

An Interview with Tamika Shauntee

Perspectives from the COVID-19 Pandemic: Leadership and Learning in Nevada

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Each interviewee had the opportunity to review their transcript. All measures have been taken to preserve the style and language of the interviewee. This interview features Tamika Shauntee, Legal Advocacy Coordinator for American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada, and was conducted on 2/17/23 by Kelliann Beavers and Elia Del Carmen Solano-Patricio. This interview covers topics including reflections on leadership, organizational challenges, and opportunities for collaboration.

## **Interview with Tamika Shauntee**

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**SPEAKERS: Kelliann Beavers, Carmen Solano-Patricio, Tamika Shauntee**

**Kelliann Beavers [00:04]**

So the first question is – and you can speak to this for your role, or any role at ACLU that you feel has relevance to the pandemic response. Can you describe your role throughout the pandemic, and the role of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) as a whole?

**Tamika Shauntee [00:19]**

Oh, that's very interesting.

**Kelliann Beavers [00:20]**

Yeah, I know it's a huge question. So however you feel inspired to respond is fine.

**Tamika Shauntee [00:24]**

So that's also interesting because - I've been at the ACLU for 14 and a half years. So at the time that the pandemic hit, I think I'd been there for about 12 and a half years. And in that time, we had never really had to delve into issues regarding pandemics, endemics, or anything of that nature. So trying to navigate that space was somewhat interesting. So what we ended up doing was taking a lot of guidance from our national office, and mostly looking at what they're going to put in place that might be infringing upon people more so. And also looking at what are they going to provide to help people, so that things aren't hindered. As most people know, education was one thing that was majorly hindered. Jails and prison systems were majorly hindered, which, normally, are also bigger institutions in the community in general, elderly communities, and a lot of the veterans. So that was really kind of what we were looking at, and just trying to focus on making sure there was no overreach.

**Kelliann Beavers [01:22]**

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee [01:25]**

So a lot of watching and a lot of sitting back. I don't even think people in our national office had truly experienced that. Very few people in the world, or even in the U.S. for that matter, had ever had to deal with something like that.

**Kelliann Beavers [01:37]**

When you describe "overreach," do you mean by the government or other organizations that are attempting to help, in terms of what they're doing and what's appropriate, or how they-

**Tamika Shauntee** [01:46]

When I say, "overreach," I mean squashing their rights completely. Just because we're in some sort of mass hysteria, doesn't mean that we lose our rights. And sometimes when you're going through that, the first thing the government's issue is – in their view – is trying to provide safety. "Oh, we've got to make sure everyone's safe. We've got to make sure this doesn't go further."

**Kelliann Beavers** [02:06]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [02:07]

And sometimes when you act like that, immediately and really fast, you forget that we can't do this to them. We can't do X-Y-Z.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [02:13]

Right.

**Tamika Shauntee** [02:15]

I'll use our prison system for example. We can't put everyone on 23-hour lockdown because we don't want them to be around each other because it may spread, right?

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [02:22]

Right.

**Tamika Shauntee** [02:24]

That's an infringement on their rights. There are laws in place, in the prison system, that we have to abide by, regardless. So you have to figure out how to make them safe without infringing on their rights.

And so that sometimes can't be an immediate fix. Sometimes you have to take a step back, review things, look at things, and look at other places where you research, and figure out what works best.

**Kelliann Beavers** [02:47]

Well, like what you're describing with the lockdown would mean that you can't just keep them in one room? They have to be able to move, and they have to be able to interface, at least remotely, with other people [overtalking 02:54]

**Tamika Shauntee** [02:56]

Yes, there are laws and standards.

**Kelliann Beavers** [02:57]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [02:58]

For like the prison formats and stuff, that state, you have to provide certain things. So that we don't go back to our prisons being awkward slave camps and all that stuff

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [03:15]

I love that example because the ACLU is always a watchdog for civil liberties, but in the time of crisis, I think especially, right?

**Tamika Shauntee** [03:20]

Yes.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [03:21]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [03:23]

And I love that example. Because we do it every day but doing it when you're also trying to be safe, and you are showing empathy for everyone else. Our jobs, we could all work from home. There were people who couldn't physically go to work because the casinos were shut down. So trying to be there, and also do this. Because we also had to be, you know, kind of like, well, this is still wrong. But how do we tell them, "Eh, don't do that, it's wrong," but you still want to keep people safe?

**Kelliann Beavers** [03:55]

To have the new territory of evaluating it, right? Because you are recognizing that some of the measures may be being taken truly in the interest of safety, versus sometimes under the guise of safety, maybe like outside the pandemic.

**Tamika Shauntee** [04:07]

Yes.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [04:08]

It seems like a Catch-22 for both sides, right? The defenders of civil liberties and the people who are enforcing the laws, definitely.

**Tamika Shauntee** [04:15]

Yes.

**Kelliann Beavers** [04:18]

The next question, and this is also – especially given the amount of time since the pandemic, an enormous question. So can you walk through a timeline, as you remember it? What happened, what did you do? You can just speak to pivotal moments that you felt like shaped your response or leadership as a whole.

**Tamika Shauntee** [04:34]

Oh, my goodness. So my current role right now, I'm the Policy Specialist/Strategist. (laughs) Sorry. Like I said, I've been here for a long time, so I've touched on all of the different

departments we have here. But at that time, when the pandemic hit, I was with our legal department. Which was very pivotal. I want to say that we were in the office on Friday, and we left, and we just thought okay, we're going to be working from home for a few days. Nothing really different, nothing really to worry about. And then those two weeks turned into four weeks, and then it kept going.

**Kelliann Beavers** [05:07]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [05:10]

And in that timeframe, from 'we're not too concerned with anything that's going on,' to 'oh, my goodness. When they shut down the strip, that's when we have to kind of step in.' Because once that shut down, everything changes. Then we noticed, for example, that our Henderson jail, which is also used for immigration detainees, started doing certain things. And we're like "These people really haven't committed any crimes against a person or anything." That literally, they're on immigration holds. They actually had jobs and were working, or they missed an appointment, and you caught them driving down the street, and now, they're arrested.

**Kelliann Beavers** [05:45]

Like certain things that you're saying, this now is not the time for this.

**Tamika Shauntee** [05:47]

Now is not the time for that. We need to shift our priorities.

**Kelliann Beavers** [05:50]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [05:51]

So we went from working on current things to refocusing on 'oh, my goodness; what's going on?' and we started looking at certain issues like that.

**Kelliann Beavers** [06:00]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [06:01]

As I mentioned, the example about where they were trying to put people on lockdown all the time. It was like 'these people need to be at home with their families and stuff. This is not where they should be.' Further, it could be being spread in the jails a lot faster than anywhere else. So we started doing certain letters, phone calls, and meetings virtually, with stakeholders, community members, police departments, and everything.

