

Shania Brown interviewed by Kenan Sala
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Corona Queens

KS: Okay, so my name is Kenan. And you're well aware the purpose of this interview is to share your story and to let your voice be heard for the future generation. And this is also as part of the Oral History Project collection., I wanted to ask you some questions. I want to start off by asking your age like, how old are you?

SB: I'm 19 years old.

KS: 19 years old. Okay. And what is your occupation?

SB: I work in retail, as well as I'm a CUNY peer mentor here at Guttman.

KS: All right. What's your racial identity?

SB: I'm African American, I identify as black.

KS: Alright. What is your gender identity?

SB: My gender identity is female.

KS: Okay, what is your sexual orientation?

SB: I'm heterosexual.

KS: Okay, and I will also like to ask this is just part of the introduction. These are the questions in the introduction. And lastly, where are you from?

SB: Born and raised in New York City, Queens.

KS: Okay. So tell me the long story of how you or your family ended up in New York City?

SB: Well, from what I know, my grandmother was also born and raised in Queens. Her mother is from Puerto Rico. Her mother came here to New York they wanted up here in New York. Well, she did. And then my grandmother was born. And long story short. I eventually, I was born from my mom.

KS: Oh, so you were born in the United States Right?

SB: Yes. Born and raised.

KS: Okay. Okay. So, what about your family? They weren't born here. Right?

SB: Well, my grandmother, Well, I don't really know the backstory behind where my

grandmother like how she ended up here. But, I know that for the most part everybody was raised in New York with the exception of my great-grandmother.

KS: Okay, cool. So, anything else you would like to add on to that? SB:

No, you know living in New York has taught me a lot of things.

KS: So, I would like to now ask you questions regarding the COVID-19. So first thing I would like to ask you is, how has Coronavirus changed your life?

SB: That is a really interesting question. Okay. So COVID I feel like it pretty much was, it's a symbol of the beginning, the ending of a beginning, for me, at least. For starting off college, starting off a new path in life. It was ended where it was modified through COVID because everything shut down and things that I was becoming used to, I had to switch. So, for instance, going to school going to Guttman getting accustomed to the environment. That was changed, and now it was put back by team to being in school virtually. So, it was a very interesting experience.

KS: Okay, everything transitioned from doing things physically to doing things remotely. So well, now I would like to ask what is it like to be at home so often?

SB: It is, like, a movie, not even like a movie. It's kind of ordinary sometimes. But then, other times, it's like my gosh, I'm in the house. You know what it's like actually, it's like a DIY project. Do yourself project you're doing stuff that going to school, doing homework. But in a way, you're kind of figuring out how to adjust how to learn and how to learn without seeing the professor. And in a way, such an ordinary thing that we think is normal as a part of life, we now have to think about it in terms of, well, what about this? And what about that? So it's a rollercoaster actually.

KS: Okay. So I also want to ask, how did this impact you mentally or emotionally?

SB: It was very impactful. And it was, honestly, one of the things we're in, especially with everything going on in politics and society, and what you see, it's kind of, it can be very emotional, emotionally draining sometimes. Well, a lot of times, after you're settled, and you're like hey, I'm home or whatever. And you see what's going on in the news in and you have time to sit and think about it and what you kind of feel helpless in terms. So, emotionally and mentally It was very draining, very draining. But, another thing is that it was very insightful because after all of that draining, you've gone through, and you probably still have moments where you go through it, you have to think about what's next. What do you want to do with your life because the COVID is happening, but life is happening? So in a way, your mental state has to get stronger and you have to have to overcome. So that's how it's been meant to be.

KS: Okay, interesting. So, how did this impact you socially?

SB: Socially? Guttman, is your first year, or is it your second year?

KS: Oh, no, I'm a continuing student.

SB: Continuing student, okay. You know, here you go through Summer Bridge. So Summer Bridge, you meet everyone, you kind of develop a friend, you have somewhat of social life. And from that to go virtually, you stop, you wind up, your friendships start dwindling. So sometimes you can feel alone, and isolated. For me, I'm the only child so it's like, that social life is kind of gives you some type of outlet, but socially, I felt a little disconnected.

KS: I also would like to ask, How did you know COVID-19? How did this impact your family?

SB: It impacted my family, in the sense of like, my mom she works with people, she's a counselor, and she helps people with disabilities. And she that's her job. So she would be considered a central work in a way because she had to go right back there, regardless of the COVID. After all, there were people that still needed to be attended. And who was going to help them? So she had to go back and it was kind of scary because you got to go back and it was a scary experience, but she loves her job so much. So she went and she did. My grandmother had to go back also because she is she works and around where she works in that room. So, she also had to go back but she had come out of surgery just a lot. So, it was kind of scary because you want to be around your family want to encounter but you don't want to give it to them and that's the scary part. You have to still have to go get groceries or go out but you still want to be with your family. So, it impacted my family in the sense of you had to be a little bit more cautious.

KS: Yes, I understand especially with the social distancing and being six feet away. It's pretty challenging.

KS: So I would like to ask, are people in your household working, or what is the follow-up?

