was a part of that as well. So I was always, you know, involved in this sort of activism, pro people, pro patient type of perspective, even before the pandemic. And also, you know, kind of viewing it as my job to, to question and to, how would you say, uncover the things that people wanted to ignore? And I remember when I was in pakora, you know, and I was just a low, super low staff member. But I would argue with the board, and these guys were only put in like a anonymous thing, like somebody would from the internet, they have this call for responses. And I will put in these really deep responses, because I was listening to the board meetings and stuff. And, you know, the one thing that was that was a big deal was I felt that they should really look at people who object to the healthcare industry. And at the time, pre pandemic, the big thing, especially precautionary were the immunizations, you know, that all these Hollywood stars, were saying that, Oh, well, immunizations cause autism and data data. And so I was saying, you know, kind of typically that we can't, as a healthcare industry, you know, we can't prescribe just prescribe stuff without actually building a sense of trust, or like, or accountability. You know, what I mean, to the general public, because they're not buying it, even though you know, polio, should have been 100%, rather eradicated. Here, it's back again, because there's this resistance. Just because you guys wear white coats. You know what I mean? And you golf every weekend, and you drive BMWs and Maseratis, people are going to resist you because you have what they don't and they don't understand why. And so it's unfair, and they feel that you got that through manipulating them, and that everything you say is just a further minute Galatian and so I wanted to tackle that problem, how do we make getting your child immunized cool. Like, you know, something you look forward to or something. So, but they weren't interested, because he was actually found that also to fund things that were not addressed by hospitals and major medical institutions. So for example, if you a lot of people have diabetes, and so a lot of research goes into that, but they wouldn't look at like diabetes plus, schizophrenia, or depression, or, you know, some lupus, you know, or something. So, there was very little attention paid to that. And also, these exotic tropical diseases, were also funded through precautionary, it was meant to make up the gaps. And that was part of the Obama Care Plan. And I remember the day that the Supreme Court upheld Obamacare, because because it was 100%, Obamacare funding, I mean, just the idea that patients get to choose their outcomes is like Obamacare. And, man, we were all in the office, we were huddled around this TV, these guys were major doctors and physicians, I mean, I work with the head of NIH, and like vice presidents for Blue Cross Blue shield's and big, big companies, Xerox. I just can't even remember all of them, there were about 40 or 50 of them on our board. And, you know, they would fly to all these exotic places, and everything was just first class. And there we were all these super intellectuals and scientists and stuff from around the world. And our whole fate just rested on this, when you know what it was? Was it attacks or is it not attacks, and, wow, it was just a really, really intense moment.

Peter Brooks 26:56

And they were all so jubilant and everything, you know, when the Supreme Court did uphold Obamacare, but you know, the assault didn't stop and, and so, you know, when you have a party and a race of people and a history that says, hey, you know, this may be your country, but you really don't belong here. Health care is seen as part of that. And so, you're always wondering, is this person for me or against me first? And only they know it? And we

don't really know, you know, are they going to take me seriously or not? And I've had, you know, my cousin died from Mercer. You know, I've had instances, you know, in the healthcare industry, most of the people in my family, the men and stuff died at home, they didn't die in a hospital or something like that. And most of the time, that was choice, you know, I want to go, I don't want to stay here, I want to go home. And I've seen people die in hospitals and be miserable and alone and stuff like that. And I've seen, you know, people come out of major surgeries in med surg and stuff, you know, just miserable. Because they just don't understand how, first off how they got here, why they are here. And you know what happened? People like blindsided and accidents and stuff, and they still aren't communicative. But they just realized something terrible has happened in their lives. So yeah, I did get to see a lot. And I feel like, you know, I've always wondered, is health care for me? You know, is it for people like me, or is it for them? And so, you know, when, when the health care argument came around, it was absolutely true that, you know, health care is for people with money. The bottom line, you know, if you can't afford to go to the doctor's, if you can't afford the copay, they kick you out, you'd have to know. Yeah, that's the copay. It's do or die, buddy. That's it. So I noticed that I saw that and it's just, it's frightening. You know, because, like, I know, you know, this will be a bit off topic. But, you know, I believe that, you know, when Africans talk about slavery and reparations, I think the only reparation for slavery is the abolishment of currency, because currency is what caused slavery and currency is foreign, to the Americans. You know, so I don't see why that has to continue. You know, why do we need money? Really, you know, is it to control consumption? And can't we control consumption in other ways? So when you talk about people's lives and money, it just brings back that whole slavery thing. Well, how much is this book worth? You know, I'll start the bidding at \$25. Well, how much is this person's life worth? Well, we're not going to bring down his blood pressure or you know, whatever decisions they make. I think medicine is also it's incredible. It's inscrutable. I think when you have a person who had a big impact on my life like House, who, you know, I identified with him as like a typical. And this was a television program. It was very popular in America about us sort of irascible physician who was brilliant. And he would go around, just humiliating other people with his brilliance. And I just saw so much of that as being in my experience in the corporate world. You know, I have information you don't try to solve this problem. I'm gonna laugh at you looking like an idiot. And I knew the answer all along, aren't you stupid? And so that that was just the way I looked at the show. And so it because that was consistent with my experience in corporate America. So I felt like wow, if this is what their healers are, you know, this is how you have to be to be a healer, you have to be, you know, kind of irascible and superior and unmoving and unemotional and, you know, call it like, you see it and trust your, you know, trusting your gut, I guess, is good thing. But it just seemed like, wow, you know, this really can't be for me, you know, it's just so so unfamiliar. And that's, you know, that's the problem. I think that medicine, I'm sorry, I'm caught on pre pandemic, but looking at it from a designer, you know, when a person walks into a MRI room, it doesn't have to look that way, you know, what I mean? This big engine with the doughnut, and the bed and data, you know, it can be designed to look like a different experience. But medicine doesn't care that about that. And I think that's what terrifies people and kind of makes them sicker and stuff. And I remember this one guy had a heart attack. And when when we were like, holding hands around him and just kind of meditating and stuff, he was just kind of calm and everything. But as soon as the ambulance came, ripping open these things, and you could see he was tensed up by that. So yeah, we kind of have to, I guess, look at the experience in some ways, and how that affects the patient. So pre pandemic, that's what I was all about.