And we actually ended up filing a mini lawsuit, that they have to be out, and that was with our national office. A lot of ACLUs across the country were doing that. This is one thing; that, as I stated before, you're trying to navigate it on our timeline. We could get this done. Get them out of there, and then let's go from there.

So that was one of the first, I think, major things that we were trying to figure out. And then from there, like I stated, education in prisons and the bigger institutions, we started noticing stuff with the schools. And I actually wrote an article on what these schools should be doing with special education. It was in the *Review Journal*, an op-ed. Because special education is near and dear to my heart – I have a family member I help with a lot, that had to go through that system.

So we just started time pinpointing all of these things that were occurring. It was almost like as it was occurring, we were reacting. So it was like the shutdown, the hotels went. Getting the people out so they could be home. Trying to figure out and navigate how are you going to provide the specifics for children with IEPs, when they're at home and virtual?

**Kelliann Beavers** [07:27]

What's IEPs?

**Tamika Shauntee** [07:30]

That's – sorry –

**Kelliann Beavers** [07:31]

No, that's okay. And I would definitely like to read your article as well, so don't let us forget to follow up.

**Tamika Shauntee** [07:35]

Okay.

**Kelliann Beavers** [07:37]

And as you refer to the article that you wrote, I'd like to read that. But "IEP" – and it's okay if you don't know and you just want to describe what it is.

**Tamika Shauntee** [07:42]

Yes. So it has actually changed slightly. It used to be an "Individual Education Plan."

**Kelliann Beavers** [07:47]

Uh-huh.

**Tamika Shauntee** [07:50]

Some people call it the "Individual Education Program." But it's "Plan" now because they're individual and unique to the student.

**Kelliann Beavers** [07:56]

Got it.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [07:57]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [07:58]

And those are a lot of our special education kids in the school. So when they're not in school, a

lot of them are – you know, severe, where they rely on certain things from the teachers, nurses, and aides that are in the class. So when they're not physically there, and they're just at home, and Mom and Dad are like "We've really, truly, had to provide education normally to the student, so how do we do it in this space?"

**Kelliann Beavers** [08:21]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [08:22]

So trying to make sure that the Nevada Department of Education – make sure that they go out to all the schools, and not just our traditional brick-and-mortar public schools, but the online schools and our charter schools. Because charter schools are public, most of them, as well, and making sure that you still provide these services – these things still have to happen.

And so you're going down this – we refer to this timeline, and we're almost – I don't want to call it "fact-checking," but we are checking like "Okay, is this system in order? What are they doing? Okay, now, let's check this one. Now, let's check this one. Do we need to write a letter? Do we need to file a lawsuit? What's happening?"

**Kelliann Beavers** [08:56]

Wow, that's so hands in the pot - I would never have known that..

**Tamika Shauntee** [08:57]

And I have to say, that was probably the busiest time I've ever worked here. And like I said, I was in the legal department, and it was just like going and going and going. Constantly watching and constantly looking at the news – what's happening next? What about these students who don't have Wi-Fi? How are you providing those things? So we were going down the line.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [09:20]

How are you getting the information from parents, CCSD, or-

**Tamika Shauntee** [09:25]

Typically, right now, our intake system is closed because we don't have many attorneys, but we do have an intake system. And at that time, we kept it open because so many people had questions and complaints. And it was also their way of reaching out to get a question answered – and sometimes they're easy, and sometimes they're more difficult. But that's the main way we were finding out about students with IEPs. We also have partner orgs that – I don't know if you've ever heard of Nevada PEP – it's Parents Educating Parents – making sure I clear up acronyms.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [09:54]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [09:57]

And they actually helped with that, and that was actually where we also found out about certain students not getting the stuff for their IEPs. You have to provide that, by law, regardless.



**Kelliann Beavers** [10:09]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [10:11]

So, even in a pandemic, you have to figure out how to navigate that. But that's the main source of it.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [10:15]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [10:17]

Some things were random - on the news, reporters, all kinds of ways.

**Kelliann Beavers** [10:22]

[overtalking 10:22] aspects of their education curriculum that had been blamed for them is what you're saying?

**Tamika Shauntee** [10:27]

Yes.

**Kelliann Beavers** [10:28]

You couldn't just get a "Okay, now school will be at home." The educators had to consider what pieces of their curriculum, or approaches to their education, that the parents might not have, do we, in fact, need to go and provide to them if we're going to ask them to do this?

**Tamika Shauntee** [10:39]

And one of the things – I know in that article – I co-wrote the article with the executive director from Nevada PEP.

**Kelliann Beavers** [10:47]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [10:48]

Was to potentially open up certain places for the more severe students, so that they could physically still go to. And then obviously, following all the proper protocols to make sure they're safe. But that way, they could at least still get their education. Because if our traditional students were experiencing such a loss, imagine what they were going through.

**Kelliann Beavers** [11:13]

Mm-hmm. And I could see circumstances where parents may or may not have been deemed essential workers, and not able to necessarily – I guess it would have to have been a decision made there about whether to work at all or whether to be home. Because these, even if they were older children, are not able to be unaccompanied.

**Tamika Shauntee** [11:28]

Exactly.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [11:30]

One of our questions is phrased, can you think of the groups that are most vulnerable, and you gave us pretty great examples of that, right? The special needs kids, prison populations, kids in schools, and older folks. Can you tell us ways about how you observed those populations? It sounds like you get most of your information from stakeholders.

**Tamika Shauntee** [11:53]

Yes.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [11:54]

Among other sources. But- [overtalking 11:55]

**Tamika Shauntee** [11:57]

Well, that's also interesting, too. So I know you read a little bit about me, but at that time also, I was the Vice President of the NAACP. So obviously, all of our students of color, and the young Black and African American students, we already knew.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [12:09]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [12:12]

We already knew there were situations with them. So it was actually a benefit for our organization because it was like here's Tamika, and I can pull NAACP stats as well. Plus we were getting them ourselves; plus we were in with Nevada PEP, and the Nevada NDALC, which is the Nevada Disability and Advocacy Law Center.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [12:33]

Uh-huh.

**Tamika Shauntee** [12:34]

We all were reaching out to each other: "Did you hear about this?" or "Have this parent contact you." It was a lot of direct things that we're finding out about them. And some things, we would find out about them because somebody would be at home, watching the news, and I would get a text message "Did you just see that?" and I was like "Oh, my goodness."

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [12:52]

Mmm, interesting.

**Tamika Shauntee** [12:54]

So-

**Kelliann Beavers** [12:55]

Wow. So, really, like just rolling with whatever information came to you, in addition to having systems to find it.