SB: So, everyone is working, including me, because again they're essential workers. And they have to and that's the fortunate part. Nobody lost their job. Thank God, you want to jinx it or anything, but nobody lost their job or anything. So everybody's fine now.

KS: So, you're saying that everybody in your family is working outdoors, right?

SB: Yeah, they're working. They don't work remotely.

KS: Oh so they don't work indoors?

SB: No.

KS: What have you learned about yourself and your family since the beginning of this crisis that occurred in 2020?

SB: I learned the urgency I have for myself. After college, you want to pursue your career and I think I have such urgency before that. I realized and I feel like for me, honestly, and I think Guttman has a good chunk of why I'm like this now. Learning new things, and how much there's so much possibility in the world, even when it's done. That really realized

that there's so much possibility even when you're in these four walls, I can't help but to think about the future and traveling. So, what I've learned about myself is, yeah, that is still possible. I also learned that I'm a procrastinator. I'm a crazy procrastinator, I think I knew that what I think is becoming more apparent, and I think I think really deeply into things. So, sometimes there's a lot and there's still room to self-improve. So, those are some of the things that I watch after this interview, I'm probably gonna think of more things like, oh, I learned this, I learned that but right now, I've learned that and the importance of family, that's all you have. But more specifically, self-improvement. And things that I learned about myself that I want to be better and that I want to change.

KS: Okay, Well said. I also want to ask, what has been the difficult part of this pandemic for you? What are challenges did you experience?

SB: So like I said, even though before oh my gosh, I was a mess during the beginning of quarantine. I was like, oh, my gosh, a very emotional very all over the place. And the reason why is because I think it's the sense of losing control when losing and feeling like okay, I have no control over stuff. It's a wreck, it's havoc. People are dying and this is going on and I was all over the place. And I'm with school, my difficulty was, I just felt so out of the loop. And I just wind it up. Well, now I'm like that a little bit of, sometimes I kind of get disconnected and then I get back connected. So that's like another difficulty with the quarantine and the pandemic. But, losing connection feeling disconnected in school I was like, I had to find three during this time. So during the beginning of the quarantine, I was like, you know what, I'm over this, this is what is the point, so that's where I felt really disconnected.

KS: Yeah, my little advice to you is to never give up, always be kind of consistent. You have to be consistent.

SB: Yeah, that is true. Yeah, that's really true.

KS: You can never give up. Yeah, always gonna, reach your goal, you got to have a goal in life and, try to reach your goal.

SB: Yeah, persevere. That's true.

KS: Yep. Like they said you should pursue your goal.

SB: Yes, and one of the people that helped me during that, realize that and also not to be, because I was like oh my god, there's the end of the world, not the end of the world, but it was pretty depressing at that point for me, and really confusing. It was a confusing time, you have police brutality going on, this has been going on. But you know, when you're in quarantine, and you see all these things on Instagram and social media, and you're looking at the news, and you're seeing the videos, and you're seeing the actual footage, in a way, you're kind of desensitized. That's another part of the disconnection part I felt. And also it was also depressing at the same time. But, one of the people that helped me realize that to persevere, and push myself and not to give up was Dr. Finesurrey. I remember I think I just stopped being active and class or

whatever, virtual learning and I just was like, you know what, I just feel like, low a little, I just feel low. I kind of just was a very emotional time. But, Dr. Finesurrey, he was saying, basically, yet, everything is a mess, and he would listen to my frustrations, how I was confused, how I felt disconnected. He basically said don't give up and it's okay to feel how you feel. And you're not alone. You shouldn't feel like you're wrong for feeling how you feel. Also, don't give up because there's so much in the future, there's so much promise. Basically, not those are not the exact words, but that was, what I got from that, and, to feel how you feel. But there's resources to learn more to improve but, don't ever feel you're alone. That I really got that from Dr. Finesurrey.

KS: I mean, I agree you're not alone, and as he said, never give up. You always got to be persistent. You got to work hard at it to achieve your goal and all that. So, yeah. And I would also want to ask, has there been anything positive to come out of this pandemic for you?

SB: Well, aside from all the crazy that DIY projects I did at home, like legit, there are been so many times, even though yes, we have a pandemic going on. In the beginning, going through the store was really hectic because there were always lines or something of the sort. I would always go to, target sometimes to buy, essential or whatever. But, also to get things to keep me busy. And one of the positive impacts from that was, I think I have gotten a lot of books to read, but in addition, aside from spending money, I've saved a lot of money because there's you can't go out, there's nothing to do, except for online shopping. That is one thing. But I've saved a lot of money. I think aside from getting disconnected from school, it kind of reconnected myself into school because at Guttman it's a lot of communication, it's hard. Sometimes there are hardships communicating when you got to email somebody and that's annoying. But, I definitely feel like I've received a lot of communication that helps towards my transferring. I was able to do this really amazing class by Battice a professor at Guttman called decolonization. And I've learned a lot. There are so many positives to out of the emotionally draining parts of the quarantine. I did have a lot of great things that happened besides large DIY projects and all that craziness. I'm a filmmaker.

KS: Oh, cool.

SB: Yeah, I'm a filmmaker.

KS: A filmmaker so, you like to act?