Kit Heintzman 32:43

Pre pandemic, staying in that time, what was your day to day looking like?

Peter Brooks 32:50

It was, you know, up at 6, 6:30, hittin, commuting to work, parking, working, coming coming home. I was also dealing with the demolition of my grandfather's house. So I was on the news and stuff a lot. And dealing with reporters, and then, you know, my son going through high school, and I just kind of, you know, missed the whole boat on that thing. And it was tense, because, you know, I was the type of person who was always wondering, why am I here? And then, of course, being told, as I, as I probe that question, and, and listen to people and think of strategic ways to, to put it out there without letting them know, that's what I was thinking, and that kind of thing. You know, and then getting responses. Oh, you're crazy. You're insane. Why can't you do this? You know, there's something wrong with you. I was hearing that so much in my life, Oh, that guy's a trip. He's insane. And then knowing, you know, not seeing many people like me, my dad would always say that when, when Facebook. It's not my stepfather, my real father. He'd say, Do you see anyone else posting that kind of stuff? And he had a point. No, you don't. So I was always really different. So I was always wondering, you know, I was always in and out of the psychiatric, you know what I mean thing. So I was always wondering if that were true, or if it was, again, a setup where people just didn't understand me, or if I was just one of those persons who was touched, you know, that people would never figure out or I would never figure out as well. You know, what this was all about, or why I was so different from the normal people. But I, you know, I really, really tried, I try to be an executive assistant. I tried to be a clerk. I tried to be a project manager. But I just couldn't do it. And so the conclusion from my family was, yeah, there's something wrong with you. So that was always a part of my, you know, of my day to day life wondering why I was here. What I was doing here? Was I living my potential. What if I died tomorrow? Is this it? And so that was a, I guess a lot that angst and stuff. And of course, you find meaning in relationships. And in looking at things in context, reading and writing, and being a part of our ways that those unanswerable questions are mitigated. And so I was also looking for opportunities to do that. To be a part of stuff.

Kit Heintzman 35:43

And what is your day to day look like when locked down started?

Peter Brooks 35:48

Wow. Yeah, everything had changed. I mean, the first thing we were doing was checking the news to see if anything new had developed, strategizing, if this happens, if that happens, can we do this? How do we do that? You know, shopping online, putting together a garden. And and trying to figure out is this? Is this going to be a new economy? How do we stay ahead of the curve? What are the trends that are happening? Can I meet those as they're emerging? But a huge, like I said, just kind of a sense of, of panic of constant, steady stress, or, or insecurity and anxiety. That was, you know, there's like a, I guess what I was trying to say, is pre pandemic, there was a level of stress or anxiety that you're under, and then it's, you know, doubled in, in the COVID. You're hearing all these things about Italy? And then are we going to be just like Italy? And then oh, no, the Chinese have kept it down. And oh, the Japanese have almost no coat, you know, and so, and then, you know, we're always looking at these things in the political context. And, you know, having these drone conversations about that. Was it a time to get closer to the family? Yes, it was. And that was really great. It was also a time to get all those honeydew projects done. I didn't do him. Because I was thinking, you know too much about my future. And, you know, that's another thing kind of exceptional about me, I really don't pay that much attention to the physical world around me, you know, if everything's a mess, where everything's clean, it's like, I'm kind of the same. Because I'm trying to see beyond that, you know, into into future into the future. And these things won't really matter, I think, so I don't pay them that much attention. And COVID had kind of exacerbated that. Because I had no excuse I had time to work on him. But I didn't. So again, I said, you know, I looked at it and said, Oh, yeah, the problem must be me. You know. So. So yeah, I started exploring artistic things, looking at my talent,

trying to figure out how to make it marketable assaulting, Facebook, and YouTube kind of all at once, getting into affiliate marketing, and things like that, trying to figure out a way to sustain myself without having to go into an office or be a corporate type person. So yeah, and I took a thing to become a contact tracer. I mean, it didn't, I don't know why it didn't follow through and why didn't follow had the job, but then they just dropped me at the last minute. So maybe they found something in my background. They looked at my Facebook page, I would have done it.

Kit Heintzman 39:01

What was it, what did you notice about your son going through high school, all of this was happening?

Peter Brooks 39:06

Wow, the incredible isolation man. I mean, just not going out for walks, being in his room all day. We got him a VR thing that he wanted. And it was just like, he was just gone, man. And I just didn't know how to reach him emotionally or anything. So it was really, really difficult. Most of my time was spent really just trying to get a read or a feel of where he was, and where he was going and what he was going to encounter and how I could prepare him for that. And it was just impossible. And then, you know, my wife and I didn't really agree We are on the way to raise him, you know, I was trying to be raised, like the way I was American, and she's from the Middle East, and they have a whole different way. And so, you know, I gave into her way and stuff, which was cool, because, you know, if she wasn't going to cooperate with mine, I wasn't going to, you know, fight the whole time. So. So that was always really difficult, constantly biting my nail, and all seeing and do stuff that I'm like, is gonna get you in trouble. So when you, you know, when you get in the real world, so, you know, that was also really difficult. We had a couple of cats who took on an enormous amount of importance in the house, and got a lot more attention as a result of COVID. But I just felt really, really bad. My childhood and all was the total opposite of haze. I went out, I did everything, I caught the bus by myself. My parents didn't know where I was, most of the time. I was just, you know, I own the city. Yeah, I knew all the neighborhoods and all that. But his was the total opposite. He just stated and, and formed these relationships and stuff online. And it was, wow, it was really, really, really scary. But you know, he, he made it through. So it was it was like he was in prison. It was like a prison sentence, you know, for young people. So that should be interesting. Because, you know, now as they become adults, they should be like, yeah, jailing and scare me. I live through COVID. I was also thinking of like, ways to commercially you know, maybe print t shirts. I survived COVID. What's next? I couldn't think of anything. But yeah, did stop going to school. He went, you know, went school virtually let himself kind of go grew his hair and all that stuff. It was like wild. It was wild.

Kit Heintzman 42:10

What's fatherhood meant to you over the last couple of years?

