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R.47. Speaking of Feminism: Today's Activists on the Past, Present, and Future of Feminism

Interview R-0881
Kwajelyn Jackson
July 24, 2015

ABSTRACT – KWAJELYN JACKSON

Interviewee: Kwajelyn Jackson

Interviewer Rachel Gelfand

Interview date:July 24, 2015

Location: Feminist Women's Health Center, Atlanta, GA

Length: 1:33:04

Kwajelyn Jackson is currently the Community Education and Advocacy Manager at the Feminist Women's Health Center. The interview begins with her childhood near St. Louis, Missouri. After attending a primarily white high school, Kwajelyn decided to go to a historically black college. Her grandmother and mother were both activists and attended Spelman College. In high school, she was involved with Inroads, an organization that connected her with a financial internship. At Spelman, Kwajelyn describes taking a required course African Diaspora in the World, which introduced her to black feminist thought. She portrays Spelman as a place to learn about feminism and the diversity of black women. When asked about the politics of her college years, she remembers a protest against Nelly as well as activism against homophobic college policies. She majored in economics, but when 9/11 happened her senior year many peers changed their plans. She got a job at First Union Bank in Atlanta in the community development department. It became more profit centered as mergers happened. In 2008, foreclosures took off and she decided to shift to non-profit work. She describes interning to learn about the non-profit world. FWHC's work is uniquely direct service and advocacy. She describes her daily work and meetings with community partners. When asked about what keeps her up at night, she talks about the weight of news of tragedies in the US and internationally. She describes how well she knew the Ferguson area growing up in Hazelwood, an adjacent town. At FWHC, she has urged the organization to make connections between state violence and reproductive rights and to be a part of what is happening in the Black Lives Matter movement. She notes working with Project South and taking a trip with FWHC to Florida to support Marisa Alexander. Kwajelyn then expands on these interconnected struggles. FWHC also partners with groups doing housing justice and workplace rights. On the topic of funding, she notices competition for grants amongst non-profits and the temptation to adapt goals to match funders. We discuss the passage of gay marriage and challenges for queer people in terms of health care and housing. She tells a story of working against a homophobic state bill in which gay lobbyists did not want to be publicly connected to abortion access advocates. The conversation turns to the mentality of anti-abortion groups who do not consider the lives of children once they are born. We discuss FWHC's activism in state and federal legislatures. She considers Obama's last term and then describes the Strong Families Resolution, a state bill FWHC helped develop. She stresses the importance of local politics. We turn to social media as a tool for collective action and an outlet the news

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responds to. In answer to questions about feminism, she aligns herself with black feminism and discusses the complexities of feminist history. We discuss Beyoncé feminism, trans issues, and white feminism. FWHC offers services for trans men more than trans women, but they are improving that. We discuss the clinic's structure. Reflecting on challenges activists face, she notes burn out and the need for many leaders. She describes conferences as a way for smaller non-profits to show work and share resources. Her hope for feminism is there will be more productive discourse and greater dialogue about how issues are experienced differently across racial and gender identities. We discuss examples of minimum wage and equal pay campaigns. The interview ends with thoughts on how FWHC is advocating for change in today's political climate.

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FIELD NOTES – KWAJELYN JACKSON

Interviewee: Kwajelyn Jackson

Interviewer Rachel Gelfand

Interview date:July 24, 2015

Location: Feminist Women's Health Center, Atlanta, GA

Length: 1:33:04

THE INTERVIEWEE. Kwajelyn Jackson was born Kansas and grew up in the Hazelwood, Missouri near St. Louis. She graduated from Spelman College in 2002 with a major in Economics. Kwajelyn then worked for a decade in the banking industry in Atlanta as a part of a community development department. Following the economic crash of 2008, she decided to leave financial work, as her job rapidly became less community development and more foreclosure oriented. She began interning at WonderRoot, an arts and social change organization. In 2013, she started her position at the Feminist Women's Health Center (FWHC). She is the Community Education and Advocacy Manager. This means she is involved in state and federal political advocacy as well as managing the programs at FWHC.

THE INTERVIEWER. Rachel Gelfand is a Ph.D student in American Studies at UNC Chapel Hill. She is conducting research for Rachel Seidman's book project on feminism.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW. The interview was conducted on a Friday morning at the Feminist Women's Health Center offices. On Fridays, the clinic provides abortion services so I saw one protester and a few couples headed into the clinic. We sat in Kwajelyn's office and began the interview. The dialogue starts with Kwajelyn's personal history and her college years. She discusses the political climate of her time at Spelman and how she found feminism. The interview then covers her years in the financial industry. She describes her experiences working in community development, which became more profit-driven with each merger of the late 2000s. She then tells of her decision to leave banking and begin a career in non-profit work. She outlines her work with WonderRoot and then describes her current position. The interview then moves to how current political issues affect her work at FWHC. We discuss Ferguson, the case of Marisa Alexander, and the Black Lives Matters movement noting the connections between state violence and reproductive justice. The conversation continues on to questions of funding. Then we discuss state and national politics including the federal passage of gay marriage and LGBTQ rights in Georgia. Kwajelyn describes the Strong Families Resolution, a state bill FWHC was a part of writing. We discuss coalition strategies and some progressives' fears of being aligned with abortion access advocates.

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The latter portion of the interview covers questions of social media, types of feminism, and the clinic's trans health framework. It ends with Kwajelyn's hopes for feminism.

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TRANSCRIPT – Kwajelyn Jackson

Interviewee: KJ KWAJELYN JACKSON

Interviewer: RG Rachel Gelfand

Interview Date: July 24, 2015

Location: Feminist Women's Health Center, Atlanta, Georgia

Length: 1:33:04

START OF INTERVIEW

RACHEL GELFAND: I'm going to say the date. It's July 24th, 2015. And my name's Rachel Gelfand.

KWAJELYN JACKSON: My name is Kwajelyn Jackson.

RG: We're at the Feminist Women's Health Center, and what's your position here?

KJ: I am the community education and advocacy manager. And so, do you want me to describe what that is? So basically I manage the department that does our education, our community outreach, our volunteer and internship programs and our public policy and advocacy work.

RG: So scrolling back I wanted to maybe just a little bit about where you're from, where did you grow up. The first question is what do you remember about your grandparents on either side. So you can go that far back or where do you begin.

KJ: Sure. So I was born in Kansas, but I was raised mostly in St. Louis, Missouri and lived there for--. Well, I technically lived here most of my life at this point, but my upbringing was in St. Louis primarily. I came to Atlanta for college, to attend Spelman [College]. And I was the eighth woman in my family to go to Spelman including my

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grandmother. So I can tie back there. And I had two cousins that followed me, so ten women in total of legacy at Spelman. And Spelman is a historically black, all women's institution. So it's really very rooted and connected to the kind of formations of my feminism and what really connects me to the work that I do now.

But growing up St. Louis was and still is in a lot of ways a really segregated place to live. I lived in a majority black neighborhood. But I went to a school that was probably about maybe twenty percent black or so. And there, the school had an active desegregation program to try to make sure that they had black population at the school. And so that was a challenge, and it really impacted my decision to go to a historically black school and kind of follow in that vein.