SB: No, I like to make films I like to write. I like to write films, learn about film. I just love it.

KS: That's great because I like that, too. I like to write stories. And I used to make skits. I used to kind of act.

SB: Wow.

KS: Yeah, I used to but, as you grow older, you kind of get tired of it. And you just want to do other things that you're passionate about. So yeah, I used to and I still even to this day I do like to write stories. I I do I like to write comedy, I used to do comedy skits. And I used to show them to my parents and they said they were impressed with my acting skills. Yeah, and I do it even right

now, I really want to go back to acting again, I really do. And I also like planning on writing stories, I always like to share my writings. And I like to put a lot of motion to it, I don't like to make it bland. I don't want to make bland writing, I want to put emotions in it. See, my thing is this when I'm writing a story or writing a film or, you know, it's what's really important is you got to make sure you connect with the reader as if the reader is like, part of that story. Like have a connection especially when I watch a movie and I like a certain character. It's because I understand that character, I understand what he's going through. And it's like, you can relate.

SB: I agree.

KS: It's pretty interesting and it's interesting that you like to, write films.

SB: Thank you, yeah, I'm a student of film. I'm a filmmaker, you know.

KS: No wonder it's called Guttmann superstar, right? Congratulations, just, you know, you do what you're passionate about.

SB: I agree. Same for you.

KS: Even though I do this for fun, my dad has told me you should definitely be an actor. And all and you know, and the thing is that I don't really want to be an actor. I just do this for fun. I just do skits for fun. And then he said, yeah, but don't we do things for fun. And eventually, we just want to do this be part of a movie or be an actor. At first, we do this for fun, and then it just starts to change. Then, we start being in movies, we start acting in movies and stuff.

SB: Yeah, definitely. it's okay if you do it for fun, but, definitely don't second guess it. That's one thing don't ever second guess because honestly that's the beauty of film. There are so many different genres and different routes.

KS: Oh, yeah. Totally yeah. But, I would like to know what kind of genre you are into?^{23:59}

SB: So for me, I pretty much the films I have done, I've done narrative films. So that focused on the coming of age type of film. I've done two documentaries. So pretty much but what I'm passionate about is, I guess you can say I don't want to say dramas, but I like writing dramas, and right now the project that I'm working on is a series of drama.

KS: Well, it's amazing, really amazing to hear all that you like to do drama because I also like to do drama.

SB: That's good drama.

KS: I also do comedy. As I said before, I like to do comedy. I like to do drama. I am also interested in other genres as well. But, it's really interesting that you like to do drama.

SB: Yeah, pretty much but I don't like to limit myself because again, I feel like, for me as a filmmaker, there's so much I don't know. But, there's so much to learn. But, I don't want to limit

myself. I just like to make what my heart or what I'm interested in or what I'm passionate about. But that is really great, comedy, and drama. I know, you're saying it's a hobby or whatever.

KS: It really is even to this day, it's still a hobby. I actually want to do my own skits again like I want to go back doing it because that when I was young, I used to do it. But, I kind of stopped because I had other things going on. But, then now I'm thinking about, because now ever since you brought it up with the whole acting and the filmmaking, I'm like, oh, I definitely want to goback. Definitely

SB: Definitely do it.

KS: Because I could literally see myself just being an actor and, practicing my acting skills. So, what do you like about acting?

SB: I'm pretty much open to it. But, for me I love writing. I love really directing, creating the story even though it's really hectic. That's what I'm passionate about. And acting from what see, and how I direct sometimes, the one narrative film I did, there will be an actor and we had them doing so many different things. I pretty much probably wouldn't do it. Maybe one day. But, to focus on your questions on the positive impact. For me for film and concerning film and one of the things that happened prior to COVID, I was actually beginning production for a film that I was in production I didn't create the film, but I was a part of the production of it.

KS: So, you want to be a producer?

SB: No, well, there for film for film, there are many different realms you can do. You can be a screenwriter, you can be a director, you can be a producer, you can be an editor. And so let me put it in more context. I'm a part of a film program called DCTV. DCTV stands for Downtown Television Community Center.

KS: Oh, okay.

SB: Yeah. I'm going to definitely send an email, just in case you ever want to check it out. If you want to?

KS: Yeah, sure, I'll definitely check it out definitely.

SB: You know, the programs are free, and it's open for all ages, but I think pretty much the teens to adults, young adults. So, DCTV I am a part of the young woman in cinema. Well, before COVID, I was part of the young women in cinema and what the young women's in cinema, it's a program where you learn more about the film, your skills, and you eventually have to create a project. And this project goes on to be screened at our event. And then it goes on to film festivals. During that time, I was a part of the production because, we got picked to be like, oh, hey, our projects were put out and whoever's project was put be put in production that was to be put in production. So mine wasn't chosen. But, but I was a part of an amazing film called Grow Me. And what her idea was to talk about loving your natural hair and loving your identity as a black woman. This goes on. We were about to be in production. We already cast people we

already were in the motion, right?

KS: Yeah, yeah.