Peter Brooks 42:16

Well, for me, it's been trying, you know, to play the role of the provider and falling short. Consistently, it's been well, I mean, that's the truth. It's been, you know, it's, it's been kind of the old man on the mountain, you're, you're watching these things from far away. And there's not much you can do about it. And you just have to stay there. Keep yourself together and wait for the tribe to come to you. You know, as the old man on the mountain, because if you come down the mountain, everybody laughs at you look at the old man, he hadn't shaved Baba, blah, blah, blah. So you're never like, it's never a good idea. If you're the old man on the mountain to come down the mountain, you have to sit there all alone and wait for them to come to you. So that's kind of the way I've seen

fatherhood. I was never, I guess, by the choice of women I had and circumstances and stuff. I was never given like that much authority. Like I couldn't say, a I'm taking my boy to karate lessons where he's gonna learn to fly airplanes, or, you know, I we're gonna go scuba diving. The moms were always like, no, no, no, I can't do it. You can't. And we're gonna do this together, you know. And so I had never had like that real bonding thing. I mean, the one thing I had with my oldest child was I got him a rifle. And then it was like a BB gun thing. And it was like a man thing to do. And, and so, you know, we would go out and be together and stuff. But it was it was it was really hard. I mean, we, I think in my generation stuff, we were so so stressed by the economy. So stressed, I mean, we were just in the squeeze. The salaries were terrible. And I was a college professor working full time. And I had like, 100 and, I don't know, like, 60 students in my major at one point or seller 138, which was enormous for one full time faculty member. And I mean, they were distributed in all but my classes were full. Students would take my class, even if they didn't need it for their major, they just thought it was fascinating. So I was, I mean, I was really hustling, you know, reading, you know, hundreds of 100 papers or so a semester, you know, having that many students. So it was a tremendous amount of work and I was making like \$45,000 You know, which is like, above just above the poverty level. It was extraordinary. You know, as an adjunct I was making, you know, before I became a full time, it's like \$1,300 per course. And that's, you know, three months, three hours a week. It was it was, how could you ask that of a father, you know, or a mother or anyone. It's absolutely inhumane. And the way in which they did that, and it was like non negotiable Take it or leave it, we've got people waiting to fill your seats. You know, it was that sort of disorientation. It was, like, this doesn't seem familiar to me, this doesn't seem right. We're human beings and like, you know, the animals have this figured out a little bit better than we do. So that was that was, those were some things that really struck me, you know, about being fatherhood, because you you can, you know, some people are allowed to be fathers, they can have a son, the ski do, and they can have the vacation in Disney and take their family and stuff. And, and that's the way we view father, Dad took us to Disneyland. But for a lot of us, that is not, you know, that is just dressed on computer all night, you know, cursing, he's, he's upset because he didn't sell any tickets and blah, blah, blah. And, you know, the other thing that's also striking, like, with my family, man, if I, you know, if my grandfather had something, we all fell in line, period, you know, if he was going to do an event, we all bought ticket your grandfather is, or anybody in my family, your uncle is doing this, you're going, but now, man, and then, you know, they would say to us, well, your cousin such and such as in a beauty contest, vote for her, you know what I mean? We would all vote for her as a family. But now, it's like, if I try something, people are just my family, just not behind it. And I think that, to a certain extent, has to do with COVID pushing, you know, everybody and nice families apart, even as they're the nuclear family seems to be a little bit closer. But, you know, we were driving each other crazy before COVID. So COVID Wouldn't be the panacea that would, you know, help us solve that. So that, you know, it's everything, again, being kind of exacerbated, and the tensions rising and having no real tools or apparatus to deal with them. Is it was really, really hard. So, yeah, I, I and now it's funny. I mean, I look for opportunities, you know, when I see younger people and stuff like that, you know, to try to take on a fatherly role for them. And for me, all you can do really, as a father is just, you know, warn them about the danger, try to exemplify the discipline and the values that you want them to have. But a lot of it's on their own. And so, yeah, with the young people, I see, I tried to warn them of the dangers now. Some of them get really, really upset about it. But I feel like I, I fall into a father stranger type of role a lot. I like to project myself that way, I like to be especially helpful to young people, because I have so many shortcomings with the young people I developed. And so that's sort of how how fatherhood. Yeah.

Kit Heintzman 48:45

I'd love to hear anything you'd like to share about getting closer to your cats.

Peter Brooks 48:50

Oh, wow. Well, you know, for me, I'm always studying cats for their personality. What are they thinking? And why does this seem and looking at their bodies and stuff and why the things they do, you know, seemed comfortable for them. And then of course, I think humans get a lot of pleasure out of being creative and thinking about you know, ways in which to challenge or whatever the cat's meow, I was always I have one cat that loves boxes. So I'm always saving boxes. And of course, that drives my wife crazy. And I just love seeing which boxes the cat likes, and which doesn't. And then just to see it in the box is just, you know, it's really uplifting to me. And so I guess I became a little bit more interested in cat stories. There was one cat story of that was a picture of a cat sitting defiantly amongst the rubble on a Russian building that they had bombed and stuff. And it was like, Yeah, coming to get me, you know, give me your worst or whatever. That was one thing I remember that was like post COVID and in the war and stuff, but But yeah, we, we gave them a lot more attention we it's kind of, you know, the day got more jealous I mean the cats really come in my room much at all but but they were like No, I'm just gonna sleep mate No, you know, so there was all that. And then you know we really adopted their their pacing to a certain extent of this sort of slow life you're here all day, no big deal, you know, which was very different from what time is it separate the art I gotta go. So, yeah

Kit Heintzman 50:53

2020 had so much going on, that wasn't just the pandemic, you could say the same for 2021. And you could say the same for now. I'm wondering what some of the other social and political issues have been on your mind over this period of time?