My grandmother on my mother's side is from Macon, Georgia here. And she's the one who attended Spelman. She was an educator. She was a principal of one of the largest high schools in the South at the time and really active in the civil rights movement and very kind of politically engaged. And so I think that really impacted my decisions about how I wanted to kind of pursue work around justice or social justice, reproductive justice, that kind of thing. There were a lot of teachers in my family, but I knew I didn't, really didn't want to teach. But education and higher education was really highly valued. And so it was just a given that we would all attend college, and we would all attend graduate school and like continue that pursuit of kind of knowledge and that kind of thing. I'm trying to think about what else.

So my mom also went to Spelman, and she was raised in Macon but lives here now. And she when I was growing up worked in social justice for most of my childhood. She worked for an organization called the National Conference for Community and

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Justice and did youth programming around anti-oppression. She also did diversity consulting with health and hospital systems, with different schools and businesses and that kind of thing. And then she transitioned from there to working at Planned Parenthood and was their vice president of education and diversity in St. Louis as well. So that was also another connection to reproductive justice. And using that sort of intersectional lens of looking at gender and race at the same time and other identities kind of all intersectionally. So all of that I think is what connected and inspired me to continue to pursue this work. So yeah. I don't know if that fully answers the first question. But that's what I've got.

RG: Yeah. Do you have siblings?

KJ: I have a brother, a younger brother who also does sort of the same thing. He's in a Ph.D. program now at the University of Maryland in DC, but he worked with a small nonprofit in California. After undergrad he went to Stanford for undergrad and then moved to LA and worked for a company there called Encompass, which was also an offshoot or kind of a rebranding of the organization my mom had worked for, the National Conference for Community Justice. They had branches all around the country, and the one in California had renamed itself as Encompass. So my brother was doing again youth programming. Encompass really tried to connect social justice to visual and performing arts. So they used arts as a tool to talk about really complex issues around identity and particularly with high school students, and also they did a lot of teacher training to teach teachers how to recognize bias and address those things before they escalated into bullying and things like that. So yeah, it's kind of in all of us a little bit.

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RG: Very impressive through the generations. Yeah. So you kind of were in, I mean the family was in Georgia, went to St. Louis and kind of--

KJ: Well, so actually my brother and I were both born in the Midwest so in Kansas. And then we moved to St. Louis and we were both raised there. And then I came back here for school and stayed, and I decided that Georgia was where I was supposed to be because I didn't really like the Midwest. I mean it was fine, but it did not feel, it didn't feel like home to me. I feel like I'm connected more to sort of southern so that's why I wanted to relocate to Georgia.

RG: So did you in your school when you were sort of, it was a mixed bag. Did you have teachers you connected with or who were your role models or what were you thinking about when you were in that age?

KJ: In high school?

RG: Yeah.

KJ: I don't know. I mean at the school itself it was tough. The faculty and administration were, I don't know, there weren't a lot of people at the school that we were really connecting with or really doing a lot of this work around. So I don't know. I think when I was in high school, my priorities were probably a little bit different even though my mom was doing this stuff; I was, I danced and I did stuff through the church, and I was in this program called Inroads, which was designed to try to prepare young minority students to enter into business and industry. So it was like every weekend we would have resume writing classes and interview prep and dress for success and all of these things, and then you got placed in internships all through the summer. So I interned at a brokerage company every summer between my sophomore year of high school and my

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senior year of college. And so a lot of that sort of professional development was what took up a lot of my time when I was in high school. So I guess that really, the people who led that program were probably really influential in what my formation during that time. Like that and then like I said, like dance and the arts kind of on the side.

But at the school itself there was one black principal who we sort, some groups of young black women would try to connect with. And so she led an after school club called the Cultural Awareness Society where we tried to like talk about black history and talk about things that were happening at school and current events, but it sort of faded away and didn't really get a whole lot of traction. So—

RG: Interesting yeah, so then you went off to Spelman.

KJ: Um hmm.

RG: When did feminism start to become something you were, so how did you find the feminist movement?

KJ: Right, I mean definitely Spelman. And as a part of like the, like all freshman who go through Spelman there is a required course called ADW, which is African Diaspora in the World. And it's really, a lot of it is centered in black feminist thought. And so talking about the ways in which women of color function in society depending on all of these other kind of layered identities. How class and education and sexual orientation and all of these different things impact the way that we're able to navigate through the world. And then looking at that across history, so looking at slave narratives and then looking at theory and then looking at literature and taking all of those things together to sort of get some context for like where we fit in the world. And it was really, really powerful to me just kind of going through that class. I wasn't a women's studies

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major or sociology or gender studies, and so ADW was like my first piece. I did end up taking like one women's studies class. It was Images of Women in the Media. And it was really kind of focused on like music and television and film and books and the ways in which sexism plays into how we consume and that kind of stuff.

The other piece I think was that Spelman for me, a lot of people like to think about HBCUs in particular or single gender institutions as like sort of this homogenous blob, like you go there to like escape from all the other people in the world. But to me it felt like it was really revealing about how much diversity there is within a black women. How many different kinds of black women there are and how many different ways there is to be a black woman. And that was really something that was big for me at that period of time. It was like it started to reveal to me that there was not a singular way of performing womanhood or blackness or those two together. And that kind of spurred me to continue to want to be thinking about those things, the ways that we perform gender and the ways in which we're conditioned to think different things about people and the way they should behave and all that kind of stuff. So I give Spelman a lot of credit for helping me to understand those pieces. And I didn't learn as much about kind of the greater feminist movement until later in life, until like taking it upon myself to really pursue and learn about those things.

RG: What were sort of the issues going on when you were in college? Like what was the political scene or social?

KJ: I remember a lot of people being very caught up in like music videos. That was the thing in that late, mid to late nineties, early 2000s. It was about like—

RG: The fish eye.

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KJ: Well, the video ho, like this idea of like that was, that was the problem to be addressed. I remember this was actually just after I graduated. I think it was in 2004. The rapper Nelly was supposed to come to Spelman to do a bone marrow drive because he has a sister who was, who had leukemia, and he was very like invested in this cause. And there was a group of women, the Feminist Majority Alliance at Spelman who protested him coming because of the ways that women were depicted in his videos, and he ended up not coming, and they did a bone marrow drive independently of him, but it was like a big thing because they were like we can't, as an institution, cosign this person who doesn't really respect us. Like he doesn't really see us as fully human. He just sees us as body parts. So that was a really big thing.

I think that there's also at the time there was a lot of homophobia--I mean there still is--but a lot of homophobia that was going on with Spelman and also the neighboring all male institution, Morehouse [College]. And there was an incident that happened on Morehouse's campus that really shook a lot of people up where a guy was like in the shower, and somebody came up behind, came and was watching him, and that person who was being watched went and attacked the other person with a bat. Like it was a thing.

And so there was this, within the sort of tenets of the institution our codes of ethics and dress codes and things like that there were all these sort of homophobic and sexist policies that a lot of people were really trying to push up against to create a more welcoming environment where they weren't harboring, where the administration wasn't complicit in like this sentiment that was kind of going around the campus. So those were some things that I remember from that time.