SB: So all of the production this whole just stop. So, that happened and then, we had to move everything to be remote. And Romi wined up not being able to be produced, but it's still amazing, it still can be produced, but it is the production of it halted. And we eventually had to shift our film into something else. So, the film classes now begin in different because some people didn't return and just things of that nature. But, I stayed at the program. And I wined up being a part of an amazing group for the summer. And we created a film called The Cost of Freedom and the cost of free, it's a documentary that talks about the cash bail system and how it imprisons people who are middle-class low class.

KS: So you said it's a documentary? SB: Yes, it's a short documentary film.

KS: And it's based on what's happening in the real world.

SB: Yes. And it's happening in different states, such as New York, Florida, New Jersey. And, so we created that film, and it was through animation because you know, we can't interview people right now, whatever. So, we gathered information from articles, just really doing a deep dive, similar to what you're doing, going through interviews going through archives. So gathering evidence and information. So, for that documentary, we did animation. We have this amazing person named Jacob who created the animation. And he did the narration. And it was just amazing. Very, very long, very, very excruciating work, long hours on zoom. Yes, zoom stress, but it created something so beautiful. And as a result of that, learning experience and creating that film, we submitted it to a film festival, well DCTV submitted to a film festival, and it won Film Festival, the Justice aid Film Festival, and it won the grand prize. So, that was a positive impact that COVID had. Even though production ended, I was a part of another great documentary, and we got to do this cool film festival called Justice Aid and learn about other films, but it was a cool aspect. Another great aspect, as I said Battice's decolonization class. He's amazing and I learned a lot just really like, the positive impact of COVID because you're in the house by yourself you have no other choice, but to look at yourself because when you go outside before COVID I'm pretty sure everybody going to work, school, I'm doing this doing that. But COVID forces you to stand still.

KS: Yes.

SB: So for me, of course, I cut myself after my little emotional, not little but, after going through an emotional rollercoaster. You kind of fight, you have to realize, okay, hey, I want to do this, hey, life goes on, hey, let me instead of just giving up, you persevere. So that was one positive impact for me. And also, getting more involved in Guttman, I became a peer mentor, a part of SGA. So really getting more involved in trying to get more connected so, yeah.

KS: All right. So, I also want to move to the Black Lives Matter protesting. I want to ask you questions about that. So explain to me why you think these anti-racist protests erupted?

SB: Because these anti-racist, wow, okay so, Black Life Matter started, because for one, there are many black lives that are passing right now like that are being brutally murdered. And also, being

in prison oppressed, that's why Black Life Matter started.

That and not even just Black Life Matter, that is the whole and just, I don't even want to focus just on being well, because racism is a part of the oppression. But, I will say, aside from Black Life Matter, this has been an ongoing force for the push for change because of the oppression, because of slavery, and just going into what we're going through now, segregation, all of these things are components of what we have today. Because of this structure, this system where it's designed to oppress and to put certain people certain in a higher power than others because of race because of these ideas and concepts. That's why we have what we have going on right now. That's why police brutality is one of the stereotypes that are perpetuated in the mind people to have this perception have a certain group more specifically black people, people of color? And that's why we have what's going on right now.

KS: Okay, so what do you think New NYC became an epicenter of the protests?

SB: Wow okay, so why NYC became the epicenter? I think New York City has so many different cases of course NYPD you know. So many differences let me condense it but NYPD is very large, right? There have been so many cases of police brutality as some haven't come to light. It's really an opera, because after seeing what's going on with the whole because first George Floyd, you know.

KS: Yes, funny, because I was just thinking about that.

SB: Yeah, George Floyd and unfortunate death happened. So in the midst of all of that, all of that emotion, seeing what happened, there, we still have these deaths, Eric Garner, right? We still have that right there, so it's not unfamiliar. So why there was such an uproar because of this, like, hey, all this, excuse my language, all this bullshit that's happening. And no, there are no repercussions, or there are bare minimum repercussions. So that's why all these protests have been going on, and after being in quarantine, after you kind of feel helpless, you kind of feel like what the hell is the point of all of this? You have people that protest that are like, Hey, I'm not going to take this. And, there's so much power in US people that, these governments and this system, who and NYPD. It's only powerful because people make it powerful. And also, of course, because of the systems that have been put in place long before us, right. But we protesting is so powerful, and especially in New York City because it's a city that, has so many different backgrounds, so many different cultures. And if we all protest it, there's eventually going to be a change, because if the people and especially with this whole pandemic, like that dangerous. So, if we're in and I saying, you should put your life in jeopardy, but when there is something that's really something serious going on, that's been going on for years. That's why, so yeah, that's my answer.

KS: Okay. So I would like to ask, do you have any stories you are willing to share about the encounters you have had with racism for the police?