Peter Brooks 51:08

Right off the bat, you know, the children when they found in the boarding schools as they started to find the unmarked graves. That was really startling to me. And, you know, it confirmed so much. I think it was an opportunity to kind of confirm so much of my own family's history, you know, which is shrouded in mystery. And it's no wonder because if people would take children and murder them, and then bury him and not tell anyone. Yeah, they don't really, you know what I mean, you're, you're either useful to me or you're not. And that's the bottom line. And if people would take babies and use them for alligator bait, like they did, you know, to that story, they would take the black babies by the water and put them in a little pen, and the babies would be up there at night crying. And so the alligators would come up to eat the babies, and they would kill the alligators, they would use them for bait. And so there's all these postcards and stuff from the south of these alligator babies, you have to look it up. So yeah, you're always wondering, wow, well, they seem so nice. They seem very civil, you know, they seem rational and clean and, and they put the noose on and all and that's very sophisticated. And when they put the news on, they sound very calm and, you know, rational and you think you can relate to them. And then you see this history, and you're wondering, wow, well, how does that jibe with these people that I see every day? So that, you know, that's always a social thing. And that and that babies thing, you know, brings that out again, I think the murdered and missing women of native culture, native countries is really major. I mean, our and you know, and that, to me in thinking about it in the events of the past two years. I mean, this is really what happened, you know, when the Europeans came here, first off, they didn't bring many women. But second, when they saw the way that native people treated women, they thought we were like, pussies, you know what I mean, we were pansies. You don't treat women that way. You know what I mean? That was sort of the lesson of it. And so it was that that humiliation because we still intrinsically I feel like, you know, this is what differentiates us. We intrinsically have as Native people, I think, some Native people, a proclivity towards female leadership, it feels

more comfortable. But that is not the case. That is the total opposite. I think, you know, the the election of Hillary Clinton, it's like a no brainer, you know what I mean? But then it didn't happen. And so get it pointed you out? Do you belong here? You know what I mean? Do you all these people think differently from you? And so that's, you know, that's kind of a frightening prospect, but, but it's one you deal with every single day, every day, there's nothing that happens, just about whether it's the Bitcoin crash or anything, where you're wondering, like, am I a part of this? Do I have a role in any of this? Do I, you know, I mean, is my presence here making a difference is that have any real meaning in the context of, you know, all of these things? So I don't know. I mean, oh, Leonard Peltier has not been released. Black people. I mean, they, we had, you know, I wasn't really sure very far from the, from the riots in Baltimore, oh, we're gonna fix this, we're going to change it, nothing has changed, nothing has changed. And I'm gonna tell you the most frightening thing really to me, you know, in terms of social movements and all and, and this comes from Baltimore when I was a kid, I grew up in Washington. And we would go to Baltimore because we have family there all the time, at least twice a month for the weekend, you know, spend the night Bagua Baltimore, was down on Moser Street in Sandtown. Winchester. And that was it. Man, when I was a kid, you'd walk the streets of Baltimore, you could hear the Orioles game echoing from one building to another. People would be hanging out their windows, just watching the cars go by waving to each other having conversations. They had these windows that were about, you know, the, the height of a person about six feet up, and the person in the building would would lean down and talk and, you know, exchange stuff. There were a rappers walk in the streets with the horses, and they were singing and stuff. And, man, it was just a lively place. There were people everywhere, people everywhere. Hardly a corner was not populated. Today, it looks like Syria, it looks like a war zone. The buildings don't have roofs and they've collapsed from within the area is absolutely desolate. I mean, our old house, it looks like somebody bombed it. It really does. And it's just like, block after block. And you wonder where have all the people gone? And somebody says, Oh, they moved to the suburbs. You know, you can say that. But still, it really looks like genocide, it really looks like a planned extermination. And it's happening, like right in front of our eyes, right? during my lifetime. Black people, they're never fit, you know, I mean, there may be a few and stuff, but they're gonna dilute them until they're not distinguishable anymore. Where there there the color of his skin just become sort of a coincidence, you know, like Clarence Thomas, you know, is sort of a prime example. And he's always been a really problematic social figure. For me. You know, I was, I just happened to be in Cheyenne River with the Sioux Tribe, at the time that the ruling went down, which he wrote, which stated that the tribe had no access to commercial activity on the state park or federal lands at all, which was, you know, devastating to the Cheyenne River Sioux. Because if you're driving through South Dakota, you don't see any signs that say, Cheyenne River Reservation 20 miles, you'll see Eddie that you just drive and drive and all sudden you come across this huge ghetto comes out of nowhere in the middle of nowhere. Oh, his poverty everywhere. And that's the reservation. And then they were saying, Well, you know, we've got this park here. And everybody goes to I guess, the Missouri River. And everybody goes in the tribe was arguing, well, let us have a commercial thing there. And the state was saying, No, you can't take money because if you get money, you won't charge taxes. And so there was this huge, you know, thing, it won't be competitive for the people who live in South Dakota or something. I don't know. But the Supreme Court agreed. And that was Clarence Thomas. And I was just so mad and, and humiliated by so yeah, it's, I think, you know, as a male, you're constantly you're constantly wondering about that. What's your role? How can you give in the best way? How can you present yourself in a way that you don't scare people all the time? You know, all these kinds of sort of social things. I mean, I was really struck by somebody like Bill Cosby, you know, I never knew that's what men did you know, they, they drugged women and then had sex with and then you sit there and wonder well, what was that what I was supposed to be doing? You know, with Trump says grab them by the pussy, I would never think of saying something like that. But then I wonder, wow, if I had just done that, you know, if I followed his advice, I

probably have a wife like this one Melania or something. But look what I got instead, I'm all alone. You know what I mean? So I don't know. It's it's always that you know, that kind of divide and stuff. And then, you know, now we've got yet another sex emerging or an ambiguous you know, people making different choices as regarding their natural birth and stuff. Which I think is fine, you know, I really it's not my business but um, It adds complexity to the entire question because we still, you know, as men, we still haven't really we're not hunting anymore. We're not gathering anymore. We're not really needed to contribute, you know, in such numbers, and so there should perhaps be less of us. And, you know, those who are here, you know, as a rule for for preserving our natural resources, if you will, but I don't know that's getting crazy talk, but carry on. rambling on.

Kit Heintzman 1:00:34

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

Peter Brooks 1:00:41

Well, you know, the big part of that word is heal. And so healing to me starts with listening. So health is then having the capacity to hold space for others, I think is is when you're healthy. When you're not healthy, you don't have that capacity, and someone has to hold space for you. Sorry, if it was brief, I'm going to stop rambling and get myself in trouble. Gosh.

