

- Speaker 1: Okay. So why don't we start off with just your name, today's date, and we'll take it from there.
- Zakia McKinsey: My name is Zakia McKinsey and today's date is Tuesday, February the 26th, 2019.
- Speaker 1: You had to look that up. So, why don't we start with just a little bit about yourself, how your growing up, how was that your experience growing up and just your childhood experience?
- Zakia McKinsey: So, I grew up in Richmond. I'm a native of Richmond, and I'm 46 years old. I'm a trans woman of color, and growing up in Richmond was... Richmond is a great place to live. But like growing up... like coming out as gay, coming out as trans, while being black, was very difficult. And, a lot of the stuff that I had to deal with at a younger age was difficult and traumatic.
- Zakia McKinsey: You know, dealing with family and dealing with people in community.
- Speaker 1: What age did you come out?
- Zakia McKinsey: Opened it out of my mouth at 17.
- Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Zakia McKinsey: Yeah. And then, began to do some things like hormones and stuff like, and then came out again at 19 as trans.
- Speaker 1: Can you talk a little bit of the challenges, both probably... I'm sure family challenges, but also like the systems that you had to navigate too, whether it's-
- Zakia McKinsey: So, the family challenges were, just my mom wasn't cool with it, and didn't accept it at all. Then there weren't any like really organizations doing work for LGBTQ people, and specifically not trans people. And I never... like growing up, I knew something was different, but I really didn't see any people that really looked like me, until like I started going into gay clubs and seeing other transsexuals and performers and stuff like that. So, it was very different.
- Speaker 1: How about challenges in institutions?
- Zakia McKinsey: Well, there were many challenges. Employment was a major huge issue. A lot of trans women still face issues with employment. The general assembly was trying to pass laws to protect us in employment and housing and that got passed on. And then it was crazy because I just shared a post recently talking about how the dog, the Tommy Dog, how what happened to the dog, right is sad. And I have a dog and I love dogs, but this happened not a couple of weeks ago, and

they passed a law that fast to protect animals against violence, but you won't protect laws against trans and LGBTQ people or for trans and LGBTQ people.

Zakia McKinsey: So, it was just sad that a dog has more value than people who identify as LGBTQ. But there are many challenges, housing, employment, you know the relationship challenges. There are many challenges, you know, being black and being trans and in Richmond.

Speaker 1: How did you come to the world of AIDS, the community of AIDS?

Zakia McKinsey: So, it was a friend of mine, a really good friend of mine, who kind of took me under my wing and was kind of like a mother to me, and ever since was like a mother to me when my family kind of, turned their back on me because of who I was, and she suffered while she was dealing with the disease. I'm not going to say suffered, but she was dealing with the virus. And then, she later, succumbed to the virus.

Zakia McKinsey: But I felt bad because I was so young, and I didn't really understand the virus at all. And to see something that took my friend from one extreme to another, really frightened me. And because I wasn't educated about it, I stayed away from them because of that, you know what I'm saying? And so then when they passed away, I felt it was important for me to get knowledge about it, understand the disease.

Zakia McKinsey: And, I started volunteering out of guilt, because I felt bad, because I wasn't there for this person that was there for me in so many different ways. And just learning about it, and thinking about ways that I could use my... I want to know if this influence is the right word, but I guess it was at that time because, I was a really huge performer in the community.

Zakia McKinsey: So, people really paid attention to my voice in the club. So I'm using my voice, just to influence from being a performer and having that platform, HIV prevention became like my mission and making sure that people, you know, understood testing. And I started being on an advisory board for Fan Free, well health brigade, which was Fan Free, and helping them to implement that whole hour speaks in the clubs, and being able to test and do all of that in the club. And so this happened, that's kind of like how I got into it.

Speaker 1: So, what year was that? Sorry to take you back to years and numbers, but I think given the-

Zakia McKinsey: I want to say my friend passed away in 2000. I actually became employed with Fan Free in 2001, but I was on an advisory committee with them, I want to say from like 98 until 2001, until I began to, yeah.

Speaker 1: So the intersection between your role as a performer and an AIDS advocate, can you talk a little bit about your performance aspect about it?