**Tamika Shauntee** [13:01]

Yeah.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [13:03]

What about prisons? What was your access like to carceral settings?

**Tamika Shauntee** [13:09]

Yes, so that's a good one. Prior to that – we already had been – we had already done a lot of prison work. That was one of our things, and one of the things in our strategic plan at that time. So we had already done several lawsuits, and we already knew partners and stuff. We had already been working on other issues before COVID ever happened.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [13:22]

Right.

**Tamika Shauntee** [13:23]

So we maintained most of those relationships. And then, when everything started shutting down, we really reached out to them.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [13:28]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [13:30]

We still were getting paper mail to the office from certain incarcerated individuals.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [13:35]

Okay.

**Tamika Shauntee** [13:37]

So they were actually still writing to us and trying to call us. I feel like, man, my mailbox was probably always full.

**Kelliann Beavers** [13:44]

To describe what their circumstances were like.

**Tamika Shauntee** [13:45]

Yes. Just everything – some of them were like "We're being forced to get the shot, and I don't want it." "They're changing the meals because of this." That's how some of them were saying, "They're not letting us out for our time, and I'm not – everyone was like "We're all in solitary." There were so many different things and experiences, but that was the main way. We already had a relationship with the prison systems because we had already – it's already one of the things we worked on.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [14:12]

Yeah. With stakeholders and administrators, right?

**Tamika Shauntee** [14:13]

Mm-hmm.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [14:15]

I have a follow-up. So I wrote an opinion editorial about the way that the Nevada Department of Corrections handled the crisis. For a time, they had an active policy prohibiting individuals incarcerated from wearing face masks, even face masks that they had fashioned for themselves. It was temporary, and they ultimately corrected the situation. Prison populations were first in line for vaccinations. But during that time, did you receive any kind of [overtalking 14:42]

**Tamika Shauntee** [14:44]

We did receive some that they were telling them their face masks, which they had made, were contraband.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [14:50]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [14:51]

That was the first, I think, issue that I personally remember discussing with our, at the time, legal director.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [14:58]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [14:59]

And that was included in all of the other conversations that we had – "Hey, some of them are having concerns." However, the bigger concern was the jails because the jails were a little bit more transient and temporary. So you're pulling a lot of people off of the streets and stuff. I know it sounds weird, but the prisons, they're there for a longer period of time. There's not as many people ebbing and flowing. And during the pandemic, they slowed that process as well.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [15:28]

Right.

**Tamika Shauntee** [15:31]

Obviously, the courts slowed, so cases weren't going as fast. So the transition from the jails into the prisons wasn't as immediate and expedited as it normally would have been. So, in reality, the prisons and the inmates there – because that's how COVID was coming, right? It's the people spreading it, and people who were in and out – the individuals who were there were almost like low-level to get sick because of their situation.

They're there; they're not leaving, going out into the world, and around a whole lot. People are just around each other. Nobody is out and anything. All of our prisons are in secluded places. So we started also focusing on that part, the jail transition part and all of that, and how that played into it.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [16:18]

So because jails are more of revolving doors – these are pre-trial detainees, right?

**Tamika Shauntee** [16:22]

Yes.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [16:25]

I remember something that I wrote "No prison sentence, or even a short stint in jail should mean a death sentence," right, which is the epitome of a violation of civil rights. But I also remember that this was a time when we had the most releases, probably, in a long time in history, but we have since bounced back to that, to those same levels.

**Tamika Shauntee** [16:46]

Mm-hmm.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [16:48]

Was there any kind of action, on behalf of the ACLU, to say, "Hey, obviously, you can do it; why aren't you still doing it?"

**Tamika Shauntee** [16:57]

Yes. There was a little bit of conversation about that. But then you get into your higher official government people who want – here's a good example. We'll use the homeless and unhoused folks, for example. A lot of them end up in jail.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [17:17]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [17:18]

Prisons and stuff. So during that time, didn't really focus on it that much. When everything started going back, they started matriculating back in. Well, they started matriculating back in, mostly because businesses don't want them in their area.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [17:31]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [17:32]

Well, we don't want these people sleeping out here now. I don't know why they're not – blah-blah-blah. So now, we get back into the whole – police come, and they pick them up. Before, everything was low-key, like you stated. Just let the people out; there was no problem. We're still advocating that they can do it, but there's no need for this to occur. But you have people who have certain life experiences, and they want something done.

Now, I'm not a complete problem-solver, but I understand – I have had family members who were injured or hurt by someone or have to walk through certain situations where they don't feel safe. And they want something done. However, the answer is not to just lock people up. That doesn't do anything, and our system says corrections – I don't know if you've visited any of the

jails. For example, in the state prisons, they have a process where the train comes in – new people coming in on the bus. But there's actually a train painted on the wall, and it says, "The Nevada Department of Prisons," because that's what it is, and that's what it always will be.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [18:33]  
Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [18:34]  
They changed to corrections because of society.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [18:35]  
Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [18:36]  
All of those things emanate from society, what they want to do, and trying to convince people that a person who's unhoused doesn't need to be in jail. A person who has mental health issues doesn't need to be in jail; they need services and help. And you're just locking them up because that business doesn't want them there isn't solving the problem because now, everything's back open.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [18:54]  
Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [18:56]  
Where before, they were outside of whatever store, and there was no one there because there was no activity. Now, everything's back open, so they don't want that person outside their store.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [19:04]  
Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [19:05]  
They're trying to ramp back up their businesses and whatever. So it's a very awkward situation. We had one with Anderson Dairy because they said, "Our trucks are rolling through feces." I'm like "Isn't it ice cream, y'all, though?" (laughter) It's on the tire, and you're upset. Do you know what are tires [overtalking 19:23] There's Terrible Herbst everywhere. You could go through the little – what is it – "Wash-o-matic," I don't know.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [19:32]  
Yes.

**Tamika Shauntee** [19:34]  
Some things are like - you're just being petty. You just don't want them there because you don't want them there.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [19:36]  
It sounds like it was never really a question of compassion, but of just being there. I was at a

Denny's, and I walked in. And this woman was crying. And the security guard wouldn't let her into the bathroom. I said, "What's wrong?" "They won't let me go pee." And I said, "Why?" "Well, they're going to mess everything up, and make everything messy" because she was going to try to shower in there. And I was like "What if I go with her?" So we went to the bathroom together, and she tried to kind of compose herself. And I came back out and I thought "Okay, so what if she did try to shower there? You could clean it up, right?" Or "You have two security guards: one male and one female. Why didn't your female security guard go with her if you were that concerned?" So it's still happening, but as you said, it was never really about that.

**Tamika Shauntee** [20:22]

So, hopefully, that answers a little bit of your question. [overtalking 20:25]

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [20:24]

It does.

