Lynnise Norris: Supervisor, University Finance

“Housing Our Story” interview with Jennifer Kingsley, Nathan Connolly, and Shani Mott

October 26, 2018

Nathan Connolly: All right. Good morning.

Lynnise Norris: Good morning.

Nathan Connolly: The date is October the 26th. We are here with the Housing Our Story interview and this-

Shani Mott: I'm sorry.

Nathan Connolly: That's okay. Miss Norris, and we are very much looking forward to speaking with you about your experience as a Baltimorean, your work life at Hopkins, and whatever else you feel compelled to describe and talk about.

Lynnise Norris: Sure. Happy to.

Nathan Connolly: Right off the top, we'd love to get a sense of where you were born and when.

Lynnise Norris: I'm a Baltimorean by nature, born and raised predominantly in West Baltimore. My West Baltimore area includes the lower Edmondson Avenue corridor, the Freddy Gray area, Harlem Park, so that's where I hail from.

Nathan Connolly: Okay. You went to school where in Baltimore City?

Lynnise Norris: High school, I graduated from Carver Vo Tech on Bentalou and Presstman. I went to the University of Baltimore. I went to the Baltimore City Community College. They keep changing the name. It's been several things since then, but I think it's BCCC now. Then, I went to the University of Baltimore, and then to Hopkins.

Jennifer Kingsley: Can I ask a little bit about what that area of Edmondson Avenue, et cetera was like growing up? What are some things that you would tell your grandkids or your ...

Lynnise Norris: The thing that hits me the most about that area. At one time, it was a totally contained, we didn't have to go anywhere. Everything was accessible to us. We had clothing stores, grocery stores, everything on that Edmondson Avenue strip. So that area, as a kid we didn't have to travel far to malls or anything like that because everything was right there. Even record stores. I mean, you don't remember that, but-
Shani Mott: I do!

Lynnise Norris: And then, '68 came. After Martin Luther King was killed, the area was demolished, totally demolished. Most of the store owners did not come back. I still ride through the area periodically now to see that the area never came back to what it was. There's still a few things there, but nothing to the magnitude of what it was.

Lynnise Norris: I think people in the area are still angry about that, the people that remember that because money did come into the city to rebuild or whatever, and they basically spent the money in the harbor area. It never got back to the neighborhoods and the communities. So, we're talking about still a lot of poverty in the area, a lot of drug addiction. That's what I see now, compared to what it was when I grew up.

Shani Mott: If you had to go back, do you remember moving into your neighborhood? I'm also curious to know about what did it look like in terms of the racial makeup, in terms of the class makeup? People who owned homes. People who rent-

Lynnise Norris: Pretty much, it's always been a very black area. Very, always. I think as a child growing up, I lived a little bit on the other side of the tracks. We did have some white families there, but they appeared to be poor class white families. Well, they didn't stay but I do remember that as a kid, going to elementary school and all. So the area has always been 99.9% black. Just, that's the neighborhood.

Shani Mott: When you remember the poor white families, you remember their children in school with you?

Lynnise Norris: Yes.

Shani Mott: What was that like? What was the ...

Lynnise Norris: We didn't have an opinion of it at that time. It was like we were kids. We were going to school. They've lived around the corner and that's pretty much it. Even though I think I was always aware of the segregated areas, I just thought they're brave. You know? I've had some experiences as a kid that let me know how segregated and racist Baltimore City is.

Nathan Connolly: Really?

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. My mom and her girlfriend, they were walkers so they would walk the kids. One day, they loved to shop at Montgomery Ward's, which is the lottery place now, the Montgomery Park. So, we walked from West Baltimore because it was summer, a nice day. We were walking. We're kids playing, walking down the street behind them.
Lynnise Norris: Coming back, because it was almost an unsaid thing, you didn't cross Wilkens Avenue going into South Baltimore because that was a racial divide. So, they being brave or whatever, crazy. I don't know. They didn't want to spend the bus fare. We were walking. So on the way back, we're walking through the South Baltimore neighborhood before we get back to our side and these white guys sic their dogs on us.