- Zakia McKinsey: So, it really wasn't like... I won't say that I use performance to advocate. I use the platform that performing gave me to advocate. So whenever I would have the microphone in clubs, I would talk about the importance of testing, how simple it was, how painless it is. Anytime it was in events that I could coordinate myself, I would invite, you know, Fan Free or the health department or whoever to partner with us to offer these services to the community.
- Zakia McKinsey: Being part of different workshops, whether it was speaking on panels, about the importance of getting tested or raising the stigma related to it. Those were ways that when I say used performing as a way to advocate, and then when I would win pageants, you know, I felt like as a representative or a queen of a system, it's important to give back to your community. It's not all about like reigning and not being approachable. It's about making a difference in the community as well as entertaining, as well as being visible.
- Zakia McKinsey: But HIV prevention and education, I always put it at the forefront, and I always blow my bull at home, making sure people get tested so.
- Speaker 1: The areas of the club scene, I know that from... we were speaking to Patricia Corbett who wrote a piece.
- Zakia McKinsey: House of Snow.
- Speaker 1: Yeah, exactly. And how, you know, she was telling us about how much of a support the community was, and how important it was, because there wasn't programs or institutions that were really helping LGBTQ or trans community. So, what did you see, within that community scene and how was that for you?
- Zakia McKinsey: Well, just like I said earlier, that when I began to transition, there weren't any organizations doing that work. So it was figuring it out on my own, or figuring it out with community members, or people like my friend that I was talking about that contracted the virus. That was my Roseme, that was my network of information that I went to, to figure out how to navigate life experiences and things that I was going through. What was the other part because I got the [inaudible 00:10:11].
- Speaker 1: I was just trying to figure out, understand the support system within the club, and the ballroom practice culture and-
- Zakia McKinsey: But I mean, it goes from like, this spring and like feed me, help to keep me from being homeless, help me understand how to go other routes than being the stereotypical sex worker, using female impersonation and pageantry and shows as a way to make a living. You know what I'm saying? So, like now, I feel like a lot of people that come out, they have a luxury that I didn't have 20 years ago. And you take advantage of this luxury and where you have people who are like meaning 75% of the way, and you only have to do 25%.

Zakia McKinsey: And that you can't even do, when 20 years ago, there was nowhere that I could come out and say, "Oh, I don't have the money for my rent." You know what I'm saying? There was no place. So it was, you either get evicted or you figure it out on your own.

Speaker 1: So what led to Nations foundation? How did you get... where's the trajectory?

Zakia McKinsey: So-

Speaker 1: Because you stopped that fanfare you read by the way.

Zakia McKinsey: So, Fan Free 2001 to 2009 almost 10, I stayed there, almost a decade. And then I left there and I went to Richmond City Health district as a disease intervention specialist and I was there for six years. And, it was like... I guess like in the progression of like... let me go back. I have no degree. Like I only have... I'm a high school Grad. I went to like a little bit of college. And so when I was at Fan Free, like you have way more creative freedom to do programming, to target the individuals that you needed to reach.

Zakia McKinsey: And so like in working at Fan Free, like just seeing all of my colleagues, it was like you worked in the nonprofit sector and then you went to the state health department, you know what I'm saying? So it was like, "Oh, I will have done it all when I get to the health department." And then I got to the health department and it was like a culture shock, a reality shock. And I didn't have that creative platform to design programming that was outside of the box to be able to reach people.

Zakia McKinsey: And so I was kind of like in this cut and dry every day is the same thing, doing the same thing. And then listening to, like what people were saying. Like, if you go to the health department Monday, Wednesday, Friday are clinic days, STI clinic days. So where's the confidentiality in that? Because when I walk into this building on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, people know that I have something, you know what I'm saying? I have a STI, I might have HIV, herpes, whatever I'm going in for the stigmatized whatever I'm going in for.

Zakia McKinsey: But it's so much stigma and then like transportation was issues. And how can I encourage somebody to stay on meds to suppress their virus when they don't have somewhere to eat. I mean, they don't have anything to eat or they don't have somewhere to live, or they don't have clothes, or anybody getting evicted. And if your basic needs aren't met, then your medical care is like, that's secondary. So those were the things that I saw and I felt like I had all these amazing ideas that was just inside of my head that the health department wasn't hearing because they couldn't do it, and we weren't a CBO to do it.