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I wasn't as engaged in like big politics. I remember like one of my professors ran for mayor of Atlanta and that was really fun. And that was my first time voting in Georgia and I was really excited about it. But I didn't really start to think a lot about like state politics and local politics and even federal politics and how that impacted the way that we're able to have our rights and do the things that we need to do. So yeah.

RG: Yeah. So you eventually I'm going to ask about the kind of the economic crash and—

KJ: Oh sure.

RG: Stuff like that which I thought you would bring really interesting insight into sort of being in that more financial world. So how did you get into the financial world and then go away from it?

KJ: Right. Right. So I majored in economics, and I minored in dance because dance was not going to be a stable career. So I had to do something that makes sense as parents like to influence children to do. And it was fine. Economics was fine. I ended up, like I said I interned a lot, a lot of my peers who were studying economics or business management or something like that had dreams of like going to New York and going to Wall Street and that was kind of like the plan for a lot of folks. But 9/11 happened my senior year. And so that changed, it was, it changed a lot for a lot of people who again thought they were going to New York.

RG: Right.

KJ: And then—

RG: Working in the World Trade Center.

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KJ: Right, yeah. Like people were really, like that was their vision. And then that happened and it really shifted a lot of people. So when we graduated, the job markets within the financial sector were a little bit more sparse than people were imagining. I, because I had interned so much I had an offer from Edward Jones in St. Louis, but I didn't want to go to St. Louis. I wanted to stay in Atlanta. And so I ended up, I had another internship with what was First Union Bank at the time. And after my internship was over, I had rotated through several departments at the bank, and the only one that I really had any interest in was community development, which was sort of centered around low income communities and reinvesting and revitalizing like neglected city centers, and so I was like this seems the most, I don't know, it seems like the most like helpful, helping people part of the bank because banks are, exist to make money, and so it felt the most mission centered of any other part of the bank. That seems like something I could do and not feel icky every day.

So I just called them and asked if there were any openings. I mean it was really, I just took a chance because I had interned with one woman and connected with her, and I just gave her a call and said if there's anything that comes up let me know and then they hired me. I didn't interview or anything. It was awesome. And then I sort of grew in that department. I worked for the bank for eight years through several mergers. So First Union became Wachovia and Wachovia became Wells Fargo and that department sort of continued to grow and do a lot of low income housing, economic development, that kind of thing. And it was fine. I didn't love it. I didn't feel like it really fed anything in me. It was just like I can do this.

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Over time it became more and more profit centered. They used to when I first joined that part of the bank, they used to call it the double bottom line. So it's like we have to try to make a little bit of money, but our real goal is to try to impact communities. And slowly but surely that other bottom line started to get a little more weight, and I felt like we were not really doing the work we were charged with doing at least in my opinion. I felt like it was very much like we're just trying to make the bank money. And it doesn't really matter what happens to the people, and I didn't feel good about that.

And then 2008 happened, and then it was just like this all of a sudden there was this shift where we're foreclosing on all these places and displacing people, and it's like every day was just management of, and it just felt horrible to come to work every day because it's like we're the bad guy all of a sudden. And it was just, it felt really gross to go and I just didn't feel like I was connected with it. I really loved the people I worked with, but the work was just not good for me anymore.

So I decided that I wanted to move into nonprofit work. I decided that I really wanted to do social justice work that I was also interested in this intersection of like art and social change and so like trying to figure out like what does that mean. Sort of again like thinking about the work that my brother as doing, I went and worked with him for a summer. And so I was like is there a way I could do some of that in Atlanta and just shift. So I resigned and I took an internship, an unpaid internship for a year at twenty-nine at this place called WonderRoot, which is a small arts organization that really does basically that. It's like an art and social change organization where they try to create opportunities for people to make art but also encourage artists to do work that will impact community and explore concepts that affect social change, and so I just lived off my savings for a

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year and I interned there and then that turned into a real job. And I did that for a couple of years to try to learn more about sort of the nonprofit world. I was the program manager so I did youth programming, I did internships; I did volunteer management; I managed the art center, and so I was just really trying to shift out of the for profit corporate mindset into this nonprofit grassroots world. And yeah, so I worked, I was there for three years, and then I left there and came here.

RG: So what's your day like here? What's your role?

KJ: So I manage one, two, three, four staff. It's five positions right now. There are four people. And on a day to day it's really sort of juggling these different activities that we're doing and trying to create a cohesive thread between them. So what makes sort of, what makes Feminist different from a lot of other organizations is that a lot, there are some that are really advocacy driven, that are really working on community building or movement building or organizing around issues. And then there are some clinics that are direct service, that are seeing patients. But there are very few that are doing both of those things at the same time. And so what I want to, what my goals are is to make sure that the work that we're doing in the community feeds back into the work that we're doing in the clinic and that they continue to like cycle and support each other. So whether that's trying to recruit and train and build leaders through our volunteer and internship programs to try to make sure that there's like a next generation of people to continue doing this work. So we do lots of workshops and trainings and skill building and experiences so that people who are interested in different aspects of this work can really get a taste for doing that. And then doing sort of our strategy and planning around our public policy work having meetings with community partners. A lot of my days are lots of meetings, meetings with

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community partners, coalitions that we sit on so that we as nonprofit organizations that are thinking about these issues that may not overlap all the time but are aligned sort of in goal can plan together, leverage each other's strengths, and really combine our bases to kind of get some of this work done and then planning for the work that we'll do during the legislative session or during the election cycle. And again like all those things are connected. So our volunteers are the people that we want to be able to go to the capitol and talk to legislators about the things that are important to them. We also want them to see that connection once it comes around to the election cycle and that they're engaged to the point that they understand the people who are in positions of power who make decisions about the people they care about and how they can carry that with them when they go to the ballot box and then hold those elected officials accountable and continue to like be invested in the work. And then like the kind of--

RG: It's tough work.

KJ: Yeah, it's a lot because it's, people, it's really easy to disengage and feel like just throw your hands up and like my vote doesn't count. It doesn't really matter. People with money are the ones who are going to make the decisions. I've just got to figure out how to survive. So then that other piece, those people who are just trying to figure out how to survive like figuring out how we can be a resource to them too. So that's where our outreach programs come in. So like our Lifting Latina Voices Initiative and our Black Women's Wellness program are very much about like bringing in people who have either gaps in their learning and understanding of reproductive and sexual health, have barriers or obstacles to getting care or the resources they need to like take care of themselves who are just kind of getting introduced to these ideas and need places where they can talk

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about like what's happening in their lives. So when I'm here, I'm trying to manage all of those things. I have people, like my staff or whatever who are really the ones who are carrying the ball across the finish line and executing all of those different pieces, all at the same time.

RG: Wow. The next question is what keeps you up at night?