Kit Heintzman 1:01:21

What are some of the things you want for your own health and for the health of people around you?

Peter Brooks 1:01:27

Well, obviously, I mean, I want to be able to give to others. And I want to support their well being I want to support anything, I think healthy is optimistic. Is is growing, is vibrating is thriving. These are kind of synonyms with with healthiness, but the objective of being healthy, really, is to be able to serve others. And so that's what I view as, as what is health having that capacity with all those synonyms added.

Kit Heintzman 1:02:05

What do you think we would need to change as a culture so that most of us had that capacity to provide care for others so that we would have the version of health that you want?

Peter Brooks 1:02:16

Yeah, I should also say health is being disease free. But, you know, it takes a change in attitude, like I said, you know, if you want that you have to get rid of currency. It's just no way around it, you know, you have to live for something else. Other than money. You have to, you have to live for someone else, or for your kids or for your community, or for your nation, or for other people in other nations, the human race, we have to change the capacity. I mean, right now, I think what our focus is, is comfort and pleasure. And so Americans do anything to become comfortable, and they spend stupid amounts of money for their own pleasure. And cats are an example of that. I mean, how arrogant is it to have cats, pets, when your own species is starving to death, living in enormous pain, you know, not far from you. But we don't have an apparatus by which we can care for that person. That person represents a threat to us, they may take what we have and stuff. So there's all this complexity involved, which the cat obviously is not going to do. So that they're not threatening and we can, you know, show affection toward them? Well, that's the idea, we have to eliminate the threat that other people kind of present. And an even if it's competition, which, you know, no one can argue competition short makes us better and stuff. But if we view

that as, you know, the be all and end all that I'm smarter, I have more, I've got better as the outcome of competition, as opposed to community and social acknowledgement and recognition and privilege, as opposed to, you know, greed. You know, I think we just have to have a mindset, a shift where we're offering what is best of ourselves and that we create for others. It's not for ourselves. And I think that's what would be required for us to have that capacity.

Kit Heintzman 1:04:34

What does the word safety mean to you?

Peter Brooks 1:04:39

I think free from threat Yeah, it's it's having your your, your, your mind. Yet so comfortable, so relaxed, I would say or or, yeah, just the absence of threat that your mind feels no threat, wherever you are, that your, your basic needs are going to be met, your emotional needs are going to be met your psychological needs, your spiritual needs, and there's no potential for harm is sort of a safety, how I would define safety from the context of a human, you know, going through these things. So, yeah, when we have economic insecurity, we're not safe. So, yeah.

Kit Heintzman 1:05:40

There was such a narrow, tiny understanding of safety under the framework of COVID and protecting oneself from an illness. I'm wondering, in that teeny, tiny microcosm, what are some of the things that you were doing to keep yourself feeling safer?

Peter Brooks 1:05:56

Staying away from people, masking, washing hands, you know, the, the antibiotics, just trying to be careful, not hugging, not kissing, being aware of your surroundings and staying away from people. Were some of the moves that I made in terms of safety for COVID and leaving my workplace, you know, because I didn't feel safe there. Yeah. That's all I could think of, I think, you know, the big one is food and economic insecurity in terms of safety from COVID. And then you know, me having so many of the the danger things you know, the age the overweight and got it, and I never caught COVID everybody around me caught it. Just about but my mom and I, we never caught it. My wife got it. My son's got it. I don't know why your how washing hands and stuff like that. Gosh, I was in a place that fixes broken computer screens. And these guys are just sweeping glass and stuff like that. And I was like, guys, you have to wear a mask. Not because of COVID you're inhaling glass! Should they were like, oh, yeah, yeah. You know, what can you do? So I don't know.

Kit Heintzman 1:07:39

How's your relationship to touch changed?

Peter Brooks 1:07:43

Yeah, yes. I am starting to touch more again. Now after several years. So yes, it has changed. I think I, you know, can get intimate or have a feeling of intimacy with people that doesn't require touch. It's, it's exactly, you know, it's, it's increased with the feeling of touch. But yeah, just the other night, I started like a platonic touching, you know, with someone else, which is the first time I've done that, in years? I think. So, yeah, and I think, you know, platonic touch is extremely important for getting a sense for person and feeling empathy with them, and compassion and stuff. But I've really, really refrained from it since then. And, you know, it's again, it's something

that's not really looked upon, favorably in a corporate environment, you know, giving people hugs and stuff like that, or whatever. So, yeah, it's it has changed, definitely.

Kit Heintzman 1:08:50

How are you feeling about the immediate future?

Peter Brooks 1:08:54

It's very, very uncertain. We have this war, we have a political threat. We have an internal, you know, increase in racism and stuff like that, you know, we have an increase in the police state. God knows what's happened to the police. So I and then global warming, talk about another social issue that's really big, you know, our treatment of the environment and stuff. So in the short term, I feel like a great deal of uncertainty. I'm fortunate I want to grant and that's sustaining me right now. If that, you know, as that evolves or ends or whatever, it's even more uncertainty going forward of what's going to happen next. But right now, you know, we're treading water. Are we optimistic about the future? I'd say just cautiously optimistic. It's just extraordinary to me how greedy rich people are. I mean, we pay our bills and we pay our taxes. And yeah, it hurts. But you get over it, you know what I mean? But those guys just absolutely, positively refuse. And they don't even see us. I don't even know where they are. But they don't, they don't see us anymore. I think an enormous phenomenon is the ending of these shopping malls and stuff. And now rich people have absolutely no reason to be seen. And so that is kind of the marker of how wealthy you are, how much you on the street. How often are you seeing in public, you know, if you're really wealthy, you're not much, you may go to the Museum of Art, you know, or something like that for a gala, but you're not on the street walking or asking or buying. It's all. It's all just completely private. And yeah, they form their own world. But you look at all those guys like Carnegie and stuff, they really were so philanthropic and generous, and I guess gates, and those guys are the same, but there just isn't that level of optimism with them, like starting libraries, or even just keeping bookstores open God that makes such a big impact on a city, you know, just to have a bookstore. And the bookstores closed and rich people could be like, ah, let's just float this place, you know, for a couple more years to figure something out. But they won't do it. They won't do it for their own community. So it's very, very cautious optimism. Because we are not generous, we're just greedy.