SB: Oh, I can't like oh, my gosh, wow. Well, you know, what's funny? I always say whenever I would be on the phone with Dr. Finesurrey, I'd be like, this is so confusing because part of me feels like, Oh, my gosh, you know, this, all of this is going on, of course, the as a black woman, as a black person, as a person in general. You feel like damn, like, this person had to lose their life, because of this unfortunate situation, because of these stereotypes, because of all of this stuff

that is designed to just have a segregated in a way. For me, but I've never encountered police brutality innocent in a way, as I've never encountered in that severity. I've never encountered that. I'm not something I can remember right now. But, in a way, I was like, oh my God, I feel like, I don't know how to feel right. But in a way and, and the frustration the anger that kicks in is an experience that I've had with racism or microaggression, that you deal with at work. One recent one, and I mean, it's something people will consider, like, oh, it's so small It's just hair. It's just this but it's your part of your identity. It's a part of my culture. It's part of who I am. I was at work and my supervisor and I had protective, I wear protective styles to protect my hair whatever and my supervisor, I was wearing dreadlocks, not dreadlocks they're called locks. I was wearing locks, bow locks, and she was like, She looked at me and, she, I don't want to like, but it is conducive towards a situation. She was a white woman, she was somebody other than my race, you know? Probably, you can't identify, I guess, whatever. But she said looked at me and she was like, you are so beautiful. You are so beautiful. Why do you want to put that in? Why do you have that in your hair too beautiful for like, the sentiments of you're too beautiful for this hairstyle? Right? I was like, okay, in a regular person's mind they're like, okay, and I can understand why because, part of me is like, you know, maybe, she just thinks it's a hairstyle, maybe, and that's not. But she further goes, and she says, minds you, my hair is in perfect condition. There's nothing wrong with it, it doesn't have any, because, like, when people look at locks, they'll probably be like, oh, it probably smells or like that. That's, what goes on in people's minds. She's like, can I proceed to touch it? Right? Because I can not work it. How much? Is it heavy on your head? Can I wash it? And, and, you know, it sounds comfortable. Because you don't? For me, at least I have this. I'm like, okay, they already think I'm gonna come a certain way, you know, be aggressive, they already think I'm gonna be like that. That's what it does in your mind. You know, hence why there's code-switching and why people of color people from a certain background code-switch in order to be accepted in society. But, I was already like, I want to tell this lady stop touching my hair. I want this lady to I want to question his lady. Why am I too beautiful to wear full locks? Why are you saying that? Why are you alluding that my hair is dirty? Why are you alluding? All of these? Why are you making these illusions? Like, why am I not losing? Why am I? So but I didn't because in a way I wanted to say something because I was like, I've all the stories, all of the past occasions, I have not said anything I just wanted, like, what again, I'm at work supervisor can't right. But it's stuck with me because I'm so upset and I'm like, is this because like, Why? Why? Like, how dare you? The question is, how is that racist? Right? How is that even some type of racism? So, I think for me, I take it as if I was a different like, why like it, I think what was so bothersome to me was her already her assumptions that people have that type of hair color, that hair texture, that bothered me. And yeah, it struck a chord because there are so many other people that are that looked like me that have that and that is another reason why people get discriminated against, black, discriminated against just something simple as that. I guess, so for me, Yeah, just being a black person, there will always be microaggressions. There will always be that, point where you're like, that's my experience with racism, racism, and things of that nature.

KS: I would also like to ask, were you active in the protest at all in a digital or in-person way over the last six months? If so, how, and why did you decide to get involved?

SB: So, for me, I was scared to do like, people, like I say, if you protest, you're very bold, very courageous, because I was scared, to be honest because I didn't want to catch COVID. Again, I don't want to give it to my mom. But, for a minute when all of that protesting happened, I literally just got kind of got disconnected and kind and I don't know what to do. I don't know what to say because you see it on Instagram, you see all of these different accounts of what's happening. Be aware of this. And you want to make sure what you're looking at is real and with of course we know the videos are real. That's real, it is real. But, what you're seeing on social media gets blinds you blurred and it's like should I support this? Should I support that? So, I kind of like I don't know what I'm doing like, I don't know. And again, you're feeling desensitized at the same time you're like, I don't know how to feel because I was never put in a predicament where it was so like, oh my God. So, for me, what I did was, pretty much whatever information I could get out there, I use after whatever information I can use, or whatever information I learned myself. I was looking at articles, having conversations with doctors. And also talking to Monica from Guttman. So after having those conversations, after learning more, I pretty much whatever information I could put out there and whatever, I can do. That's what I did. So I use social media as a platform, and definitely spreading information, spreading awareness on what's going on. And whatever I felt was just right. And also, the cash bail system that documentary, of course, after you did your research, or like your due diligence, you're like, hey, obviously, it's affecting people of color people that are just people that can afford the cash, like, nothing all black people are just saying that black people, people of color and people that the middle class, that's what I'm saying. I definitely push forward like hey, this should go here that should go there. Nothing because I was the only one since all of my group or my group member, my team, we all were on the same page. But, that was also another way where I was like, okay, this is serious. This is what's going on.

KS: Now, what were the responses? How did let's say like the cops or what do you think about the local or national government's response to protesting that begin in May 2020?

SB: Can you repeat that question one more time?

KS: So I asked, what do you think about the cop's response to protesting, as well as, local and national governments' response to the protests that began in May 2020? What do you think about that?