KJ: Oh goodness. So the thing that's really hard right now I think is that and people say this all the time. It's like because of this age we're in, this internet age we're in, where we have so much access to so much information so quickly all the time it can feel very overwhelming to get bombarded with all of the tragic, just heartbreaking things that are happening here and in Nigeria and in Jordan, and all around the world and all around the country. And it is really, really exhausting to feel that way all the time and to feel buried by it. I mean I think that's something that is really hard with the shooting in, with Michael Brown in St. Louis. I mean Ferguson is literally four miles away from where I—I lived in Hazelwood which is also part of North County, St. Louis. So every time I would watch footage of what was happening it felt very, very present because it was like there is the movie theatre that I went to on Friday nights. And there is the place where I took dance lessons, and I got gas at that QT and like all of those things. It felt very present. And it felt like this narrative that was coming to the surface was like I lived through all of this every day. We didn't feel like we were going to get shot by the police. But we definitely knew that there were places that we couldn't drive at night for getting pulled over or places where we couldn't walk or police that would drive up and down our street and like ask us why we were standing outside in our own yards. That kind of thing was very regular part of my growing up.

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So watching all of that unfold and then watching what felt like this rapid succession of death and exoneration over and over again, even though we know it's not new it felt different in a lot of ways. And it has been really, really hard to continually mourn the loss of people and never really recover because as soon as you do there's another something to take you back down again. And so that has been really, really hard to manage through and to be able to care for yourself in such a way that you can keep doing the work at the same time because it's just depleting, I guess for lack of a better word. And so that sort of Black Lives Matter movement alongside thinking about how that's impacted with the gender lens and how black women or black trans women are having this simultaneous moment but not getting some of the same recognition has also been really hard. And then again taking all of those racial dynamics to the reproductive justice movement and looking at those simultaneously too to say like we can't just be singularly focused on abortion rights. We also need to be thinking about what it means to live in the world and how those things are, how this movement, how this moment is a part of reproductive justice. It's not separate from. So all of those are the things that make it really, really difficult to rest easy and to take care of yourself and to feel settled. It's fuel to a point to keep doing the work. But it's also depleting.

RG: You've brought up many issues that are sort of the other questions. But it just occurred to me since you work in an art and social change setting, if you, do you produce stuff to try to manage the depletion?

KJ: I don't. So I'm, even though I'm very connected to the arts, I'm not an artist myself per se. Like I say I used to dance and I taught dance for a while, but that's not something that I really do anymore. My partner is a videographer and filmmaker, and so

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he does a lot of that stuff. So I sort of live vicariously I guess in those ways. But yeah, I don't know to, it's hard to replenish. I mean sometimes it feels like you crash and just try to rest, and fortunately my mother's here. So I'm able to have sort of family near and do that stuff to sort of get recharged and vent it all out and then go somewhere and get a steam or something to try to get your life back. But yeah, sometimes I really wish that I was an artist that I could just like paint or sculpt or do something that would feel sort of productive in this moment, but I don't.

RG: There's a question about sort of racialized violence at the forefront of people's minds. How have you engaged in these conversations through your work and how have they shaped your organization's approach if so?

KJ: Yeah.

RG: You've already sort of gone there, but I wanted to sort of connect it like well go ahead.

KJ: No, I understand. It's, I mean it's something that when things happen in St. Louis, like I was really messed up for a while. It was hard to do my work, and I told folks here that I was not, I would not be comfortable with us as an organization being silent on these issues. And so at that point like we put out a statement and a letter. We haven't been able to put out a response to every instance, but I have tried to make it really clear that we have to be a part of these conversations and we have to continue to make the case for why this state violence is a reproductive justice issue. And so I think we've done an okay job at continuing to do that. I think that we could do more.

When there have been different protests and rallies and sort of actions here, I've participated to a degree. So I've gone to a few of the marches. I haven't been able to do

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all of them just because that act in itself is also really exhausting, but yeah, just trying to be present and aligned with other orgs that are, that have racial justice at the core of their mission and being able to support them in their work also and partner when it makes sense. Say like how can we be of help, how can we continue to elevate the message that you're putting out there, that kind of thing?

So we, one example we last year we had several interns that were, did sort of this freedom summer organizing in partnership with a group here called Project South that were really doing a lot of racial justice work and activism across the whole Southeast. And then we also went to Florida to be part of a movement around the Marissa Alexander case again to really make this connection between state, sort of the state violence, the domestic and intimate partner violence, the reproductive justice, the mental health community, like all of those things connected, social work, like bringing all of those groups together so that we could have sort of a collective voice around the issue. So those are just a couple of ways that we tried to make like Feminist [Women's Health] Center an organization a part of what's happening, and then like I said as an individual I've just tried to be what I could when I could. So yeah.

RG: Yeah, I mean it's the anti-abortion rhetoric is about lives, and there's the whole—so how do you, just to be explicit, how do you make the connection between state violence and reproductive justice in your work?

KJ: Right. So the way I like to think about it is that we're, because we use a reproductive justice framework, so we're thinking about not only the right to decide whether or not to have children but also to decide when and with whom, to decide--. I mean to have the ability to have sort of safe and healthy relationships and families and to

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also have healthy pregnancies and healthy children. So it's like all of those things are connected to each other and having full body autonomy. So all of those things are a part of this bigger reproductive justice movement, right.

So if you live in an environment in which you know that it is not safe for young people growing up, how might that impact your decisions about whether or not you choose to have children or have more children. How might the police state or the interactions with law enforcement with your community impact your ability to parent with dignity and have all the resources you need to care for the children that you already have? How are women dealing with issues of pregnancy, delivery, abortion access, gynecological care within the prison systems? How are incarcerated mothers able to have connections and families, I mean connections with their families and children? Like all of those things sort of all wrap up together. And so that's the way that I tend to think about it.

Marissa Alexander is a good example of the fact that she's, she was a breastfeeding mother at the time that she was arrested. The state didn't step in to protect her against her husband when she had filed charges against him in the past that her stand your ground was not held and other folks in Florida's were. Like those kinds of things we felt like we're still all a part of this movement. And so we had to talk about them. We have to talk about all of the different, I mean if you want to tie it back to abortion we need to talk about all the different reasons that somebody might need to choose abortion and state violence could definitely be one of them.

And then also I think what doesn't get talked about a lot is this idea that that institutional and systematic racism how that impacts not only fertility and health but also

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mental and emotional health and how that also might impact whether or not you decide to have children or parent children. So like I think, all these things are like inextricably linked to one another, and that's why issues of reproductive justice are complicated, and that's why abortion rights are complicated. Like it's not a cut and dried, people get abortions because they hate kids. Like that's not—

RG: The stress trauma.

KJ: Yes. There's so many other factors that would impact whether or not someone might choose that, and so therefore we need to make sure that we're protecting that ability all the time. So those are, I don't know if that's super clear, but those are the things I think about.

RG: Yeah. With the crash we already talked about, but I just thought, you're linking it with issues of housing and foreclosure that how does that come into your work or how did you sort of, you chose to step away from that space.

KJ: Yeah. I mean I care very much about access to safe housing as sort of just a human right. But working in like real estate and finance and development was not where I was suited even though I was fine at it. And it was, it really like I told you felt really heartbreaking to see that because a millionaire developer defaulted on a loan for seven or eight or ten million dollars that somehow that was also going to displace 150 people who are making less than $20,000 a year. And it's like through no fault of their own in many cases. It's not that we were foreclosing on individual apartments because somebody didn't pay their $450 rent. It was like those kinds of things happening *en masse*. So it's like tearing down a housing project that had 500 units and then rebuilding a mixed use community that had seven affordable units in it. That kind of thing started to feel really

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gross and really inappropriate, and then it's like these are real people's lives, and I wanted to do work that was on the ground, dealing directly with people's lives.