Kit Heintzman 1:11:46

What are some of your hopes for a longer term future?

Peter Brooks 1:11:51

Obviously, you know, egalitarianism, I think female leadership, I think a return and a respect for the earth. I think people learning their true American history is something really important. I think I'm hopefully developing some of the language. You know, that makes me optimistic about that, you know, in telling people that look, you know, you're from this soil, you're going to end up in this soil, it's probably important to know how the soil works. You know, I mean, how the land works, how, how it was before you came here. And I think that's kind of resonating with people. And I think Americans do realize that they've lost a lot of education in Native American history. And I think they've made a lot up and they feel like they know more than they actually do. But we, we have to show them the complexity and the beauty, so that there is this sort of sentimentality and a desire to learn more. So yeah, it's just, I don't know, it's it's, it's, it's just creating more of a sense of caring and compassion, you know, to make to make these things happen. And it's hard and it just can't be compassionate in the health care. You know, I mean, just think about it, gosh, you bring these people over here, you work them as slaves for hundreds of years. And then when they're done, just leave them on the street to die. Who does that? You know what I mean? Who

does that you should at least reward your slaves. Gosh, you know, they did this for you, you know, you've got all this because of them. You should really, you know, should really consider treating them differently. You know, and another thing you know, it's so shocking, you know, Mexicans, people from the South. To my tribe, these are our elders. People in America treat them like they're invisible. They treat them like crap. I mean, they just ignore them and exploit them and, and feel as if they're there to serve and stuff like that. I perspective is the total opposite. But these are the wise people who can tell us things and have the history that we don't. And they've seen more than we have. And so yeah, but but now they've completely changed and, you know, that's in looking at colonialism. That's my one big thing is like, the native people like we are an African people totally unrecognizable, totally. to African American people are nothing like the people who got off the boat. Nothing big. I mean, they have the same skin color, but they're totally different. But the white people haven't changed much all that time is still pretty much the same. You know, so thank God we got some of them who see through that and help us but man without them it would be all would be lost because it would just be like a straight out race war. So yeah, we're really fortunate for people like you Kit. To keep us keep us alive was.

Kit Heintzman 1:15:32

When you've needed support over the last couple of years, who's supported you?

Peter Brooks 1:15:37

Um, my friends and most of them on Facebook, but my mom certainly and yeah, my, my family, my larger family, but I it's, it's funny, you know, not getting a lot of support I selfishly and greedily, like, supply myself with the things I need to support myself, and then ended up pushing humans away. And so, yeah, that's, that's sort of a challenge. And I always try to support each other's others. In fact, I mean, talk about what I do, I'm just a cheerleader. Really, I'm just a cheerleader. I just want to see you succeed. And I'm going to be so happy when you do and I want to do everything I can to make sure it happens. But dang now I really forgot where I was going with that. Tell me the question again.

Kit Heintzman 1:16:46

When you've needed support,

Peter Brooks 1:16:49

Oh, yeah, yeah. So that's the hard thing about being a cheerleader is like when you cheer for others, and then when you go out on the field, when they throw you out there in the game. It's like, well, who's cheering for me? You know what I mean? Because the sidelines are empty now. Because you're in the game. So yeah, that's it. And I think people who are like me are very, very sensitive to that, because I hear you know, from others. So support is really, really important. And that's the kind of thing I'm talking about in terms of changing stuff is, you know, sitting down and just really listening, you know, you talk about what is health health is a lot of listening to me. So, as well as being, you know, free from disease. But But that's not all, you know, that's only the only way we look at it. And I think it's more than that. So that's why it was colored my answer that way?

Kit Heintzman 1:17:43

And what are some of the ways that you've been taking care of yourself?

Peter Brooks 1:17:47

Kit, who is going to sit through this boring interview? Gosh.

Kit Heintzman 1:17:52

Someone is going to sit through it, and they are going to be so grateful that you took the time to share this, I promise you.

Peter Brooks 1:18:04

If they're still awake, alright.

Kit Heintzman 1:18:09

They're awake.

Peter Brooks 1:18:11

What are some of the things that I do to take care of myself? Take breaks, you know, when you feel like it, tried to trust your body, try to eat well as you can deliberately try to, to get yourself closer to your friends and do the things that you like to do. I mean, we have to do so much that we don't want to do or not interested in doing for various obligations and stuff. So you know, I think it's kind of important to take time on your own. Obviously, you know, meditate a lot of big meditator prayer. Just staying involved staying staying in the game, you know, even if the play is on the total opposite end of the field, and all you did was watch, you're still, you know, you're part of the team. So I think that's what's really, really, really important and, you know, you talk about other social movements, I mean, gosh, within the tribes, you know, this thing about, I'm an enrolled, I'm unenrolled. I'm this that the other, pushing people away is really extraordinary. And is again, the total opposite usually, you know, historically, in the 15th century and stuff, tribes welcomes people now they push them away. So yeah, that's another, you know, like social movement and thing that's really really disconcerting to me. So I don't know what else I do to take care of myself. I sing. Singing is really, really therapeutic. And I mean, I have this class that I had offered like 10 things people can do, you know, to take care of themselves everything from the guide Three mantra to the Omani Padme arm. Meditation, guided meditation, prayer, all kinds of things that you can do to try to take care of yourself, you know, spending for yourself for a while, not thinking too much, you know, about the future, and you know, what's going to happen and, and just trying to, you know, let's say, I feel a sense of health and safety and stuff, if I'm helping a lot of people. And so getting the opportunity to try to do that and figuring out what would help the most people, you know, Facebook doesn't help that much. Because, you know, the people don't pay attention and blah, blah, blah, but you're still you're putting it out there, and they can't deny that at least you did it, you know, at least you try. So that those are things that I think, you know, make me feel a little bit more healthier. Walking and, and watching the sunset and stuff like that.

Kit Heintzman 1:21:07

Do you think of this pandemic as a historic event?