**Tamika Shauntee** [20:28]

It's driven by a lot more-

**Kelliann Beavers** [20:29]

What you described earlier in terms of the effort toward advocacy by the Nevada Homelessness Partnership, those kinds of connections can be made. Because that seems like a very clear, and not easy, but obvious thing to discuss in terms of advocating to the legislature about things that just don't seem to be being done in a compassionate way. That's all it is.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [20:51]

Bathroom access. We just need more bathrooms.

**Tamika Shauntee** [20:57]

Right.

**Kelliann Beavers** [20:58]

Yeah. Just compassionate spaces for people.. that are not jails.

Okay. The next question is the question that Carmen asked, so that's great. We don't need to ask that again. Is there anything that you wish that government, at any level, did differently, or could do differently now, in response to the pandemic and/or the economic downturn? Just anything.

**Tamika Shauntee** [21:24]

How about everything? (laughter) You could have done everything. But just open the "wish list"- [overtalking 21:30]

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [21:33]

You have a magic wand today – what can we do differently?

**Tamika Shauntee** [21:35]

Ah. Well, because education – my passion, I'll start with education.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [21:40]

Sure.

**Tamika Shauntee** [21:41]

I feel like there were so many different things they could have done to help not – so the kids wouldn't have lost all that education learning, and have to experience that, and just their mental health, right?

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [21:51]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [21:53]

Gosh, I feel like they could have instituted certain different things. They could have had rotating days in the buildings. They could have, for the kids with IEPs, maybe in-home visits, even if it was only a hybrid model, like so many days a week.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [22:10]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [22:12]

I was actually a fan of the hybrid model because I felt like it gave them the socialization that they needed. Small spaces, so that we could keep everyone safe with their masks, and distancing. But they're at least in an educational atmosphere – like environment. Man, I feel like they could have provided more free tutoring when everything did come back into play.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [22:31]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [22:34]

More one-on-one for free. They tried to do summer school, but according to my cousin, it was a joke.

**Kelliann Beavers** [22:40]

Yeah, he's probably not alone in that perspective.

**Tamika Shauntee** [22:43]

Yeah. "Yeah, we didn't do anything except sit and watch movies." There could have been so many other things there. I feel like with the prison system, you brought up a good point. Why did you start picking back up those people? You already proved that these low-level offenses can be let out, in a safe space, in a safe manner, with their families. That we didn't need to have them all couped up in jails and prisons. Those were the lowest levels, I think I read, at some point-

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [23:09]

Yeah.



**Tamika Shauntee** [23:10]

-in years because we were going through that. And then with even low-income, socioeconomically-disadvantaged folks, you could have continued to provide those small stimulus checks for them.

**Kelliann Beavers** [23:22]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [23:23]

That was the one time in this country that we didn't have poverty for children.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [23:27]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [23:28]

Like who doesn't want that? I was lucky, like I said, because we were able to work at home, so I still had a paycheck. But how many people, when those hotels closed, or the eating places, or clothing stores and stuff closed, relied on those, and they were able to be home with their kids and spend time with their families? And if you think about it in the bigger picture, what was it – five or six hundred dollars, or whatever the secondary one was, that they continued to do for the children, the \$250-dollar one?

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [23:57]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [24:00]

That's not even that much money.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [24:01]

It's like childcare for a week.

**Tamika Shauntee** [24:02]

It's like my kid wants tennis shoes – yeah, and childcare for a week. But something so minor as that, that you know you can do, that would answer a really big question in our community, like solve the problem.

**Kelliann Beavers** [24:19]

It could have been better targeted at those in the most dire need. And I'm not suggesting that they shouldn't have done the initial thing the way they did. I think it was appropriate in terms of how many people were suffering at different levels. But they could have made an even more targeted effort toward those who are absolutely, definitely, struggling right now in terms of income.

**Tamika Shauntee** [24:36]

Because just think about it. Like I said – I know we have the other stimulus funds, but I know that after those, they did the ones that were directed at the children like you got the two hundred, or two-fifty, or whatever for the kids. And I thought that was just awesome. And like you said, I

think that one was more directly targeted because they were trying to do something, but it was temporary.

And I think with childcare, that was a big thing. Because as things slowly started to get back to open, all of the schools weren't 100% in. So it's now like these kids either stay at home, or you have to pay some place for them to go, right? And that would – I feel like it just would have helped people. It didn't even have to be *me*, but just help others so that you don't have that feeling. Because you know what it's like when someone has to work two jobs? They can't get home to pick their kid up; the kid is always on their own; they have to get themselves to school, and they have to get themselves home. Sometimes they have to fix their own meals. And my kids don't have to really worry about that, but I had to do it briefly because my mom's a single parent, and she had to work to provide. And I always said I didn't want to have to do that when I had kids. And I'm very fortunate that I don't. But I just know so many people every day, that that would have been a great thing to continue to do. Or done differently with the pandemic and when things started to open back up.

**Kelliann Beavers** [26:08]

Is there any public conversation about reimagining the way in which, in general, aid is provided, so that it's more of just cash checks, even if it's not an enormous amount?

**Tamika Shauntee** [26:19]

(laughs)

**Kelliann Beavers** [26:20]

I'm serious though – because one of the things that we talk about, in terms of the many ways that people are in need, is that oftentimes people are given help in the thing that they didn't need help with. What they needed was a couple of hundred dollars to do whatever it was they needed.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [26:34]

"Yeah. I don't need another backpack."

**Kelliann Beavers** [26:38]

Maybe they needed to pay their electric bill, or the next-door neighbor needed to buy their child shoes, whatever it was. But oftentimes, there's a lot of help available that just so happens to not be the help that they needed, that cost the same number of dollars to create the help for.

**Tamika Shauntee** [26:52]

Yes. And I think that sometimes that's also in letting people have a voice.

**Kelliann Beavers** [26:56]

Yes. So many times, everyone makes the decisions for everyone. "Well, you need a job." "You need this training." "You need education." "You need this and that." And they're being told what they need, and no one's listening to what they personally feel they need or want. Sometimes, the "want" can turn into something that can propel them into getting their own need, like "I want a car." You may not need a car, but you wanting that car and having that car can give you transportation to get to school that you want to get to, or to get to a train, or to go to a specific

job that you really want, instead of being forced to go to this job because it's closest to the bus route, or easier for you to walk to.

That's really what that comes down to. And as far as your question about services, I have had many conversations with different people, outside of different things, as far as what's best for people. And people need to decide what's best for themselves.

And also, some of the services that we do have, a lot of people are against because they feel like "Oh, the government's just supporting folks. You're socialists." Because everyone thinks the ACLU is a socialist communist organization because we feel like you should be helping people.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [28:06]  
Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [28:09]  
It doesn't make sense that certain people have one percent of the wealth in the country, and the rest of us are struggling to get by.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [28:16]  
Right.