And so housing justice is a part of that, but I felt like I was more interested in thinking about sort of these other layers of like I said sort of the racial gender health access sort of issues. But we know occasionally we'll partner with folks who are doing more of the housing justice piece or folks who are doing more of the economic and workplace justice stuff. I mean because we, any individual, group or person even if you care about all the things, it's really hard to do work on all the things at the same time, all the time. Every now and then you hear people complain they're like you're going so hard for Black Lives Matter but you're not doing anything about Israel. That doesn't mean I don't care about it, but I can't do everything all the time. You can have space to care about a lot of stuff. So what we do in order to combat that is knowing that like housing issues and transportation issues and workplace issues all impact the people we serve. We need to be aligned with the groups that are going to meet those other parts of their needs and do what we can to create environment where people will have access to all of those things. So yeah.

RG: Yeah, do you feel like in the nonprofit world that in the last five or many years with the money like that there's a different relationship to funding? I mean you sort of came in at that moment but—

KJ: I think probably. I don't know as much. I mean I'm only on the periphery of our actual fundraising and development and grant writing in that I am on the program side so I need the money in order to do the thing. I think it's really hard. I think it's hard work all the time. And I think some of the things, some of the folks who are doing the

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most demanding work are significantly underfunded and that there are some larger scale organizations that can sometimes get access to funding because of their capacity and because of their reputation or because of lots of other factors that some of the small scrappy folks--. I mean and we are probably fall somewhere in the middle of that. Like we've been around for a very long time, but we're not big and bureaucratic either. So we're grassroots but old. So it's still a challenge to get access to the funding.

I think that a lot of the foundations did lose money during that period of time. Folks who had stuff invested lost a lot and had to spend some time rebuilding. You saw colleges who had all kinds of reserves and stuff like that have to make a lot of really big financial sacrifices. I know Spelman did. And I'm sure others did to try to recoup and make up for the losses that they faced. I think folks are just starting to get on the other side of that. I think because there's so much needs there's so many orgs, deserving orgs all the time and deserving programs all the time that are trying really hard to change the world with no money. And so there's so much competition for the same few dollars, and I think that that's one of the things that's really inherently challenging about the nonprofit sector. It's just like literally you have this mission that's virtually impossible to accomplish. I mean most of the time they're written so—I mean sometimes they're very practical, but sometimes they are very like idealistic. Like this is the kind of world we want to see. And we are going to slowly chip away until we start to see some glimmers of that world, right. And we're going to try to accomplish that with virtually nothing, almost no staff and skin of our teeth and bubblegum and string, and a lot of times those orgs have to prove that they can accomplish results before funders will actually give them anything to do anything. It's just—

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RG: A catch-22.

KJ: Yeah, it's really, really hard. It's really hard.

RG: You have to be successful to get the money to be successful.

KJ: Right or you may have a really strong and clear vision about your mission, but there's always this temptation to sort of shift and adapt your goals to match the funders, and then how do you maintain sort of the integrity of your intentions while you're trying to make it, mold it to what the funders want. So that part is also a balance. Creating programs that don't actually do the work that you want to be doing but that can get the money and being okay with that. It doesn't always feel very good especially on the, for the people that you're trying to serve. Sometimes that is the thing. Like a funder may have a very clear idea of what they want to happen with this community but the community doesn't want that. So us being able to try to balance that and do what we can and try to do it the right way.

RG: Other sort of current politics, the LGBT rights movement, legalizing gay marriage recently, how does that, and just generally sexuality, sexual identity, and trans issues.

KJ: Yeah, I mean I think that marriage bans being lifted is amazing. And it's a huge accomplishment and it took a long time. But I don't, it's really hard to just count that as like we've done it because there's so many other things that are left undone around LGBTQ rights. And so that's the challenging part. It's like marriage is not the only goal that a lot of organizations and individuals are really focused on. When you think about how many queer youth and queer youth of color are, don't have a place to live or are facing threats of violence every time they walk outside, getting married is

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really far removed from their actual lived reality. So I think that there's a challenge to try to celebrate the small victories, not get stuck there and continue to do more of the work. Georgia is a state that doesn't have any protections around discrimination against orientation or identity. So it's really, really hard to, you can get married, but you can get fired the next day. So that isn't—

RG: Yeah, that's what it is I like in North Carolina.

KJ: Yeah. It's like that kind of thing is what complicates it, I think.

RG: Yeah.

KJ: And I think that there is a lot of, there is some level of mistrust because sometimes the public face of different parts of the movement doesn't really reflect the real diversity of the people, of the community that it's supposed to represent if that makes sense. So that part I think has been really challenging. We try to, I mean LGBTQ issues are really central to our work. And they are really again embedded in the reproductive framework that as a part of bodily autonomy that being able to have freedom to make sexual choices and have your identity valued and acknowledged and all of those different things. Being able again to have access to safe health care, I mean it's like again a very basic thing that is not, that is not happening and is not reflected in the sort of right now public conversation. So we have a lot of work that we're still trying to do and that we are trying to partner with other LGBTQ sort of centered organizations to sort of push a little bit so that it's not a like very white cis male gay movement. Like that's not the singular place.

We had some challenges with it earlier in the year around our legislative session because we had a Religious Freedom Restoration Act that was introduced in the session.

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It didn't pass here. But there was a very concerted effort to really stop that. And it was very much led by one of the large local LGBTQ orgs with also some national organizations as well. And so we were parts of those strategy meetings, but we weren't the public face because there was some times a hesitation from some groups to align directly with reproductive rights and abortion rights. And they just don't want to be too sometimes—not, not, not--.

RG: We'll take your support but we don't want other people to know.

KJ: Right. Right just well and I think it's not exclusive to that group, but lots of org nonprofits that we work with, they care about our issues just as much as we do. They value us as a partner, but sometimes cannot, will lose political will by aligning with us very publicly. And so sometimes we have to just be like just a step in the back. And sometimes we're fine with that. I mean it's like, if it's going to get the job done we'll do it. But at the same time we want to try to work in the progressive movement to try to build an environment where people will go to bat for us in the same way that we'll go to bat for them and not be scared abortion all over them and then they won't be able to get anything done. So we've been working on that part. We know that again these issues are, intersect with each other. They're not singular. There are plenty of queer people who need abortion access. And we, so we need to be able to be working together all the time. And so just continuing to like grind away at it and trying to make it happen. But I don't even know if I answered your question. I just talked. I just said a lot of stuff but--.

RG: No, I mean that's it just shows how intense the push against—

KJ: Right.

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RG: Abortions are the progressive community is afraid to be out in favor of abortion.

KJ: Yeah. Because as, what we're seeing I think around LGBTQ issues is like to a point they are becoming less and less controversial. I mean it's not a challenge to get big corporations to come out in front around queer issues. It's not even for some conservative legislators, like they're feeling more and more safe to be vocal about their opinions. We're seeing, we don't see as much of that around reproductive rights. I mean people, it's still a very, very contentious, I mean people may be there for us but just can't, don't feel safe enough to talk about it. And what can we do to address some of that stigma so that people can talk about it and it not be a thing.