Zakia McKinsey: So, I was real heavily in pageantry, so I me and my cousin had started a pageant, and we started the pageant 70 years ago and it's called Nations Pageant. And the mission of the pageant was to provide education and information related to

HIV prevention and education. So we did a lot of stuff in community health fairs, toy drives for children living with HIV, feed the homeless, whatever we could do. And, we saved money every year from the pageant.

Zakia McKinsey: And then it just got to a point where I had told my cousin, I was like, "Yo, I'm not happy here at work." And, it's more that we need to do to reach people, and they're not thinking outside of the box. And I was like, I think we save that enough money. I want to apply for 501C3, and we started doing our own stuff because I know if we're a nonprofit, then we have less restrictions of the ways that we can reach folks versus the state, you know what I'm saying?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Zakia McKinsey: And so, he was like, "You know, that's your field, but I love you and I support you so I'm down for whatever you want to do." And so, October 24th of 15, we opened and I left Richmond City, I want to say the end of December. And the reason I left out, because we had opened in October of 15, 11 December. But the reason I left was because I couldn't work for the state health department and apply for grants through the state health department as well. And I didn't want to put my business in someone else's names.

Zakia McKinsey: So I took a leap of faith and left. I cleared out all of my retirement from the stay. I got it all out early, and I started uber-ing and I started working for the anti violence project and I just started the organization and then I started doing it full time. And that's how, here we are today.

Speaker 1: Wow. Wow. That's incredible.

Zakia McKinsey: Yeah.

Speaker 1: That's incredible. So given that context, what do you see are the biggest changes for yourself? You know, given your working with Health Brigade, working with the health department, and now doing your own thing that really serves the community that you want to target.

Zakia McKinsey: I think each place, I was supposed to be there to learn what I was supposed to learn and go through what I was supposed to go through. Make things better when I left because I do believe that I had considerable contributions to each place. You know, when I worked at Fan Free, I was able to be instrumental and starting trans health services in Virginia. And that, that model has been duplicated in other organizations like planned parenthood, and there was other organizations in Norfolk who was doing it.

Zakia McKinsey: And then when I was at Richmond city, they expanded my knowledge of more than just HIV, where my focus was really just HIV, and so understanding syphilis and how complex study is and the stages of it and just understanding reporting and all of that kind of stuff. Understanding budgets, understanding the state

way of thinking versus nonprofit mindset. I think all of those components was what I needed to be able to... and all those relationships that I made during that time, kind of was instrumental into how successful we have been in the last three years.

Zakia McKinsey: Because like without those relationships, like if it wasn't for like Sean McNaulty, and Heather Brunson, and Susan Talley, Jim Beckner, they were really instrumental in one, taking a chance on someone who was black and trans, who had never had a job other than performing. You know what I'm saying?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Zakia McKinsey: No degree, and giving me every opportunity to exceed and do YL, and make a difference in my community. Even like the TJ clinic. You know, when I mentioned it, Jim Beckner, he wasn't like, "That's impossible to do." He was like, "Well, you figure out where the money come from, how to fund it, and let's make it happen." Because they knew it was a need there. And then it was like the next year, this funding opportunity came out and it was like they wanted something specific for trans programming. So I was like, "Here's the money," you know?

Zakia McKinsey: And those was people like him who just... when it was an idea that I had, it was never like, that's a dumb idea. It was like, "If you can make it work, make it work." And that's kind of like the mentality that I have with my staff now. You know, we have to meet people where they are and our community is still very much marginalized today. There's still so much stigma still related to HIV and testing, and especially within black communities.

Zakia McKinsey: So I encourage them to think outside of the box, you know, think about whatever barriers people are facing, or like correct term social determinants to health, and how can we combat those social determinants of health and come up with unique ways to reach people, to get them tested, to get them in care. You know, to have dialogue about being positive or living with HIV, understanding prep and the resource that, that is, and also still understanding the importance of using condoms, but then also making sure folks are undetectable, because we know that if you're undetectable, you're less likely to transmit the virus because of detectable.