**Tamika Shauntee** [28:17]  
You shouldn't have to think about – when the eggs were crazy, like "We can't have eggs. Sorry. You'll have to have – we could get bacon, but we can't have eggs."

**Kelliann Beavers** [28:28]  
Yeah. I've just thought about it so much because I would never have thought that it could have happened that everyone would just get a check in the mail from the government.

**Tamika Shauntee** [28:36]  
Me either. (laughs)

**Kelliann Beavers** [28:38]  
And it did happen, and part of the reason I wouldn't have thought it could happen is because there's just too much freedom to do whatever you want with that money. So I've thought about the fact that – not that the money was there in the sense of like, oh, it could just be thrown around for that. But money is being distributed by the federal government for a lot of different needs toward grant programs and toward various targeted things. So why couldn't that money come down, in some kind of nonprofit, that essentially did – just said, "This person needs \$300. This person- you know? I recognize that the government might not be able to do it, and I'm not suggesting that you should make this happen. But it is something that I've just thought about a lot. Like it *did* happen, and it seems like there is – you and I are both in agreement that this a reasonable observation; that people don't necessarily need the type of help that they are getting, and sometimes-

**Tamika Shauntee** [29:27]

Well, I think there's a truth to that. I didn't mean to cut you off.

**Kelliann Beavers** [29:30]

No, it's fine.

**Tamika Shauntee** [29:31]

But I say that what is it – like 80% of American families don't have emergency funds, like their cars if something were to break down, and I think the number is 300 – they don't have an additional \$300 if they needed to fix a car or anything like that.

**Kelliann Beavers** [29:44]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [29:48]

And I think you just hit the nail on the head with that. So I know in college – I went to school in Reno – they had – you could go get emergency funds.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [29:55]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [29:57]

And it was like a form you did really quickly. You filled it out. And they literally would either deposit it into your checking account, or you went to the office and picked up a check.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [30:05]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [30:06]

And so if universities can do that, there's no reason that – I don't know what you would call it-

**Kelliann Beavers** [30:13]

Or how you would lead it. But institutionally, I feel like we're all smart enough that we could figure out something that could marry the help that is already being provided by the federal government in a variety of ways, such that it was more effective, and landed on the ground in a way that landed in people's pockets. Anyway, thank you for listening to my TED talk (laughing)

**Tamika Shauntee** [30:37]

Okay.

**Kelliann Beavers** [30:38]

If you would like to say anything about any specific policies that the state or federal government implemented – CARES, ARPA – and how they impacted people positively or negatively?

**Tamika Shauntee** [30:48]

Oh, yes. So I'm going to go back to education now. I'm sorry.

**Kelliann Beavers [30:52]**

Sure. Great.

**Tamika Shauntee [30:54]**

The funds that they gave to the schools were amazing. I also think there were other things that some of the schools could have done with those funds, but I was so happy to see that they had those funds. That was one time when the free and reduced lunch program, we didn't have to worry about it because everybody can eat.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio [31:11]**

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee [31:12]**

It even saved me because I would be like "Oh, shoot I didn't give my kid money," or "I didn't pack him a lunch." But guess what? The school's going to eat. I spoke to you earlier; when I lived in Europe, I don't think I paid for my lunch. I think I just ate. It was not – you didn't pay for your lunch at school. That was just - you ate at school. So I loved that. It's like we're always talking about education, and especially here in Nevada – we're 49<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup>. We straddle the line, and there's no reason for that. We have so much money that comes into the state, between the mining, between the gaming casinos, and between all of these – now, we've got sports teams and stuff coming in. There's no reason that we can't pay our teachers adequately. We can't fund our students appropriately, and that we should be last

**Carmen Solano-Patricio [31:55]**

Yeah, well some schools can.

**Tamika Shauntee [31:57]**

Well. (laughter) I'm not going to go into details, but I'll just – and for the record, this is me personally; you heard me. If you were to break up certain districts, there would be places that would be way better off than others. And that's unfortunate. You would also, unintentionally, segregate this state and county. You need to think about those things. Because it's not separating that solves the problem.

**Kelliann Beavers [32:25]**

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee [32:27]**

It's not removing myself. It's working together to find a solution to fix it.

**Kelliann Beavers [32:29]**

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee [32:32]**

And it's not just throwing money at it but using the money adequately and appropriately to educate the kids.

**Kelliann Beavers** [32:38]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [32:39]

Like my two-and-a-half-year-old already knows colors and already knows how to read and stuff. And it's not because I intentionally sat down like "This is red; this is blue." Yes, he goes to a pretty good little daycare and it's private. But also, taking that time – when you approach a red light, everything is learning.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [32:57]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [32:58]

And it's like "What color is it?" "Green!" "What do we do on green?" "Go!" "Okay." "Can I go?" "Yes!" Also, he just learned how to drive, [laughing] you know, but don't run the red lights.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [33:05]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [33:08]

But little things like that – we need Pre-K education.

**Kelliann Beavers** [33:10]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [33:12]

Those funds were helping so many students. The lunches, the extra programming that they needed, and the extra teachers they were able to hire. Making sure all of the kids had proper Chromebooks, iPads, and all of those things. I really wish some of those funds wouldn't run out because – and I don't know if you've been following the news – like a lot of our Title I Schools just lost funding.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [33:36]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [33:37]

One of them is [C-33:38] Middle School, the one I co-chair. Because the day they pulled the numbers, [C-33:40] was at 74.9 *that day*. That doesn't mean that they don't hit the 75% marker. Because there are families that clearly don't fill out the free and reduced lunch form because that's how they measure it.

**Kelliann Beavers** [33:52]

What do you mean, by "the 75% marker?"

**Tamika Shauntee** [33:54]

The Clark County School District put a 75% marker on the schools that will continue to receive Title I funding at the level they were currently receiving.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [34:04]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [34:05]

If you were below that, you would lose it. Like [C-34:05] lost roughly \$600,000.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [34:08]

Based on the share of families that apply for free and reduced lunch?

**Tamika Shauntee** [34:11]

Yes.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [34:13]

Did you hear from teachers?

**Tamika Shauntee** [34:15]

Mm-hmm. Because like I said, I volunteer and coach at the school. And teachers, to be fair, they're both sides of the spectrum, right? Some of them were like "We need more funding so that we can have smaller class sizes, or so I can have an aide. And during the pandemic, I want to make sure I'm safe. I don't want all of the students in the classroom at the same time."

Then there were other teachers who were like "My students are losing it, and I have to be in the classroom. I can't properly work from home. I'm not getting paid enough for this."

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [34:45]

Yeah.