Peter Brooks 1:21:10

Absolutely. Yes, it is a historic event. It affected the world. Hundreds of 1000s of people have died from it lives have been completely changed and uprooted you know, a war came in some way as a part of the pandemic, and that usually happens with pandemics. So yes, it is a very historic event. You know, it reminds us of our vulnerability. And it's historic, because we, as a scientific people, you know, accomplished so much so quickly. That was really extraordinary. Have things changed much? I I don't know. I don't know what caused it. I don't know what, what contributed to it. And I don't know what's being abated from that. And what's being learned

from that? You know, it all has to do with the relationship between animals and humans, all of these things like AIDS and swine flu and monkey pox and COVID. And, you know, and it's really interesting. So, Native Americans are especially vulnerable to the diseases of other people because they never domesticated animals. There were no chickens or cats or dogs, like we have them. No guinea pigs or anything like that. No mice, mice, I don't think are indigenous to the United States, or they may be rats or not. So it all has to do with with with the relationship to these animals. And so we take on different spirits and, and one thing that emerged from it, I did write a children's story, a short story that came from COVID. The story of the bat, the spider and frog. Do you want to hear it? Seriously?

Kit Heintzman 1:23:17

Yes.

Peter Brooks 1:23:20

So it's kind of a story about bullying really. So frog lived in a time where there were bazillions of insects. And frog could just sit on a lily pad and not do anything and insects would just come to him and he would eat. And it was like a buffet. So happy all day long could just sit there and relax. But frog had a major problem. You see, the fish were very jealous because frog had left the water. And they hated frog. They couldn't understand why frog was so special and they were confined to the water. And why frog thought it was so much better on land. When everybody knew the water was the place to be. So the fish would often gather and they would like tease frog and and you know, say stuff to him and they'd have these big parties and everything and they'd be like a frog. Look down here in the water. We're party and yet boy and frog would jump in the water to join the fish and they would all swim away as fast as they could. They really had no interest in befriending frog. They just wanted to get under frog skin. So frog decided, You know what I'm going to do? He says, no matter what these fish do or say I am going to pay them absolutely no attention whatsoever. However, and to this day, the fish can do whatever they want. But frog sits there as oblivious as if it's the man on the moon. But it wasn't so good for frogs friend, the bat. You see, they both enjoyed insects and they both talked about the insects that they and stuff like that but bat had a terrible, terrible problem. All the other birds had such beautiful songs and bat didn't really have such a pretty song. In fact, bad song was so ugly that the birds would laugh at bat about it and tease it all the time. And in fact, they didn't like the way the bat flew it was so erratic and uncoordinated whereas the birds are all so graceful and they pride themselves in their you know, ability to be graceful and so bad felt so bad that when ever bad would hear the birds talking chirping back would swear they were making fun of it. Even though the birds were talking like they could care less about bat you know, they teased them whatever they moved on, but it still really bothered bat and it was to the point where you know bat was in serious danger of not making it because bat would only come out at night. It was so afraid of all the other birds that it would wait for the birds to go to sleep and then it would come out and flies so that it wouldn't be humiliated by having to hear them chirping all day. But there weren't many insects out at night and so bad was having a really hard time well it was the total opposite for our friends spider for frogs friend spider. So frog says the spider Can't you help bat out a little bit but Spider was a strange fellow you know out of all of them the insects hated spider the most because Spider was absolutely merciless. You know there was so at the time there was so many insects spider could draw a web the size of a highway like 95 a major highway and catch all these insects and just for fun and spider just had this enormous appetite and had bazillions of kids. But the thing that the insects hated because they thought Spider was like an insect like them. But it really wasn't. Because see the insects they all work together. You know what I mean? They all love each other. They all love the humans. That's why the flies and mosquitoes fly around you because they love they think you are the most awesome thing ever. So the bat the frog went to spotted spider when spider

would catch an insect no matter whether it was a mom or dad or grandma or anything. They would beg spider please let me go Please let me go and spider would just laugh and tease them and capture them and make them go through a slow death Spider was the worst insects hated spider. But they felt that spider had no compassion until frog talked to Spider. And when frog talked to spider and told spider the predicament of their cousin, their fellow insect eater, the bat spider decided to show some compassion and decided that it would only do most of its work and will only work at night. And it would try to create its webs in the light so that bat could see where the insects were if they weren't in spiders net tried to make the bee somewhat reflective in order to help bat and even though spider had taken that step of compassion, the insects still rejected spider they agreed that spider moved closer to being an insect but he was not quite an insect yet but it is also true that because of spiders compassion to this day, we have bats as well as frogs because spider decided not to eat all the insects for himself because he could have and so that's the story of the spider the bat and the frog bye botched it a little bit because I'm tired but you can read it on Insight Timer. But yeah, it's it's a story about bullying. It's a story about greed. It's a story about of giving and becoming more compassionate and moving in that in that era area. How did it relate to COVID? Because, you know, I thought they said the COVID came from the bat. And so I thought I would do a story that showed some another side of bat, even as bat was killing all of these people, through its association with humans and COVID. Know. So it was meant to kind of humanize back a little bit. And help people in dealing with the pandemic, but the story of bat, spider and frog.

Kit Heintzman 1:30:38

I'm coming to the end of my questions, and they'll take a bit of a turn, I'm wondering, what do you think people in the sis, in the social sciences and humanities could be doing right now to help us understand, understand the human side of the pandemic?

Peter Brooks 1:30:56

You know, there's always context. There's always exposure, there's always the, the perspective of privilege. And so I think, you know, it's, there seem to be enough poets, and humanities scholars, and social scientists, but they just don't seem to have the support. You know, I don't think we've quite figured out how their role how they fit in to the larger scheme of things, because they're not making money, they're not being productive in that, in that traditional sense, they're not selling their bodies for labor power. So it's very, very hard on them, I can't, I can't really say what they need to be doing. I mean, I think everybody, everybody needs to be, you know, trying to do more listening. And that's all I can say, in terms of specific programs, I think that the thing that we rely on them to do is to give us the context, and to put these things in perspective for us. Because we're really worried about, you know, how we're going to feed our children and pay tuition, keep clothes on their back and stuff. And so you guys, as the humanities, have an artists and stuff, have the ability to worry about something else. And, and so that, that gives that relieves us of that, you know, concern or worry. And, gosh, that's all I can say. It's just leading us, you know, leading, leading, telling us the dangers of both sides of of the things that we do.