SB: I don't want to be more specific May 2020 because I'm trying to think about, well, like, what you're saying, but I want to say in general. Their responses that's the frustrating part as a black person when you're looking at social media or people on platforms, who are sometimes even people of color. That's it because when you see people that say, hey, police brutality is not real, and you have to look at all the other intricacies of it, it gets frustrating. And I have people that have talked about their own accounts, and how, basically it's kind of a thing where they completely disregard and they know that they're not gonna get no repercussions. So, whatever, my response to that specifically is, that is a reflection of how society has put people of power people that are supposedly supposed to have power, that is what you get, is the production of that. And it's frustrating because how can you not see that that's wrong? I try to brain around it and sometimes it gets confusing because I know that it's wrong. Many people know that is wrong, but you have this specific reason why it's not right. So the common theme will be these people risk their lives every day. Right? And you risk your life every day.

And in my mind, I'm like, okay, you risk your life every day, same here. But, you do it as an occupation. You feel like people don't respect you because of the backlash of law enforcement. I look at it as a can you have that reasoning? But Why though? Why, why? Why do people not liking it and again you can't just be like oh, let me just wake up one day and say I don't like to believe there are some people that feel like, okay, I'm just gonna follow things. But, there are also people that have experiences. But I one time I remember and this is not even particularly because she probably we were black, but I remember my mom used to get stopped a lot by when she used to pick me up from school. And it could be a plethora of things, oh, you parked around or whatever, you know. And not she didn't get up multiple times. But, there was like, two times she got stopped. And one time, she called my dad for I think it was because of something. Actually no, I call my dad because I don't know, I think I called him for some reason. And he was trying to explain something to the cop. And he's like, why do you have that camera in my face? Why do you have the camera in my face? And in his mind, I'm probably thinking, okay, maybe you're uncomfortable. Of course, if somebody puts a camera, but I'm a kid, I'm like, here, here's the camera, and now, when you see everything that's going on, I kind of thought I think about all types are wrong, you know? But it's scary, because it's like, what do you think is gonna happen? And, part of me thinks if I was something if I didn't if I wasn't black? What would it be like? What if I had a camp, whatever. And then there was another situation where a lady, was a woman cop. And this stuck with me because, I used to think like, if I ever see her again, I'm not gonna do anything. But I know, I'm just not gonna like her. I'm gonna know when I see you that you're not a good person because she stopped my mother and there are different things like you when somebody's being rude. And you being rude is objective. It's not always an objective thing because somebody can say something like, no, you're being rude. It's a subjective thing. But, my mom, I guess something, were her chin, something. But, she will stop and was just being rude like, oh, something about the license, please. But it was just, I remember that feeling, she didn't have to do all of that, you don't have to. You didn't have to do that because my mom wasn't being rude or my mom was like you're the police officer, you have to follow the precautions. But, I say this to say police officers, I understand your risk your life, I understand at any moment somebody says like, you have to stop somebody and you don't know what is gonna happen and I do know that those people are feeling the same exact sentiment, and some police officers they take it as when you have a gun, you have certain things, and you're taught the procedure. But, you still disregarded you still go the extra mile and we still have these cases. You wonder why people don't like you, you wonder why. And it's not saying people have that mindset for every police officer. Should I take those two base encounters or those two unforgettable encounters with police officers as I hate police officers? No. But, it should not be disregarded and they should think of changing some things. There are some police officers and I'm not saying all police officers are like that but, I'm not gonna say that sentiment of oh, there's just a few bad apple. No, there's just a system that has been placed where there are no repercussions for this bad apple. So, their response to it, it just sometimes it just gets like, do you not understand that, you have a job. You're here to protect and Why are you not? Why does it seem like there are so many senseless killings if you're not protecting? I had a friend who was telling me her experience with the law, like basically because she's into that field or whatever. And she was saying they're taught to aim to kill, that's what they're taught. They're not aimed. They're not taught to cheat or lead. They're taught to kill. And that's scary. I understand you have to protect yourself but, let's look at like a situation like yours...Were those necessary situations? No. So it's like when they have that reasoning about one piece

of it's like... And then you have a former president this day, former President Trump, push this like, oh, people are rioting, and people are doing that. It doesn't make it any better people that just come in, oh, you see what President Trump said? Because then people think, oh, he's a part of the government knows all of this. Oh, and it's a higher power. So I think what they say is, their responses are divisive. Like, a lot of the messages are gonna read out even the active are very devices. So that's my response to that, that long-winded sentence that's my response.

KS: Yeah, okay cool. So, I just want to move on to questions about 2021. I want to ask, what is your reaction to the invasion of the US Capitol by the trump supporters on January 6, 2021? What do you think led these people to attempt to violently overthrow the government?