**Kelliann Beavers** [34:47]

Honestly, this reflects the reality of how diverse and dynamic the situation is, and that there isn't just one answer. I think having both of those perspectives expressed by teachers goes to show that it could be done in many different ways, and it doesn't need to be pigeonholed into-

**Tamika Shauntee** [35:02]

Exactly. But that's why I loved the funds for education when they did that. And I just wish that it was more curtailed and specifically done a little bit more because I felt like we could have done so much more with it. But I guess we are already kind of lagging in other places, and you're kind of playing "catch-up" for our state because we're already low-ranking to a point.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [35:28]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [35:30]

And then, also, trying to provide things so we can make it through that time period.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [35:33]

I have a follow-up because it's relevant now. There's a bill before the legislature that could potentially increase class sizes. Is the ACLU doing anything about that?

**Tamika Shauntee** [35:47]

Not yet, but we watch all of the bills.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [35:49]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [35:54]

(sighs) I just – so to be honest and fair, I'm a product of all systems. I went to Clark County School District briefly. I went to private school briefly. The only thing I didn't do was charter, but my kid went to charter and private.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [36:11]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [36:12]

There is a difference in education with larger classes versus smaller classes. There's a direct correlation. My son goes to Crystal R- High School. His class size is 14 to 15. There's not even 20 kids – well, one of his classes, I think, has 20 kids in his class sizes. He has a 3.7 GPA. And he's the kookiest little kid, loves anime and doing weird things, but he can focus in his class, right?

**Kelliann Beavers** [36:40]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [36:42]

His cousin, same age – well, I think they might be a year apart – goes to Canyon Springs High School – 47 students in his class.

**Kelliann Beavers** [36:49]

47???

**Tamika Shauntee** [36:50]

There's 47 students in one of his – well – and he said that's just the one that he knows; because the first day of class, they didn't have enough desks. And this is a high school. I don't even know about elementary schools. So I say that because all the school systems obviously can work together, right? Charter schools can alleviate really crowded public schools.

**Kelliann Beavers** [37:16]

Mm-hmm.



**Tamika Shauntee** [37:17]

Because the answer isn't just like building more schools right? There's something else that needs to be done – because we've built a lot of schools. There are two elementary schools, sometimes, on the same property here in Vegas.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [37:26]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [37:27]

And they're *still* crowded. So there's something else that needs to be done, and there are certain schools that are more crowded than others.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [37:33]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [37:35]

So how do you navigate that? I'm not 100% sure.

**Kelliann Beavers** [37:38]

Sure.

**Tamika Shauntee** [37:39]

The reason I think they want increased class sizes is because they don't want to have to build more schools.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [37:44]

More teachers.

**Tamika Shauntee** [37:47]

Well, who wants to be a teacher anymore because of the pay?

**Kelliann Beavers** [37:48]

More teachers still require more space in some cases.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [37:49]

Yeah, true.

**Kelliann Beavers** [37:52]

So more teachers – unless you're going to have them teaching out in the yard every day-

**Tamika Shauntee** [37:55]

Oh, they do that – portable[s]

**Kelliann Beavers** [37:57]

Yes.

**Tamika Shauntee** [37:58]

And there's a charter school that has classes in the hallway. Yeah, a public charter that has classes in a hallway because during one of their rotations, all of the classes are full, and they have to use – the special education classroom has to be for special education.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [38:12]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [38:13]

So that particular, I guess, rotation for specials or something is conducted in a hallway of their school.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [38:16]

Wow.

**Kelliann Beavers** [38:19]

You just have so much physical space and built buildings already in this region. I feel like we could think of something creative-

**Tamika Shauntee** [38:27]

Well, I know. I've been – full disclosure – I am on the State Charter School Board Authority.

**Kelliann Beavers** [38:32]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [38:33]

I pass by so many empty motels downtown, and I'm like if we don't use them for housing, and they're not serving their purpose as a motel, why can't they be a school?

**Kelliann Beavers** [38:43]

Exactly.

**Tamika Shauntee** [38:44]

A lot of the schools are saying, "We can't find space because these businesses think it's a money-maker, and they want to charge something crazy, or they think something better is going to come along."

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [38:53]

It's a zoning issue too?

**Tamika Shauntee** [38:54]

Sometimes it's a zoning issue, but to be fair, if it's for education purposes, you can sometimes get around zoning issues, as long as – obviously, you know, bars or something within a certain distance.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [39:03]

Yeah, so it's an acquisition issue.

**Tamika Shauntee** [39:04]

Yes. Because we've had – charter schools have been put in Rite-Aids, like old Rite-Aids and CVS bldgs.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [39:09]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [39:13]

The old Elks Lodge on Charleston. So you can make like some of the zonings and [overtalking 39:17]

**Kelliann Beavers** [39:19]

You can do some kind of "flex space" that multiple schools could tap into and use when needed.

**Tamika Shauntee** [39:24]

You heard me say earlier that I'm a fan of hybrid.

**Kelliann Beavers** [39:25]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [39:26]

One of my older cousins told me years ago, there was an, I guess, overcrowding problem in Clark County.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [39:33]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [39:35]

And they did – I want to say, a double session. She called it, I think, a "double session," or it consisted of double session.

**Kelliann Beavers** [39:43]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [39:44]

So in the morning, one whole set of high school students came to school. Ninth through 12<sup>th</sup> grade, like – it was really early, and I want to say that had to be at school at six. They were done at noon. Teachers had a break until one, and then from one to like five or six in the evening was a whole other set. All-in-one building. And they did that, I guess, for a few years. We could probably google it, I'm sure it's online somewhere.

**Kelliann Beavers** [40:06]

The morning students would go home and have school virtually, or not at all?

**Tamika Shauntee** [40:10]

No, they were done because they already did the required six hours or whatever, from six until noon, or eleven. And then the afternoon students did from one until later.

**Kelliann Beavers** [40:18]

Oh, I see. I didn't even understand what you meant by a hybrid model, exactly.

**Tamika Shauntee** [40:21]

Yes. You literally covered-

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [40:23]

Rotated.

**Tamika Shauntee** [40:24]

Yeah. So say, the school holds two to three thousand kids. You had 2,500 kids in the morning. Normal school day; did everything. Then in the evening, you had another 2,500 students. You just covered 5,000 students. You didn't overcrowd classrooms, and you were able to get them all in.

**Kelliann Beavers** [40:41]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [40:42]

But I'm sure – [40:44] go into details. She's like "Yeah, we had this thing where we had to go double sessions." It was a morning session, and she loved it because she could go back home and go to sleep.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [40:52]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [40:53]

I'll have to get more information or something on it. But that was one thing they instituted; I'm sure that someone complained about it. Because if their kid was getting out of school later in the evening versus early in the day.