Zakia McKinsey: So just giving people knowledge, especially the young kids, to kind of try to change their mindsets because a lot of them, "I'm good, I don't want to know." You know, and then when we look at... or just personally when I look at how many of my friends who have passed away that are young, that you know what I do for a living, but you choose to keep your mouth closed, and not take care of yourself, and then we have to be coming to your service.

Zakia McKinsey: You know what I'm saying? But again, that's just from the stigma of it. How hateful our LGBTQ community is specifically black communities are. And how

hateful they are to people who are living with the virus. How they make that such a dirty negative thing that folks are afraid to talk about it or afraid to access care. You know, having a mobile unit is like amazing. But like this, we were out yesterday, and this man was like, "I don't know work for," I always like to just listen to people, because people never think that it's me who is like the owner, director, whatever.

Zakia McKinsey: So he was like, "I don't know who you work for, but you tell your boss, you tell your people that this was a great idea having this mobile testing unit." And he was like, "And where y'all at, everybody needs to be stopping their cars and coming to getting tested because it's free." And so I was like, "Well, thank you." I said thank you very much. And so he's just kept harping on it. He kept harping on it, and this was yesterday. And so I told him, I said, "I founded this organization."

Zakia McKinsey: And he looked me, and he was like, "You did it." And I was like, "Yeah." And he was like, "Well kudos to you. You did a really... this is awesome." And he just kept harping on the fact of how amazing it was. But this was an idea that I had when I was with the health department. We had a whole big dental van. Bon Secours dental van, that sat outside the health department, every day. I would be like, "Come on, can we take it out?"

Zakia McKinsey: So I was determined, it was like a dream of mine to have a mobile van, so that we could go out and test because I know just like when we put up, people are not going to just come into this office and get tested. But if we on Broad Street at Third and Broad, people gone... we do 20 tests in like 35, 40 minutes. Yesterday we went out, we were out, we got out at five o'clock. We came back at like 6:00, 6:30, we did nine tests in that little bit of time, and using food as a way to incentivize testing because people are hungry, people are homeless.

Zakia McKinsey: They don't have food to eat, but they'll come and get tested. If I know I'm going to get a bag of food, then I can open up and it's some stuff that I can deal with because I have nowhere to lay up. Yes, I'm going to come and get tested. So it has made a huge impact on the people we serve, the amount of people that do know their status, the amount of people who didn't know their status and were homeless, and we could connect them to services to get them housing because of their status in the programs.

Zakia McKinsey: So, it's just making a big impact on people and it's a good impact. And then like when I'm sitting there, and people don't even know that it's me who is behind all of it, and I'm listening to just how amped up they are about it. It's awesome.

Speaker 1: Yeah, it's an amazing idea to do that and give an accessibility. Right? I think that's what it is, is making it accessible. So what different areas do you have the mobile go to? Where do you go?

Zakia McKinsey: We go everywhere. We get the best numbers in like Mechanicsville, like Mechanicsville and Cool Lane, they take the mobile unit to Wickham Court, Craig Court, Jackson Moore, Borough Street, Salsa Plaza. And it's not really, a given schedule, because people have asked us, "Well, what's the schedule?" We don't really have a schedule. It's like when I really was thinking about it and trying to figure out and like God just put it on my spirit. You don't need a schedule, just go. You know what I'm saying?

Zakia McKinsey: I tell them like, "If we slow, transfer the phone, go ahead and go out." Because we go run into people in all different places. And it's not to just continue to go to one area, and then kind of exhaust yourself in the area. So just move around, exploring new spaces. You know what I'm saying? My thing is just go out and get people tested and come back and either... you know, make sure that they link to care, but we go everywhere, everywhere.

Speaker 1: Wow. How about, you talked about younger people, and how surprising it is in knowing that you're here, can you talk a little bit about the youth community and do you serve the youth community and do you particularly target, I don't know, high schools, universities?