RG: Yeah, I mean you have this bumper sticker behind you that I keep seeing.

KJ: Yeah.

RG: Do you want to, I mean it makes all these connections. It says, "May the fetus you save turn out to be a gay abortion provider."

KJ: Yeah, I got that from a clinic--not a clinic, that's not true--from a conference. I mean and it's, I just think it's just really funny just in the sense that people protestors and the folks who are really actively trying to dismantle abortion access are often not thinking about the lives that are attached not only to the unborn but to the people around the unborn. And you hear it so often. Like they, a lot of folks they only care about these fetuses until they're born, and then they don't, they're not—these people are not the same ones who are actively working to try to improve the foster care system or working within the schools to try to improve graduation and literacy rates. They're not working to make sure that young people don't go hungry or that people have money to go to college or--. I

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mean they're not working on children's rights in so many ways. They are singularly focused on this issue and not really thinking about full people.

And our job, I mean we're thinking about whole people and that whole people also includes those who carry babies and how they make decisions about their lives and their bodies beyond this moment of pregnancy or moment of conception. And so it's like, I think that's kind of what it speaks to. It's like if you care about life, like there's a lot of things that need to be done to really improve and sustain people's lives. Let's go do that. Let's all go do that.

RG: The amount of energy.

KJ: Yes, let's make sure that people can live, can really live. Like what does that look like? As opposed to just making sure that someone can be born and then I'm done. I don't care what happens after that. If they get shot by the police next week, that's on them. Like that's the part.

RG: You've talked about legislative stuff, so I just wanted to—so what's the political climate that you're working in? Obama's in office nationally. How does that shape your work?

KJ: So at the federal level things are interesting. Most of our political work is at the state level, but at the federal level there's definitely been some old action both for our issues and against. We've seen some very brave and outspoken legislators who are pushing to end the Hyde Amendment and to add additional protections to prevent states from eroding away women's access to care on the basis of not medically sound information.

RG: Right.

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KJ: And so we've been a part of some of those movements and doing some federal lobbying from time to time. I am just thinking about the President, I'm very interested in how he's continued, in this kind of last phase of his term will continue to sort of push for some of these more radical shifts that will impact kind of the social climate. I think it's one of the things that a lot of people had hopes for from him in the beginning. And because of lots of different circumstances he wasn't able to accomplish. I hopeful though I'm not that convinced that people will start to understand more through this administration how the president alone is not—the buck doesn't stop there. And so I think people are disappointed in his inability to get things done but not necessarily acknowledging all of the other representatives and senators, the court systems, all of the things that are working together that actually create the laws that we live under. And so that's the part, I mean I would hope that in the future, the regular, the average every day person will start to understand like the President is only a piece of the government and is not, like can't wave a magic wand and make stuff happen.

Locally in Georgia it's a really difficult political environment. A lot of the more progressive legislators, they're still trying stuff and still trying to put stuff out there, but it's really, really difficult to get any movement on a lot of things. I feel like a lot of what progressive organizations and legislators are doing is trying to maintain as opposed to really push more proactive stuff. I mean we're trying, but it's really difficult to get any momentum on things like that. So it's more stopping bad stuff before it happens. But we know that it's going to be necessary to have real change for us to be able to do progressive stuff. So we've introduced a resolution that kind of talks to some of these things. It's like an intersectional approach to talking about health care access and

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workplace issues and racial disparity and all different kinds of family formations and saying like, kind of trying to take back the language of family from those who might use it as a weapon against our issues to say if we really care about families, working families and making sure that they have everything they need, then we have to be considering all these things at the same time when making policy. So you can't make policies that only work for two parent households with two point five kids. We have to think that sometimes a family might look very drastically different and probably the majority of the time it's going to look drastically different. And so being able to think about those things in concert, and so it's our way to try to bring a lot of folks to the table at the same time. Because it's not abortion-centric it allows for people from who are working on minimum wage and equal pay and those kinds of things to come in. And it makes room for advocates around workplace discrimination to come in and people who are thinking about the ACA and closing the coverage gaps to come in and like us all to talk about these things the same time and hopefully to have a platform to have some more proactive legislation to come out of it. But there's a lot of pessimism and cynicism so—

RG: So you wrote a bill.

KJ: Um hmm.

RG: And then has it—did it get introduced?

KJ: It was introduced last session, and it's called the Strong Families Resolution, and this in 2016 we're hopeful that we'll be able to get some movement around it and get it passed. We've been doing a lot of throughout this year like working with different legislators on it and trying to get some grassroots support in Atlanta and in other cities around the state, trying to get people talking about the issues that impact them, try to

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figure out some ways to really lift people's voices around like not super complex policy but like regular every day issues that folks are facing. Like my job is here and I live here, and transportation issues are a barrier for me to be able to support my family. Or I take care of an elderly parent, and my job won't let me take time off to care for my parents and that limits—I mean I can't quit my job but I can't let my family member languish. I'm incarcerated and my child is living with my uncle, and how am I able to maintain that connection and what policies are preventing me from being able to make sure that my child has able to have everything they need. Like just, there's all kinds of little things that are really impacting people and we want to give them an opportunity to start to talk about them and see how that fits in with state policy. And hope that that will be a way to encourage people to get more engaged in politics, to vote more, to really see like the President is important, but your state rep is the one who is calling a lot of the shots around your life. And your City Council person is calling a lot and your school superintendent and like your police chief and how all those pieces fit in with the way that people live so hopefully that they will speak up more.

RG: Has social media been a useful tool or you brought it up earlier as sort of a like the weight of the world?

KJ: Yeah, sometimes but it's also really good. I think kind of more broadly that social, the thing that's really impressive to me about social media is that it is, it allows for people who before this might not have had a platform to talk about things or might not have had a way to get their voice out there to have that. So you see people emerging and getting a public platform that might have been denied that in the past. They would have had to have been published in the newspaper or somehow seen and found by a news

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camera. Where now the news is mining social media to try to find these voices and really taking them seriously. And then you can also see these pockets of collective action that happen where something gets talked about on Twitter for a week, and then it makes it to national news because it's been on Twitter for a week, kind of thing. Whereas there was a period of time where it would've been the other way around. Things are happening in the news and then we get a chance to like respond to it. So that part is really exciting.

It's also really scary because there's people who get a platform to spew basically anything that they want, and so it makes the Internet like this really, you can find a view that will reinforce how you feel anywhere. It's not like going to the library and finding the research like this the book that has the truth in it. There's a bunch of different perspectives and they're all out here to choose from. It's, so you can find the things that will reinforce the things you already believe. You also see the things that counter it, but you can choose to not engage with that part. So that part I think is really, makes it complicated. For us we use it like most other folks use it. I mean we promote our events and are able to share content, and we're starting to do more sort of writing and blogging and that kind of thing to try to get more content out about the issues that we feel like are connected to reproductive justice and why and sort of engage more in that conversation. But I think we're going to continue to grow and figure out like what is our place and how we can best, I don't know, like I said it's not to me about elevating our voices about like figuring out ways to get the voices of the people we serve lifted up and put out there. So that's I guess basically what I think.