**Kelliann Beavers** [41:02]

Yeah.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [41:03]

Mm-hmm. The childcare issue. But that's an example of an innovation which is [overtalking  
41:06]

**Kelliann Beavers** [41:07]

Yes, which is our next question. What do you think have been the most innovative ways that organizations and citizens have dealt with the challenges of the pandemic or the economic

downturn? It could be examples of collaboration programs, or anything else that comes to mind. That was a great example already. (laughter)

**Tamika Shauntee** [41:25]

Yeah. I kind of pre-answered that one. But even – I think a lot more community members, we all had to speak to each other, and we had to collaborate. You were forced to. So there were, like we just stated with schools and educators, everyone had to figure that out. We had to figure out the release of inmates and prisoners, like we all had to work together. Everyone had to put something in. Probation for the state had to say, "Okay. They can come out, and we'll just still be under our guys and watch, but you know, they don't have to be incarcerated physically."

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [41:55]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [41:58]

I think another way that was innovative was – you know, this might be kind of weird, and some folks might not agree – but some of the businesses, right?

**Kelliann Beavers** [42:04]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [42:07]

They did certain things, and I know, we ordered out, and our fees were different. They didn't charge us the normal weird fees that they would normally charge.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [42:15]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [42:19]

[42:18] And they were like "It's the pandemic." They're just doing certain costs so that helps, because then you didn't have to go out. Childcare places, a lot more were open. They did a lot more with urban leagues. A lot more in-home. You can use your neighbor; they could get certified and stuff through the Metro-

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [42:40]

Oh, wow.

**Tamika Shauntee** [42:41]

And then the Urban League had even additional funds so they could cover it.

**Kelliann Beavers** [42:44]

Oh, wow.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [42:46]

Wow.

**Tamika Shauntee** [42:47]

Yeah. So you could have a family member or neighbor who lives somewhere, and if they were home – like I watched my little cousin because her mom – when the hotels – everything started opening back, she had to go.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [42:58]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [43:00]

And so she's like "I can't be home to make sure she does school." So I had, technically, four. Had a little, tiny baby, my son, and the other two, and we just had to, you know, and I'm like "You all work there, and then this is my workspace." Because at least I'm physically there.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [43:15]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [43:16]

And you had to work together to do things.

**Kelliann Beavers** [43:17]

Yeah.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [43:18]

Wow.

**Tamika Shauntee** [43:21]

So it was just on many levels: organizations, businesses, and just people.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [43:26]

Yeah.

**Kelliann Beavers** [43:29]

Thank you for that. What can we learn from the COVID crisis that could be lessons for future crises?

**Tamika Shauntee** [43:38]

Stock up on masks and Clorox (laughter) for when all this happens.

**Kelliann Beavers** [43:40]

True.

**Tamika Shauntee** [43:43]

Man. So we need to do better about preparing educationally to be able to give those kids that service that they need.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [43:51]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [43:52]

I think we need to prepare for families to be at home. I think we need to provide more services. Because some people are social butterflies, and some people, like me, I'm straight. I'm [44:05] but it doesn't work well for everyone, and you need to be able to have those spaces so that if folks reach out – there was a really high suicide rate with a lot of the middle school kids. Because that's also their formative and how they measure each other, and everything was just measured by online.

I think we need more education with online and students. What's appropriate? What's not appropriate? We say it, but there's not really a class that says, "Okay. Let's everybody take out our phones. What's appropriate? What can we say? How can we say it in a different way without hurting someone's feelings?"

**Kelliann Beavers** [44:43]

Oh, that's interesting. You don't just mean in terms of online education.

**Tamika Shauntee** [44:46]

No.

**Kelliann Beavers** [44:47]

You mean in terms of online behavior and online [overtalking 44:49]

**Tamika Shauntee** [44:50]

[44:49] presence, like how can you say, you like this shirt, but you don't like it for yourself?

**Kelliann Beavers** [44:54]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [44:55]

You don't just say, "Oh, that's ugly." You can say, "You know, all that looks good on you," or there's ways to say things, and kids don't know how to do that.

**Kelliann Beavers** [45:01]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [45:04]

And sometimes it's okay for them to be direct. But in other spaces, everyone has a different level of sensitivity, and you need to respect that.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [45:11]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [45:12]

And you need to learn how to navigate that. And they don't know how to do it, and some of them lost that during the pandemic because they weren't in their social setting. Some of them just don't know.

**Kelliann Beavers** [45:20]

Is anyone considering doing something like what you just said? I think that's a really good idea. Did you just have that idea because that's something we should be doing?

**Tamika Shauntee** [45:27]

Well, because I talked to my son about it. I'm like – I threaten him with "I'm going to put you in the [phone-45:32] he thinks it's real, but no, it's not. "They're going to take your phone and show you how to use it."

**Kelliann Beavers** [45:38]

It is a good idea. Though especially, sometimes, younger children – I don't mean toddlers – but they don't realize what's hurtful. They think that they're being cute, or funny, or something, and they don't realize how hurtful something could be. So even just conversations like that I think could help humanize children, which is a part of what was lost.

**Tamika Shauntee** [45:55]

Yeah.

**Kelliann Beavers** [46:00]

We're almost to our last question, and were you about to ask something else? You're welcome to.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [46:04]

No, just about lessons learned. So there was a lot of talk on what governments didn't do, could have done, could do differently. But I'm an urban studies person, right? So I always think of society as a triad: governments, nonprofits, and enterprises. So I want to ask the same question, what do you think businesses could have done differently?

**Tamika Shauntee** [46:29]

Businesses can always do more. But like I said, my mom's a business finance major, so I know the business model.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [46:34]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [46:36]

Which is about income, raising the stakes, and all of those weird numbers things she always talks about. But I think businesses need to be more humanitarian.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [46:45]

Yeah.



**Tamika Shauntee** [46:46]

Sometimes it's not about all of your stock, people. Sometimes you just have to take the "L" and be like "You know what? This is what we do." I think I mentioned an example earlier about homeless individuals outside your store; the situation you mentioned about them in Denny's. Why don't you, maybe, give them a meal?

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [47:03]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [47:05]

Why don't you give them a water? You don't always have to call the police. Sometimes, just take a step back. Sometimes, speak to them like they're human.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [47:12]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [47:15]

Sometimes that goes a long way. I think that's something that could be done. I think, also, the businesses have a stake in our education. They should want the kids to be more educated. And right now, it comes off as if they don't because they can keep them oppressed at a certain level.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [47:32]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [47:32]

And for the few of us that kind of break that, or kind of push through it, you see it sometimes, and you wonder. And folks are like "But you have a job." "Yeah, Burger King is not paying enough for them to buy a home – an apartment is like \$1,500 a month."

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [47:50]

"Yeah. But I'm a business owner and a landlord, so you can rent from me."