SB: Violently overthrow the government? I think that's crazy that you say that because I was gonna bring that up in my answer before. First of all, that was so crazy, because I saw the video of the police officer, he was a security guard, I think. He was trying to keep them from coming upstairs. But, every time he went up the stairs, they went up the stairs, and it kind of reminded me of this of called "this is America". The music video, like he's running from these people. But, I feel like, what led to is just people feeling like, it's crazy when I look at Trump people that are Trump supporters or just supporters of like certain, I don't want to say it, but certain supporters of a direction that is a divisive supporter, like divisive supporters. That's what I'm going to label them divisive supporters. I think of this sense of entitlement, that's why this entitlement cannot happen. It's a difference when you protest because people are dying and injustices are going on and actual oppression, versus people that feel a certain way because of a situation, that is not severely oppressive. That is not, and I haven't looked at so much into the Capitol Hill, for me anybody, even Finesurrey can say. So you can say that I'm very much a political person. You really don't know but you just have to be aware of what's going on in society. But, for me with the whole Black Lives Matter, all of that, that was a lot. I was like, oh, my gosh, this is so much. There's so much you have to look into with all of this. You see what's going on, but there's so much back story, but that's the side the point. Capitol Hill, from my knowledge, it was just basically crazy Trump supporters. But, for that situation, why there was so much violence, entanglement, and because it shouldn't be that way. And if it's not this way then, all hell is gonna break lose. It's that ridiculous entitlement that's why that happened. He's crazy. And, to further reflect on that, it's crazy how far they have got. We got homies out there for people that are protesting for Black Lives Matter. You got armies out there ready to rip the tear gas off, and do all of this violence towards the protesters, right?. But did you see there was a photo of them just sitting on the desk taking photos, like not taking photos of himself like these photos, actually taking selfies with police officers. It was a whole walk through the White House or something. You see the difference, protesters could not do that. I think there was a whole windy set on fire. There were some things on fire and there was looting. That didn't just happen without? No, there were repercussions for that, there were people that were arrested, people that were still on repercussions. I'm not saying that right now they aren't looking because obviously. I see that there were a couple of them that were put in jail or something of the sort. But what I'm saying is those two different accounts of protesters that are protesting because they're mad. Protesters that are hurt and going through something are tired of it. Imagine being one of those protests and going in there and looking at documents and having that ability to go invade some type of privacy. Versus there's a different type of power that's there, a different type of inclusion

that isn't there. So, the scent and the root of that is because of that entitlement. They feel entitled and they feel like it should go this way. Make sure the votes are right for that justice. When that change starts when Biden and Kamala Harris are in office. No longer that system that you all like so much and it's no longer in your favor and Donald Trump is not here to save nobody is not going to change anything. That's when that entitlement gets mad, and that, enraged entitlement gets stronger. And they flex their power, the sort of power that they have.

KS: Yeah, cool. I want to ask you, what do you think about the impeachment trial of former President Trump?

SB: I don't think it's gonna happen. It's going on right now but, I don't think he's going to get impeached. I'm not sure I know what to think. I don't know much about it. It see it on twitter it's live right now. That right there is he does get impeached, I know that he can't go in office. So, that takes away his power. I am looking at it if he does not get impeached, he probably gonna run for something if he feels the need to. But we'll see what happens. That's all I'm gonna say about that.

KS: Okay. so, now I have five additional questions that I came up with. And I would like to ask you if you would like to answer them.

SB: Yeah. Oh, and to go on to that question, you have to look at if Donald Trump get impeached, we still have others and that's why it can't just change. It has to change with people. we have to really push for that change, that reform in government and the systems. For instance, Mike Pence, or just any other figure that gets out of the office or gets impeached, that's like okay, Trump you're out. There are still going to be people that support him. Also, there are other stuff needs to be done about like cases, I think sexual assault, and taxes. I don't know those are the things we're talking about because does that even include impeachment? No, I think it's just about really the assault with Capitol Hill. And also, I think other things like concerning him with the killing of or not even killing, what do you do for assassination, something. All of that needs to be addressed too. One man's impeachment, it doesn't mean that they're another person can come in after two years and do the same thing. It really takes us that this is what needs to be reformed. This is what is needs to be decolonized. So, yeah, but on to your five questions.

KS: Yeah, yeah. So, I would like to ask why did the looting happen? Why did they decided to loot? I mean, if you're protesting or peacefully protesting and why did it just get violent all the sudden? What is the accomplishment from that?

SB: Okay, I'm going to explain it like this. How do I explain it to you the proper way. Do you ever get mad and not even that, do you ever feel about something or you're emotional or have you ever crumple up a paper after writing something down? Do you have a crumpled paper?

KS: Yes, I mean, if I don't like something I write, I would just rip it apart and start a fresh. 1:06:21

SB: Start over right?

KS: Yeah, start over.

SB: Okay. So, I look at looting like this. I look at it as that frustration of wanting to start over society, wanting a new society, and wanting justice. That frustration of I have to start all over. And for them, you can't win the society. We can't start over. We can't start over and go back to where we don't know where we're from, or where we came from.

To see videos, and even have personal accounts of police brutality, racism, or discrimination, all of those things. Of course, you get mad, also to add on to that why looting. There are some people that protested that did not loot. So, that's one thing that the media gets miss construed. There are protesters that gathered peacefully and that gathered to sing songs, that gathered to chant, and just really were fighting for that.

Hold on one second.

KS: Okay.