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RG: So there's a question just sort of about feminism. Do you identify with the Third-wave terminology, why, why not? How do you think about your work in relation to the history of the feminist movement?

KJ: I mean sort of. I identify as feminist and I know that sometimes there are people who find just the term feminist a little bit problematic and not sufficient for them. But I do. But I also identify as like a black feminist and like that part of my identity is really important and really informs the way that I think about feminism because--. I mean some of the history is really challenging to deal with because it has not always been as inclusive as it should have been and it's--. As with lots of movements it's like once you start to explore these different intersections it can splinter and it can, people get challenged from within. I don't know if I would consider myself Third-wave or Fourth-wave or whatever wave we're in right now. But yeah, I think it's tough.

I think feminism is really something that is defined by people's perspective and lived experience and informed by history and theory. And we get into so much of a frenzy trying to police other people's, the way people live their feminism, that it becomes more harm than good to me sometimes. People pitting people who consider themselves like a Beyoncé feminist and saying that that's not real. Or is there space in white feminism for people of color or is your feminism trans exclusive and all of this stuff. I mean I think it's important to keep having the conversations, but I think we have to keep open to having our views shifted over time. Like none of this stuff is static. It's constantly moving and being informed all the time. Nobody has it on lock. And if we would just kind of accept that we can all be problematic from time to time. We all have stuff that we're continuing to learn and grow from. Our feminism is constantly developing and

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redefining itself inside of us. I feel like that's a perspective that I sit in most of the time. But I'm excited about the fact that a lot of conversations are happening around like how people live their version of womanhood, their version of feminism, their version of this sort of gender identity and how it interacts with other people. So again I don't know if that answers your question but--.

RG: But I did sort of bring up trans issues and not follow up. So how does that influence work here?

KJ: So we have a Trans Health Initiative as part of our clinic. So we specifically target to serve trans clients. Most of our trans clients are intersex or trans men or trans masculine clients, but we do see some trans women. A lot of people, we do get some pushback from time to time because we don't, people think we don't serve enough trans women, and we don't always have all the services that trans women need. Right now we don't do estrogen, and so but we don't do estrogen for ciswomen either. Nobody gets it. We just don't have that hormone replacement available, and so we want to be able to work towards being able to have, offer more services to more people, but it's also based off of some of the financial confines of like figuring out how to fund the capacity limitations of our clinical staff. Like it's just not as easy as just making a decision. So we're just constantly trying to do that work.

Our framework is trans inclusive so we want to make sure that all gender identities are able to do the outreach, education, advocacy, reproductive health work with us. Like none of it is cis-centered. But again it's work because our volunteer base doesn't always reflect that. We have, we probably have some trans identified folks. We may have some that are not openly trans, but they are or that we just don't know based off of visual

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cues or anything like that. We're not necessarily tracking for that. We let people self-identify if they want to, and if they don't it's on them.

I think we could be doing more work. We've done some partnerships with some other orgs that are more trans centered to try to again support. So we did a partner, we did a project last summer with a group that was called Deconstructing Binaries where they were really working on bathroom justice and trying to get more trans inclusive restrooms around metro Atlanta and that kind of thing. So we partnered and did a little bit of work there. I think that we, there's lots of space for us to do more. Our black women's wellness program just recently had a focus group where we were, they were talking about again about state violence but talking specifically violence against trans women and like what that environment, what the Atlanta environment is, how the Atlanta environment is for safety around trans women of color and what role we could play in addressing some of those issues. So yeah, I mean I think it's very, very present in our work, and we try to make sure that we're working and improving on those issues as best as we can. And we know that we have a lot of, we still have a lot of work to do.

RG: How does, I guess I don't know exactly how it works. There's, I mean there's clinical staff, and then there's staff who do more program work. How do you guys come together or what's the relationship?

KJ: Yeah. I mean we all work together all the time.

RG: Yeah.

KJ: Basically we have, our clinic is upstairs in this building from the administrative staff, and we have a leadership team. So people who are at the sort of management and director level from all different parts of the organization meet monthly

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to talk about organizational wide issues. We, there are some people who work in multiple departments. So there's some people who work both clinically and administratively. So that also acts as a good conduit. When we do programs out of the clinic, it's everybody's involved. We try really hard to have overlap so sometimes clinical staff might do an outreach program with us or vice versa. We try to figure out ways to make our outreach programs inclusive of our patient base as well. So there's a lot of internal work that has to happen to make sure that folks who come here for care are also a part of our grassroots organizing and volunteer base and internships and all of that stuff, that they're not like these disparate places like patients over here and volunteers over here. And yeah, and it's something that has to continue because our job, our day to day jobs look very different, but we are constantly trying to make sure that we are working together and thinking together so that like I said at the very beginning so that our work sort of feeds one another all the time.

RG: That's pretty impressive because—

KJ: It's hard.

RG: Yeah and more powerful to have someone on, doing some lobbying who has been a patient.

KJ: Right, right; right. But that's not always easy. I mean again with the stigma thing, it's really hard to create an environment where people feel safe to tell their abortion story or their hysterectomy story or their miscarriage story or whatever is happening. Those things feel really personal to people, and people feel like when they expose themselves, what kind of consequences might they face. So our job is to try to make sure that they're equipped to have everything they need to do that and to be supported after

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that and to make sure that they make sure they understand the power and value in their story and so people don't feel like their stories are being used for someone else's benefit. Like that can get really creepy. So it's a lot of work and so it's a challenge to make sure that we're creating an environment where that can happen easily.

RG: What do you think are the biggest challenges facing feminists, facing activist organizations?

KJ: Organizations burn out; I just think it's hard. It's hard to have, it's hard to do this kind of work that is so sort of like I said emotionally depleting in lots of ways and to be sometimes in organizations that are working over-capacity so that one person might have four jobs kind of thing. I mean that kind of thing can really take a toll on your health and well-being and sanity and all that stuff. So people need to be able to take breaks and need to be able to advocate for themselves to make sure that they are not overworking themselves. It's challenging when you are really, really passionate about an issue because you will sometimes almost kill yourself to do it. Like you will work all the hours and go to all the things and because you are very deeply believe in the thing that you are working for. Sometimes when you are a little bit detached from like the work that you're doing, you can just go home and be unplugged but a lot of people who are working in some of these really important issues they never, they never unplug. It's because you're always thinking about it, and you're always encountering it in your life. So I think that that's the biggest challenge I see is figuring out how we can build up enough of a deck so that there's lot of people to help to shoulder the weight. The problem is big enough that it has enough space for a lot of people to continue to be doing the work together. So how can we be building new leaders, making sure that lots and lots of people are present so that

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people can step out and take moments and know that the work will continue to get done and don't feel like it's on them.

RG: Do conferences play a role in sort of, you mentioned I know there's different reproductive justice conferences. How do they figure in to sort of maintaining the work?