Zakia McKinsey: I think it's different based on where we go. When we are in low income communities, young African American men, 16 to 25, 26, they are more willing to come get condoms versus getting tested. More women in those areas get tested and I've heard the mentality of "Oh, when my girlfriend is good, so I'm good." But I've noticed that a lot of older people in those communities, will get tested more frequently and more receptive about it than the younger people.

Zakia McKinsey: We also test that side by side. More informed youth, different upbringing, parents a little more aware, accepting and affirming up and know all of the risks. So kids there test more frequently. High schools, we haven't really gotten into any high schools and I've been thinking about, because it's like so many... like we're tape with the schools. So I have really thought about like posting up across the street from the school.

Zakia McKinsey: You know I'm not on your property, posting up across the street and seeing what happens. But also I'm excited about, kind of like these peer navigator positions that where you're ready to hire for because we're specifically targeting people who are youth that have experienced housing instability. And I feel like having them as test counselors being young, it may change the mindset and people may feel more comfortable being tested by someone who looks like that.

Zakia McKinsey: Almost kind of like how before... you know, just like how there was never a Trans DIS, Disease Intervention Specialists at Richmond City, and how I was able to tap into getting more trans people into care and tested and all of that. And even the same thing at, you know, at Health Brigade. You know, there was a trans woman who was a case manager there long time ago.



Zakia McKinsey: But in an outreach position out in the community, I was the first. And so, because people saw someone who looked like them. It made them more comfortable with that organization. So, I'm hoping that having youth, and I even like mentioned to the health department to ask what's the young instead of person you'd be trained as the HIV test counselor, because CDC guidelines said that we can test someone, 13, without parental consent. So if we can test someone 13, can a 13 year old become a test counselor?

Zakia McKinsey: My nephew is 17. He's asked, can he be a test counselor? Because he talks to his friends, and his track team about the importance of using condoms. This is a way that I can get into youth. You know what I'm saying? So I'm waiting to hear back from them, but I'm always thinking-

Speaker 1: That's important and really innovative. So this new program is starting this month, this Wednesday that a pear-

Zakia McKinsey: So, they will actually come on board March 18.

Speaker 1: All right, that's pretty soon.

Zakia McKinsey: Yeah.

Speaker 1: So how many are they?

Zakia McKinsey: It's supposed to be two.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Zakia McKinsey: But off record, we weren't really impressed with a lot people, they look good on paper. Then when we interviewed them, they were all... so, is three that I specifically want to interview because I wasn't on any of the interview processes, but these are the three that they said were of the best. So, depending on what I gathered from them, I may just hire one, because the program is still new. And then if like we've seem... if side by side seems to get more people in that host home project, then I may go ahead and amp up, like put it out again as maybe say we can get a new pool of candidates, but, it's supposed to be two.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Zakia McKinsey: So yet again expanding.

Speaker 1: So what other visions do you have for Nations Foundation?

Zakia McKinsey: I feel like I'm getting close, because it was a lot of news and press about me trying to purchase a house, a couple of years ago. And, that's part of the fact,

because we assist so many people with emergency housing. And putting them at a hotel was just putting a bandaid on it, because in that time they put them together. And then when you look for a job, you need at least two, sometimes two weeks, sometimes a month before you really get a paycheck. You know what I'm saying? And so I really want to get a house that's like... I feel it real close.

Zakia McKinsey: Like we need a house where we're able to house folks, give them a longer period of time than five to 10 days. But in that house also, like I've already made relationships like my bank, they're willing to... and this is some of the things that were going to kick off without peer navigators, because when these kids get in this house home, they only have two years to be there. So you need to learn how to manage a checking account, how to open up a checking account, the difference between the checking and savings account.

Zakia McKinsey: You need to understand your credit score, life skills, and like I want that house to be able to provide these necessary skills so that when they transition out of the house, they're transitioning out into their own place, and they have jobs, they understand how to manage that money. They know what their credit score looks like or have worked to clean it up or in the process of cleaning it up, and be able to sustain themselves, get tested regularly and, you know, overall health and wellness and a holistic approach.

Zakia McKinsey: So that's what's next. I really want to get that house because what we spend a year in hotels. Or if it's not even the house, like I've even like pondered the idea of renting an apartment or renting a house, because it would still be cheaper to rent a house to be able to provide a longterm stay to help. So just navigating that. That's my next goal.