Kit Heintzman 1:32:40

Imagine speaking to a historian in the future, someone far enough from us that they have no lived experience of this moment, as they go forward with their projects to try and understand COVID-19 What would you tell them cannot be forgotten?

Peter Brooks 1:33:08

Well, I think, you know, the one thing you can't forget is that when people work together, things happen. Yeah, we had this pandemic, the scientific community all cooperated and work together. And they came up with a solution. That's all I can say. I mean, you know, the government's work together, everybody cooperated. And that's how it happened. And so many different countries contributed. And even the former slaves, I think it was an African woman, African American woman who actually came up with the final thing. So it one thing you can't forget, if you can get these people to come together, they can change the world. And they did because we were on a really, really bad trajectory until the vaccine came out. And that was like a miracle. That's the one thing you can't forget was how fast they came up with that vaccine. That was out of control. I mean, I thought it was gonna be like five or 10 years for the head of vaccine. They had to give it to you three or four times but a man and I mean, the one thing I can't forget his poor Connie, man, gosh, from COVID to pneumonia, and just an all I could do is sit on the other side of phones at Connick, please get some rest please. Just absolutely refused. So you can't forget that either people who, you know, the best never rest, you know, kinda but yeah, that's my big takeaway from it. Working together works.

Kit Heintzman 1:35:00

I want to thank you so very much for the generosity of your time and the kind thoughtfulness of your answers. Those are all of the questions I know how to ask at this moment. But I'm wondering if there's anything you'd like to share that my questions haven't made room for, please take some space to share it.

Peter Brooks 1:35:31

I can't think of anything. Well, I, I just feel right now. You know, we're, there's another pandemic, at least looking at it from an American perspective of an American. It, it, it's a disease, it has obvious symptoms. And you can certainly point to, you know, you can identify people who have it and are not healthy. But, yeah, I am really concerned, I think a lot of a lot of Americans. You just, it's not just Americans all over the world. I mean, gosh, it just just can't reason. They've lost the capacity to reason. It's, it's like a reptilian thing. And you, you create such a small world by just thinking of yourself, and, but that's what they've done. And they have a leader now. And as a result of that leader, they've all really come out. And it's shocking, it's your unexpected, how many people that were that really lacked that capacity? to reason and to extend themselves with their heart first, in compassion and love towards their own fellow human beings, that it became something else, it's this sort of childhood all for me, and how would everybody else? And that's a disease, it's a real, real disease. You saw it on January 6, you saw it on 911. You know, and, and I think, you know, we cause that in a way through our actions, obviously, but but now it's, it's like, unleashed, and it's hard to say where it's going to end. Yeah, I think a lot of people have really, really gone insane. And it's, it's exceptionally scary because the media takes them seriously. And gives them a platform, which is something they never did in the, you know, 20s through the 70s, the 80s, you know, when we had an era of mass communication, you would never give an insane person was irrational or, you know, emotional beyond what we consider the capacity of reason. We would we, the traditional media, people would consider you were embarrassing yourself. You didn't know what you were doing, you know, you've lost this idea of decorum and proper and politeness, you know, and adequate, or what's the right thing to do? And so the media would cut it off, they would think, yeah, we're not going to give this guy a platform because they've gone off the deep end. And I think the closest thing we had with Senator McCarthy, and it was amazing how, you know, in his case, it was sort of unavoidable. But the media journalists were constantly trying to contextualize him, especially Edward R. Murrow. But then today, you know, when you had Trump, it was, it was so good for business. You know, the ratings were so high with Trump. It was extraordinary Obama, and those guys are exceptionally boring compared to him. So you know, the proclivity for sensation, and the idea that urgency is associated with trauma. And so you

have this sensational trauma, sort of whipping around like a tornado, and it's just sucking everybody up. It's just people are just falling right into it, and just losing their minds. And, you know, you compare it with this incredible undercurrent of both narcissism and rape. You know, we are called culture that is built on rape. And I think it was, it's very powerful that all of us have rape fantasies in this culture, and so all of these things swirling around have coalesced into an elixir, if you will, or some type of compound that people are consuming. And once they consume it, man, they're gone. They don't care about anything anymore. And they don't even think rationally. I mean, gosh, these guys in the capitol have no eye to what they're doing. And I think it's so interesting, because if Native Americans had taken over the Capitol, it still be there. He'd be there for months, it would have been so coordinated, you know, but these guys were like, it was like a vacation. It was like a, I don't know, they just lost all context. Because you know, you can tell they're, on the one hand, they're pro police. And they even reinterpret the American flag to be pro police. And on the other, they kill police officers. It's just not rational, you know what I mean? And so I don't I have no idea how you deal with it? None. None. None. You know, the other day, my TA was asking me, so you with this class teaching stress reduction techniques, how are you assaulting, you know, the white male patriarchy? And I'm like, I don't know, I don't know, all I can do is just soften it a little bit. Because I can't get through with these people. I can't, because they say things that are so shocking to me. I, it takes me a while just to get over the trauma, you know what I mean? What did you just say? I can't, I can't wrap myself around it. So I can't proceed in conversation. I'm useless. So there's nothing I can do. Because, you know, I'm just devastated. So, yeah, it's, it's really, really hard. But, you know, I think, you know, looking back, the one thing you have to remember, you know, like, everybody is living their own heroic story. And that's what you have to perform as you are the hero, all these challenges and stuff that you are facing, where they're just to prove that you are greater than that, you know, that you are really going to come through and save the day. And so that's what I believe is is going to happen. I mean, I don't know I think that you know

Peter Brooks 1:42:40

I don't know, it's I'm thinking like Krishna now and how Krishna became this giant, you know, in order to ward off the enemies, you know, and stuff and so, we have to find that capacity within ourselves to become so big that all these petty things that people are talking about don't bother us anymore. And we're just working with loving kindness and and going from there without all this violence and and having to feed the ego and be correct and smarter and stuff. I'm done Kit let me get a water. Are you done? Yeah, go ahead. You're ready. All right. I gotta get a water.