KJ: I think it's good because people get to share experiences and best practices and learn from each other, and it's no, it makes no sense to just be kind of out trying to create something from scratch that somebody has a model for. So being able to really share skills and information is really helpful, being able to like connect people just on a personal level who really understand the work and can be like a soft resting place sort of thing is really good at conferences. Like I said there's a lot of really brilliant folks who are getting a new opportunity to share and become kind of leaders in the field and getting more and more exposure through that process of speaking at conference or presenting a project or something like that. That's really exciting especially for folks who are in these tiny orgs that are off the beaten path that are maybe doing something that is groundbreaking, but they don't get seen because there's bigger orgs that get most of the shine, and so that part is really cool too, to really see the folks who are grinding and on the ground.

RG: What are your hopes for feminism?

KJ: I hope that there will be more productive discourse and more, I hope there will be able I guess like build in more space for different experiences and perspectives. I just get tired of the same like somebody said something out of pocket and so we need like eight responses to this crazy thing that somebody wrote and like that—

RG: A lot of energy.

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KJ: Yeah, it's just like, I mean I just hope that we can, that it becomes a discourse and not a point of contention between different groups. And I really hope that more people who don't identify as women can start to really talk about the issues of feminism and the ways that sexism and patriarchy play out in the world. So more I don't know good strong allyship and discourse, and I hope that sort of people can learn to apply the gender lens to--I mean because there's so many of these issues that have implications across gender identity that are not seen that way. And so if we can continue just try to insert that into conversations especially politically like thinking about these really big and pervasive issues that really impact people of different gender identities very differently and some people really, really detrimentally. And we feel safe to talk about it and feel like there are listening ears for it or something like that. I don't know. Those are the things that I think about.

RG: With that are you thinking of like one example of something that experienced gender lens, just curious?

KJ: Um so this is probably a small one, but you think about something like having conversations about minimum wage. So minimum wage affects lots and lots and lots of people. There's this idea of who are the people who are making minimum wage. But really somewhere like sixty to seventy percent of those are women and are likely parents. A good portion of those are likely women of color, like so let's talk about that. And so and how that informs some of these other pieces because if you are working a minimum wage job and you don't have access to health benefits and—it's just like they're all--.

RG: You have like three kids

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KJ: Yeah, yeah. You have all these other things and that part of your life again might really be directly connected to whether or not you decide to have more children or need abortion care. It might be connected to the ways in which the state and law enforcement treat you. I mean I don't know. It's just like lots of different pieces that are compounded. So us having the ability to acknowledge those differences and not use the sort of cookie cutter mentality of like we're just going to address this thing and pretend like once we do this magic fix it's going to feel the same for all people. That's just not the way people's lives work. So like really acknowledging the complexity of the way that people live and the ways that these other forces impact that. Like those are the things that I just really want. And I feel like if we really, if folks had a real understanding about like what feminism is about and about really trying to reset equal value of people regardless of their gender and we could break through for some of the ways that we've been conditioned to think about gender. I feel like that could create the entry point for a lot of change. It's not going to fix everything but it at least gets people thinking differently about how to address some of these really, really big problems. So that was probably again very convoluted. I kind of talk all around but—

RG: No, that's—no but you're opening up, you can present the minimum wage stuff as just a--. I mean I think it's probably intentionally just left sort of as a universal problem

KJ: Right

RG: And thinking that if it was a women of color problem that it would get less support somehow.

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KJ: Right, right, right or if we didn't, if we look at equal pay and people like to use that seventy-seven cents on the dollar, but then you break that down a little bit more and you talk about like how Latina women are paid in comparison to white women. How black men are paid in comparison to white women. And then you start to stratify it and then it starts to reveal some other issues, and so I mean I guess it just, we can't keep thinking about these things super separate because they're not separate because we don't live that way. Again it's just kind of like—

RG: Right, it's a fiction that it's just a simple number or strategy or something.

KJ: Right, right, right.

RG: But sort of we've covered the questions I wanted to cover. So I want to leave room to sort of just talk about anything you want, what we're missing.

KJ: Um, I mean

RG: In this conversation.

KJ: You touched on a lot of different stuff. There's nothing that I was expecting that you didn't ask me. So I mean is there anything else that you're curious or wanted to know more about.

RG: I mean kind of just since we've been talking about it just in this larger context political, like in this moment what's my question—sort of I don't know, how you see this organization working in this moment.

KJ: Sure. I mean so I think that like when I think about the phrase like in this moment, I feel like we are, I feel like we really are on the cusp of some really major change and that there is sort of a tipping point looming where things are going to start to really shift. And so--in a lot of areas. I think that marriage equality is like just the

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beginning of sort of these major changes. And I don't know exactly what it's going to look like, but I do think that there's going to be a leveling out in some ways of some of the social inequality that we're constantly fighting against. I don't think it's going to be quick and I don't think it's going to be easy. But I do think that we're kind of on the precipice of the beginnings of that, and then us as an organization, I'm hopeful that we can continue to broaden our scope and I don't know be able to have a role—. I guess at, it doesn't, to me it doesn't matter if we're in the front lines or in the background but having a role and playing a part in creating some of that social inequity shift in the state of Georgia, starting to see some real progress towards more equity across difference and in these different parts of the state that I mean I just want people's lives to start to improve. I want fewer people to be dying. Like I want, I want us to start to see some forward momentum, and I'm just cautiously optimistic that we're at the very beginning of some of that chain of events. So I'm just hopeful that feminist doesn't get left behind and that we don't get so stuck and mired in one area that we're not flexible enough to figure out how we can support and or be directly involved in some of these other aligning or sort of tangential issues. So I just, I don't want us to be the ones that I complain about as like you all are doing this work and you don't have anything to say. Like I can't, I wouldn't be comfortable continuing being here if we weren't active and vocal and advocating for people. So I don't know—I don't know if that answered you either. But that's what I got.

RG: Yeah, no. I just sort of wanted to pull back a little bit because we're going through different issues and there's like sort of—

KJ: Sure.

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RG: I feel like you have a lot of experience in these different, going through all this stuff so where you sort of see the larger picture. I'm glad it's cautiously optimistic because I wasn't sure whether you were going to say we're at a tipping point and I don't know if abortion providers will be allowed to work in a couple of--.

KJ: No, I don't think that. I really don't. I mean you never know. But I don't think, I think that we've got a very good job of like holding back the tide for a really long time. And I'm hopeful that our resistance will help to fatigue the other side and that we'll continue to do work to build support and to—the marriage equality wave, like that wasn't an easy fought battle either. This kind of growing acceptance for like really visible and really public face of LGBTQ folks is, I mean it's not won yet obviously, which we talked about, but it's, but it is drastically improved. And so I would love to be at a place where we could see a commercial about abortion on TV like what would that be like? We're starting to see little pieces of like storylines and television shows and movies where it's not a tragic story. Thinking about that kind of thing where it's not, there are other places in the world where it's not a bad word and it's not a scary word. And so hopefully one day we're going to get to that place, but it's going to continue to take work on our part and stuff like these Planned Parenthood videos don't help, but it's an empty tactic. Like I feel like they're just trying to or figure out whatever they can to see what sticks. And the more prepared we can be the better, the better our chances are. So--

RG: Great.

KJ: And that's all I got.

RG: It's—I'm going to turn this off.

END OF INTERVIEW

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Transcribed by LM Altizer, September 17, 2015

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