Speaker 1: That's exciting. I mean it takes it to another level as well.

Zakia McKinsey: Yeah. Like, another goal was to, expand our STI services and we were happy to launch that stuff like a week ago. We were only doing rapid HIV testing, and a lot of times I felt like we missed out on folks, because we weren't offering any other testing. So now we offer chlamydia, gonorrhea, syphilis, we have a rapid Hep C test for individuals who meet certain requirements for Hep C, and then we can do Hep B and then I'm going to make sure we Hep C as well.

Zakia McKinsey: So now those people aren't like say, "Oh we can't do the other tests." Because I feel like we probably missed out on some people who probably could have been positive or whatever, but because we didn't offer, a complete array of STI screening, then they was like, "well I'll go somewhere else." But now they're able to come here for free and get everything they need.

Speaker 1: That's incredible.

Zakia McKinsey: Yeah.

- Speaker 1: That's incredible. So what do you think are the biggest challenges as you move forward?
- Zakia McKinsey: As I move forward with?
- Speaker 1: With Nations foundation-
- Zakia McKinsey: Biggest challenges for Nations? Biggest challenges for the community?
- Speaker 1: I think both actually. Yeah.
- Zakia McKinsey: I would like... funding, I always say funding, because we need money to do what it is that we do. But also like raising more awareness about the organization, and the services we provide. Because like I said, when we take the mobile unit out, it's easy for us to just get, you know how quiet it is in here. I want to hear the phones ringing more, you know what I'm saying? I want more people in and out. I want to see people utilizing the computer lab and it being more lively here.
- Zakia McKinsey: But I think, you know, challenges are funding. I think challenges, one, a major challenge is being black, and trans and, a leadership role and getting seats at the table, or making connections with corporate sponsors, to tap into the type of resources that we need for me to accomplish that goal. So I think those are some challenges for me as the organization.
- Zakia McKinsey: I think challenges within the community, just like I said stigma, and trying to change the mindset of the way people think. I think a challenge is getting into the schools, because I think that... like the sexual... like the health education piece in school is not in depth.
- Speaker 1: Yeah. It's terrible.
- Zakia McKinsey: No.
- Speaker 1: It's like abstinence.
- Zakia McKinsey: Yeah.
- Speaker 1: That's the solution.
- Zakia McKinsey: Yeah. So I think that's a challenge, and I think when... like I look at my nephew is just like an example because he is everything that shows me that homophobia and trans, all of that is just taught. You know, when kids are exposed to these things, and you expose them in a positive light, and they understand, the mindset is so much different. And I think that because there's this lack of

education and understanding at a young age, the cycle continues, and that's why we have so much ignorance that we have now.

Zakia McKinsey: But I think if it was, you know, more educational at a younger age, that would make a huge difference. I think it would also slow down the spread of disease, and new cases of HIV. So I think that's a major challenge like for people. I would love to see more end up the education in schools. I would love to see, condoms, not be contraband in the prison systems, because you know that you're locking these young man up, and you're locking them up for long periods of time and y'all can have your PREA, all day long, your prison rape elimination act, but you know that people are having sex in the prisons, so why not equip them with what they need so that they do not get affected, or come home infected and give it to their wives. And so that was a challenge.

Speaker 1: Yeah. What if you had anything to share with your community, what would it be, or for the youth? Like what would the one thing you want people to leave knowing?

Zakia McKinsey: Just in general?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Zakia McKinsey: I guess what I like instill, and my nephew is I told him this the two Cs, use condoms and don't mess with crack. I always say, you use condoms, until you don't mess with my credit. But no seriously. Use condoms, don't mess up your credit and get tested. Like that's what I really want people to understand. Because if you have a good credit, you can't be homeless, you know what I'm saying? And credit trickles down into so many different things.

Zakia McKinsey: Like unemployment, insurance, housing, using condoms will keep you from getting STIs and possibly contracting HIV, and get tested. Because if you don't get tested, you're not going to know. And if you're walking around not knowing, then you're constantly putting people at risk, and you're doing continuous damage to your own body.