Nathan Connolly: Oh my gosh.

Lynnise Norris: And of course, we're kids. We're screaming at whatever. I'm like, "Wow, we were just walking down the street." But it was an unsafe thing. You did not go on that side of Wilkens Avenue. So I was really aware and conscious of the segregation of the city and certain places.

Lynnise Norris: I guess after that, I tended to stay in my own area and not venture far from that because I had one incident, like I said. I probably had to be six or seven when that happened and it still sticks in my mind now.

Nathan Connolly: You got actually bitten or you ran before they got to you?

Lynnise Norris: No, we ran in ... my mom's and then we stopped. And they stopped the dogs, but the point is that they actually told them to sic. You know.

Nathan Connolly: Sure.

Jennifer Kingsley: That's terrifying as a kid.

Lynnise Norris: And I know that we used ... Then, we started catching the bus going down because they refused to stop shopping there. As soon as we crossed Wilkens Avenue, they would blast the bus with eggs and things like that because there were black people on the bus.

Lynnise Norris: So like I said, all this sticks up here. It won't go away.

Jennifer Kingsley: Let me ask. So, you were six or seven. How does that compare to in terms of where '68 is as a landmark you've already mentioned. What are we talking about? The 60's?

Lynnise Norris: Yeah, the 60's.

Jennifer Kingsley: The early 60's. Okay.

Lynnise Norris: Yeah.

Jennifer Kingsley: So leading up to ...

Lynnise Norris: Mm-hmm (affirmative). I was a teenager when '68 happened.
Nathan Connolly: Wow.

Jennifer Kingsley: So, in the 50's and 60's, you're experiencing this, the bus and ...

Lynnise Norris: Yes.

Nathan Connolly: So, you're having that experience as a child relative to whites in South Baltimore. Relative to Johns Hopkins, which is also a kind of representative or a symbol of white power in the city in some way-

Lynnise Norris: Yeah, absolutely.

Nathan Connolly: How did that factor into your household conversations at all? Was it even a character in the life of US youth?

Lynnise Norris: The weird thing about Hopkins when I first came here, I came into a department called Jhpiego, there down Fells Point.

Nathan Connolly: Jhpiego?

Lynnise Norris: Jhpiego.

Nathan Connolly: How do you spell that?

Lynnise Norris: J-H-P-I-E-G-O. They're Hopkins, but they do their own thing. They're in Fells Point, but they do international health so it's a very international, very diverse ethnic organization. So, you see people of color in power, leadership positions. So I was like, "Okay, well maybe Hopkins is not so bad." I'm from West Baltimore, so Hopkins was never a thought for me. It was always the University of Maryland because I'm on that side of town.

Lynnise Norris: So when I came in Jhpiego, it was like well maybe it's not a bad place to work. I see black men in leadership positions and being directors and things like that. So I'm like, "Okay. I'll give it a shot." It wasn't until I came on campus that I really got the feel for what's going on here.

Jennifer Kingsley: You mean this Homewood campus?

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. Because I was being greedy, I wanted a promotion so I came up to the controller's office in finance when we were in Garland Hall.

Nathan Connolly: What was your title officially?

Lynnise Norris: Tax Accountant at that point.

Nathan Connolly: You were Tax Accountant.
Lynnise Norris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nathan Connolly: Do you remember what year that was?

Lynnise Norris: '98.

Nathan Connolly: Okay.

Jennifer Kingsley: Can we backtrack for a second? When did you start at ... Jhpeigo?

Lynnise Norris: Jhpeigo.

Nathan Connolly: Jhpeigo, yeah.

Lynnise Norris: '95, '96.

Jennifer Kingsley: '95, '96. Okay. So you were ... I'm sorry to backtrack again, but I'm just trying to get a sense of the chronology. You talked about what happened to the neighborhood in '68. Did your family continue to stay there after '68 or had they already moved?