SB: Alright, so what was I saying? I lost my chain of thought. So there were some people that were protesting that did not lose. So that's when people get in misconstrue. If you think that looting is this and that, and even if they did lose, I'm not excusing it. I would say that I can understand. Look at all this places in Soho fashion whatever. Or stores, they profit off of our dime. And they can't issue out a statement. All of these things your prides, your input, and your prized possession that creates this society or rooted off capitalism or whatever. But, capitalism is a whole nother thing. But, all of that can lead to frustration like hey, if you don't respect me, and you don't respect my part in society, then what can you do when all of this is gone? This is how you going to hear me and if you can't hear me then, this is how you're going to hear me. That is the outcry of what's going on. Throughout history to there's been shown, there's been different ways and different paths people have taken to express their effects of oppression, whether it be violent, whether it be peaceful, but either way, it was all from the root of that oppression. So why was there violence because half again, not all protesters were looting. Some people just looted and it was seen as a whole with the protesters because that's what he wants to show. But also, because of that frustration of that simple assembly crumpling up that feeling of feeling powerless. So for me to take back my power, that's what I'm...(connection cuts)

KS: Hello.

SB: I'm back. Sorry. Okay. So, that crumpling of the paper and getting frustrated.

KS: Yeah. Just simply short I know this interview. I'm sorry?

SB: But it's not as simple. It's just like a metaphor.

KS: Yes, just because this interview has been a long time.

SB: This transcript I felt so so bad.

KS: No, it's okay. I just simply short I got a former question that simply short. Do you think the policies for COVID were restricted? Like such as wearing a mask all the time when outside or stamp home orders? Do you think it was restrictive?

SB: No, I don't think it's restrictive because this pandemic that's going on, millions of people are dying. So, you don't know what's going on, you don't know where it's coming from. I mean we don't know where it's coming from, it's a virus. You don't know who has it. So, I don't think it's restrictive.

KS: Okay. I will also say what I do think if you were to participate in protests, what could give you that motivation? What type of motivation would you get for participating?

SB: I feel like right now on the current present, I feel like with the pandemic that is the scary part for me, I'm scared of dying. I don't want to die but, I don't want this to continue. So, that's where it just stretches. But if there wasn't any pandemic, I would want to protest.

KS: Okay, alright.

SB: That sense of being scared, but sometimes in order to conquer and to make change, you have to conquer that fear. That's in society and that's a good way to go long-winded. But that's another component society, we're scared because you want to be in compliance, you don't want to be shamed for being black or being a other. You want to stay within that room, but you have to sometimes you have to go out of that bond because if you don't, then that will continue.

KS: All right. So is what are your overall initial thoughts and reaction of this crisis?

SB: I think, Well, no, I know, you have to learn for yourself. In one of the classes, I said this before, in the early in the interview, but, the decolonization class and even in Finesurrey's class, the city seminar class, for his class it teaches you the history of everything that has a history behind it. How we got here? How everything was built, how New York was built, all of that is a history to why we're at where we're at now, you know? But, in more particularly, but T's class teaches you, there's that history. Now, you have to deconstruct the history some even Finesurrey's class you have to do deconstruct the history. Ut, in the other class, I learned that basically don't be afraid. I can say that for both classes, it teaches not to be afraid. City seminar teaches you the history teaches you how to look deep into history. It's crazy how those two classes it's kind of like a combo. The history and then more history but, also deconstructing the history, language, identity. So, to answer your question, what I have to say about this crisis is really get in tune with yourself and get in tune to who you are, what your background is, and also why things are in place. Don't take it for what is it.

KS: I guess you're saying kind of to learn how to adapt.

SB: Not even that but to learn to evolve.

KS: Yes, that's the right word.

SB: When you adapt, you're pretty much adapting to society. Like if I adapt, right, of course, that's what we're taught because we're survival, right?

KS: Yeah. More of getting use to because now with all restrictions going on the COVID restrictions, it's affecting a lot of businesses, it's effecting a lot. And that's something that we used

to go to Guttman physically, now, we got to do things remotely. And this is something we got to get used to.

SB: I agree, I totally agree with you, but learning to evolve. And I say this with COVID, because, I'm learning answering what I want to keep in mind scholarships, all of that, that's another part of evolving and creating the series, not letting my dream for the film die. And, also getting up even when I feel discouraged, that learning to evolve. And to be more specific, until and the intricacies of our society, such as the government and police brutality and law enforcement and just things that structure our identity as well as history, learning to evolve in the sense of learning, not just taking from what I learned, even at Guttman or in my prior educational career, learning for myself, learning other things outside of it, and striving to learn. That's what I would say about this crisis. You have to learn how to evolve.

KS: Okay. So this is my last question. My last question to you is do you have any message you would like to share that will inform the future generation that will look back to this interview? Do you have any message to give regarding to this crisis that happened in 2020?

SB: Well, if you're looking at this right now, and you're in like, 2030, right no that's let's say 2040. So I would say, create, learn, don't take everything at face value. Whatever you see right now is not always what it appears to be. Not even only that but also, learn, really really learn and evolve and believe and create, create. I don't care if you're not an artist if you're not a film maker, always create, always leave something behind.

KS: Yes, do something you're passionate about.

SB: Yes, follow your passion. And don't be scared. Don't be scared. Fear, fear is the waste of time.

KS: Yes.