Speaker 1: What were your support systems, your role models?

Zakia McKinsey: So I pray a lot. I have an amazing relationship with my pastor. I can call him anytime when I'm feeling any kind of way. I have amazing people, that's like part of my community and people that I call family that is not really blood family, but they are my family because they've been there for me. So I kind of fall back on them a lot. And then my dog, she on my nerves, but is my ride or die, and it's a shame that people can't find it in themselves to give you unconditional love as pets and animals.

Speaker 1: How about... I guess I'm also thinking like professional mentors.

Zakia McKinsey: I have a lot of professional mentors. One is in the other room waiting for to talk to me.

Speaker 1: Oh, am I holding you back?

Zakia McKinsey: Her name is Carla Bennett. She's an intelligent woman, and she teaches me a lot. Jim Beckner, Heather Brunson, Sean McNaulty, Susan Talley, Greg Fordham, Rodney Loft, and Bill Harrison, James Milner, James Prairie. I have a lot of mentors and amazing people that are in my life that help me like navigate a lot of different things. So kind of like blessed. That's what I say.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I guess I'm thinking about, for you, we talked about like the programs that you wished to happen. How do you see yourself like 10 years from now?

Zakia McKinsey: 10 years, I'll be 56.

Speaker 1: Oh.

Zakia McKinsey: Probably still be very much involved in doing this work. Will I be in Virginia? I don't know. I don't know. Because like the ultimate goal is to have Nations everywhere. Like I would love to see, Atlanta Nations, or Georgia Nations, or New York Nations, Alabama, California. Because I know that people need these services everywhere, there's just so much going on. So like at the end of the 18 years, I hope that I'm looking at this organization expanding more across the country, and providing those needed services in different places.

Speaker 1: Which would be your first stop if it goes to Nation?

Zakia McKinsey: Georgia.

Speaker 1: Georgia?

Zakia McKinsey: Mm-hmm (affirmative). And that's probably where I would end up moving.

Speaker 1: Any specific reason or?

Zakia McKinsey: I love Atlanta. I hate the triathlete, but I love Atlanta. The houses are so beautiful. The neighborhoods are beautiful, the culture is amazing. They're very open, when it comes to the LGBTQ people, and especially trans people, it's not like... the culture is just different. Yeah.

Speaker 1: Have you seen change in terms of the trans Culture here in Richmond?

Zakia McKinsey: Major change, because it was invisible at one time. I would've never saw me 20 years ago on TV doing the work that I was doing. If I saw me on TV, it was

getting arrested, being killed, you know what I'm saying? Or portray on TV as some type of sex work or man in a dress. But Virginia has changed a lot, you see more people, more trans people aren't still. I think they know that it's important to be visible, to be accounted for, to make a change and to be taken seriously.

Zakia McKinsey: Like I said, there weren't organizations 20 years ago that helped folks. There wasn't funding opportunities to help you transition. There weren't medical providers in this state who were willing to work on trans people. So there's been huge change. There's support groups that we've noted for being trans. Employers, you know, we have companies like Capital One and Wells Fargo and Demand Energy who are affirming your LGBTQ identity.

Zakia McKinsey: So, there's a lot that has changed in the time, you know. Still a whole lot more work to be done, but huge change from 20 years ago. And that's why it's a little frustrating and infuriating. I'll use both of those words, when people kind of take for granted or be lax about the luxuries that they have now to help them. You remember back in the day, with HIV there weren't a lot of Meds that folks can take. But now, it's a plethora of medicines that people can take.

Zakia McKinsey: Not at work is not all these pills you have to take, with less side effects. And then, a drug that you can take that can make you resistant to it, but people still don't want to talk about it. People still don't want to get tested, it's just still all of this stigma related to it. So, like that's the only thing that, it just makes you sit and think, like how do you really drive the message home, and what is it really going to take for people to understand the importance of safer sex and getting tested.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative). There's lots more that I want to ask. How about, I guess I'm thinking more details and to ordinal details, but people's stories of having HIV and when they come see you, what are some stories that have been like happy endings, and some that have been just tragic endings? You thought they would go fine and then all of a sudden something shifted. Just for you, like what was the most memorable case for you?