**Tamika Shauntee** [47:54]

Yes, you can rent from me, but also, you can't afford it.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [47:56]

Right.

**Tamika Shauntee** [47:58]

That's why people have to work multiple jobs or live in multifamily situations.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [48:01]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [48:04]

So that's why I say, the businesses have a huge stake in it. The businesses also have really big lobbyists and deep pockets.

**Kelliann Beavers** [48:08]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [48:11]

They can lobby the government in any way they want to.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [48:12]

Right.

**Tamika Shauntee** [48:14]

They say, "Justice is blind." But Justice, I always picture her – I saw a picture once when I was in Europe – her eye covering is drooped, and one eye is looking out. So she's not 100% blind; she sees, but she's not always reactive. That other eye chooses not to.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [48:32]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [48:34]

And it's very – sometimes it's insulting with businesses because they want to do certain things. I could take – we were talking about your triad model – the City of Reno and the City of North Las Vegas. Those past things about catalytic converters – making ordinances so it's illegal and criminal if you're found in those city jurisdictions with catalytic converters or parts. Very interesting because there are a lot of people who are "backyard mechanics." Like my uncle is one. There are probably cars in his yard we don't even know where they came from. The owners are probably gone by now. But it requires, if you have those things, you have to prove all of this.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [49:07]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [49:10]

And do you know why? What would be the major push for that? We know that there's a problem with catalytic converters, but we already have laws about that. It's no different than if they stole your car. And people don't always get caught immediately when they steal a car, but we already have laws for that. There's already a law. There's already a rule. You get incarcerated, blah-blah-blah. So why so much more? It's business-driven. Because if you have to prove that you have the right to this car, to this piece, and that you have it, who's going to have all that information but another business?

**Kelliann Beavers** [49:38]

A corporation.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [49:41]

Huh.

**Tamika Shauntee** [49:42]

And I can't even afford it, and I do okay, right, Marilyn? I do okay. (laughs) I can afford to pay the cost of a catalytic converter from a business. I may have to order it online; I may have to have my uncle install it in his backyard. But if he has the old pieces or something like that, why do we have to prove that he has it?

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [50:03]

So this is about taking out the competition?

**Tamika Shauntee** [50:06]

It's about – my thought is it's about business, and making sure they get all of that business. However, other folks are saying, "Oh, no, it's trying to put another layer, so folks aren't impacted by this horrible thing of folks stealing their catalytic converters." But realistically, if you want the catalytic converter, you're going to take it.

**Kelliann Beavers** [50:27]

Also, you can also just sell it somewhere else if that's [overtalking 50:28]

**Tamika Shauntee** [50:29]

Yeah. All they're going to do is go to California or somewhere like that.

**Kelliann Beavers** [50:31]

"Well, let's steal that then..."

**Tamika Shauntee** [50:33]

Yeah. Nobody thinks – if you're in that criminal state, or you're that desperate where you need that money, you're not thinking "I know this is illegal. I probably shouldn't do it." You're going to do what you need to do. Whether it's to eat, whether it's to – whatever it is.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [50:45]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [50:47]

So businesses can do a heck of a lot more – because they can sway the government, they can sway your community.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [50:53]

Yeah. Very true. Thank you, Tamika.

**Kelliann Beavers** [50:59]

The last question is, are you hopeful? And if so, what are you hopeful for?

**Tamika Shauntee** [51:06]

So most of my office colleagues will say I am the "Little Eeyore Donkey." (laughter) I am not hopeful. I have very little trust in people. No one's going to do, inherently, the right thing on their own. The only way they do it, working at this organization, is if we sue them; if we tell them how you're going to get sued. If we tell them again "We're going to sue you," or we just sue them. Otherwise, no one is going to think through things the way they should.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [51:36]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [51:37]

No one – and I know that sounds bad.

**Kelliann Beavers** [51:38]

Absolutely not. I hear you.

**Tamika Shauntee** [51:40]

But no one is going to be like "Our school district is the lowest. There's a way we could fix this. Let's just do it." There are 15 layers to getting it done, and in the process of going through those layers, this person's going to disagree. That person's going to say, "Well, we don't want to – the businesses – "Well, I don't want to have to give up more tax money." The mining companies don't want to give up anything. They lie low. You don't really hear much about them. They bring in an enormous amount of money. We are the second-largest mining entity in almost the world; definitely, the country. People don't even know that. Everyone comes here and they just like "Oh, yeah, the Strip." Do you know how much silver ore comes out of the ground in this state every day? Anyway, sorry-

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [52:23]

If men were angels, right?

**Tamika Shauntee** [52:26]

So my mom says, "Don't always be pessimistic," but I am. The little optimism that I do have is from being here. Knowing that we do have those [52:40] and that we do it. And sometimes, even if we don't win, we just brought attention to an issue that you weren't even thinking about.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [52:47]

Yes.

**Tamika Shauntee** [52:48]

And so now, you're going to be – you're on pins and needles, and you're going to watch yourself. Or you're going to contact us first before you decide to push through some other weird ordinance that might be discriminatory.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [52:55]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [52:57]

So I will say, I'm about 10% (laughs) hopeful that something will be done, on a larger scale, to just solve the problem. We had a former executive director, and he made a comment once about "The day that you don't need the ACLU is a great day."

**Kelliann Beavers** [53:19]

Yeah.

**Tamika Shauntee** [53:22]

And obviously, that day hasn't come, so I'm still employed. (laughs)

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [53:25]

Mm-hmm.

**Tamika Shauntee** [53:26]

We're all still here.

**Kelliann Beavers** [53:27]

Yeah. And none of us are like "That might happen in our lifetime." We're all like "Can we have two ACLUs? (laughter) Is it possible for your building to expand? Because nobody is – and I think what you're saying is genuine and transparent, in a way that is absolutely true, which is that there's a way in which hope can be blinding and naïve, if you let it keep you from action, and keep you from recognizing that there is, in fact, evil, for lack of a better word, in the world. So-

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [53:58]

That's the first thing we've gotten to know.

**Tamika Shauntee** [53:59]

And I liked it. (laughter)

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [54:00]

Yeah [overtalking 54:01]

**Tamika Shauntee** [54:02]

I'm sorry.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [54:03]

No, that's great.

**Kelliann Beavers** [54:04]

It landed well, though. I appreciate it, and I hear what you're saying. And you didn't seem like a pessimistic person to me at all, so (laughter) I didn't hear you expressing that you were pessimistic. I heard you expressing that you're realistic, which is-

**Tamika Shauntee** [54:17]

Yeah. I guess that's what it is, I'm realistic, you know? It's just what the reality is. I don't know.

**Carmen Solano-Patricio** [54:25]

Thank you. Thank you so much.

**End of audio: 54:30**