Zakia McKinsey: I think like, kind of one that I talk about on a regular, is this one guy. He was actually the first person that tested positive at Fan Free, and he was living on the down low, had just graduated college and was very concerned about having children and getting married and all that kind of stuff. And I saw him maybe 10 years later and he had been married, it didn't last, but he ended up having three kids and none of them are positive.

Zakia McKinsey: And he's doing good. And so, like I share that with people a lot because people think that this is just a death sentence and that once you get this, you out of here. And that's not the case. You're living with a disease just like people live with diabetes. You have to watch what you eat, you have to get your sleep, you have to take your meds, not be stressed. And I mean, really that's everybody. But people should also understand that, people live with HIV and in care and

undetectable, are probably more healthier, than just general people who walk around the street who don't want to get tested, "Oh I'm good, I know my status," and don't want to get tested.

Zakia McKinsey: But yeah, I use that story a lot. And then I just use the fact, you know how they were really, there was really nothing but ACT that took a toll on your body and here all of these medicines that you can take, so please take care of yourself.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative). How about one where you would just disappointed with the outcome or you wish you could do more?

Zakia McKinsey: I don't think I've had any of that, I've been disappointed with the outcome. I think what I have been disappointed is it's like I said before, there are people who I have been close to, who know what I do for a living, but I didn't feel comfortable enough to open up their mouth and then ended up passing away. One of my friends passed away at 26 years old, and called me grandma, and came to my house every day, and would talk to me about any of everything except for that because so much stigma within our community.

Zakia McKinsey: And, I wish our own folks would stop beating up our own folks, because we have so many people that are outside of our community that's already done a good job of beating us up. So we need to stop beating each other.

Speaker 1: If, as we're also thinking about making sure we have a wide range of perspectives, is there any other person that you would recommend to share their stories?

Zakia McKinsey: Here in Richmond?

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative) in Richmond.

Zakia McKinsey: Did Rodney connect you with Deirdre Johnson?

Speaker 1: Mm-mm.

Zakia McKinsey: Have you spoken to Heather Bronson.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative), yeah I will.

Zakia McKinsey: I'm sure you talked to Bob Higginson.

Speaker 1: Yes.

Zakia McKinsey: What about Elaine Martin?

Speaker 1: Yes.

Zakia McKinsey: Wow, [inaudible 00:53:14] crazy. No, you haven't talked to all the folks, Caroline Campbell?

Speaker 1: No we haven't talked to Caroline Campbell.

Zakia McKinsey: And also, I have a certain young lady who works for me part-time, her name is Zena Boy Thompson. And she's been in the field of HIV prevention for a while. And so-

Speaker 1: Would you think she would be interested?

Zakia McKinsey: Yes.

Speaker 1: That would be great.

Zakia McKinsey: Yeah.

Speaker 1: I feel like we are definitely missing a younger voice in the range of all of histories. And so, it'd be good to have that range.

Zakia McKinsey: There was a young guy who used to volunteer with me, and he was positive young guy. I'm going to ask Chanetta what's his name, because she'll remember. He was called Jamal I think, I'm going to ask her because she would know, because she and maybe you can reach out to him.

Speaker 1: Okay.

Zakia McKinsey: He is a young guy I would say he's like 19, 20.

Speaker 1: Mm-hmm (affirmative), wow.

Zakia McKinsey: But very vocal about his status and how he could get at what he's been through, he has a powerful story. [inaudible 00:54:33].

Speaker 1: Wow.

Zakia McKinsey: Yeah.

Speaker 1: Well, thank you so much for your time.

Zakia McKinsey: You're welcome.

Speaker 1: I hope that if we have any more questions that can follow up, but also, we have a photographer who's going to be also touching base with you to take pictures.

Zakia McKinsey: Okay.



This transcript was exported on Jun 28, 2019 - view latest version [here](#).

Speaker 1: So look out for that as well. What would be CC'd with that as well?

Zakia McKinsey: Just let me know.

Speaker 1: All right. Thank you so much.

Zakia McKinsey: You're welcome.

Speaker 1: I'm sure.