Lynnise Norris: Or course. No.

Jennifer Kingsley: Okay. And are they ...

Lynnise Norris: There are not a lot of choices for people of color as far as ... No, we can't just up and move.

Jennifer Kingsley: Right, so you continued to live there and saw ...

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. We don't live in fear, which I think a lot of people have that perception that if something happened, you're going to be fearful or whatever. That's our neighborhood. Most of us have roots in that community. And usually in Baltimore areas, you're legacy driven. The parents live there. The kids don't move far away. So, everybody stays in that proximity.

Lynnise Norris: So, no. We didn't leave.

Jennifer Kingsley: So you were still living there when you started working at Hopkins?

Lynnise Norris: No. I was grown then.

Jennifer Kingsley: You were grown then, so you- 

Lynnise Norris: I moved on my own, yeah.

Jennifer Kingsley: Okay.
Lynnise Norris: But I'm still in West Baltimore.

Jennifer Kingsley: Yeah, in the neighborhood.

Nathan Connolly: So you stayed in West Baltimore?

Lynnise Norris: Yeah.

Jennifer Kingsley: And you're still there now.

Nathan Connolly: Wow.

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. A little further, Northwest Baltimore but I'm not leaving the city. I'm a city person and that's all there is to it. I have no desire to live in the County.

Shani Mott: Did you have sisters and brothers growing up?

Lynnise Norris: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Two brothers.

Shani Mott: Two brothers. Where do you fall in that family?

Lynnise Norris: The oldest.

Shani Mott: The oldest, okay.

Nathan Connolly: Are those two brothers still with us?

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. One's in Oklahoma. He's doing extremely well. He went into the military, did his 20 years. Now, he's some kind of alcoholic drug abuse director of some center he did for the veterans, but I don't know what he's doing now. My other brother, not so lucky. He's still here in the city. He's doing his thing. He has issues, but ...

Nathan Connolly: So you come to Hopkins in '98 you say.

Lynnise Norris: Six.

Nathan Connolly: '96, okay. '96.

Shani Mott: Jhpiego was part of ...

Lynnise Norris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nathan Connolly: Oh, got it. '95, '96. And you come to the Homewood campus as a tax accountant and you said it was at that point that you said you saw something.
Lynnise Norris: Yeah. I noticed just looking around that area because we were really tight in that space there. I'm like okay, the only black people are in accounts payable and lower level positions. Then the other departments, some of them had their required one black person. So I was like, okay.

Lynnise Norris: I was on the elevator one day and this lady, she's like, "Oh, do you work in accounts payable?" I'm like, "Well, no." She's like, "Oh." And I'm assuming that's because I was black and I was going to the third floor or whatever. "No. I'm a tax accountant." We ended that conversation.

Lynnise Norris: But I started seeing things, some overt racism type things going on. They didn't make much attempt to cover it up. Periodically, you would see some black person just going off. I'm like, "What's going on around here?" And then, they would just leave.

Jennifer Kingsley: You mean, they would leave the university?

Lynnise Norris: Yeah, like, "I'm out. I can't do this anymore." I really still until I started talking to people, understood what was going on. When they detailed to me how the directors, the managers were treating people of color differently from the way they treated other people, I was like, "This is a problem."

Lynnise Norris: But luckily, from my two past positions there, I had very good managers so I didn't feel the brunt of that but I saw other people ...

Nathan Connolly: Feel that, experience that.

Lynnise Norris: Yes.

Nathan Connolly: Can you give us maybe one incident that you might remember?

Lynnise Norris: For?

Nathan Connolly: For someone experiencing racism in the office.

Lynnise Norris: One of the managers, he used to ... We had a strict 8:30 to 5:00 kind of schedule. So at 8:31, he's pacing up and down the hall. That happened to me too. Before they had all this stuff, we parked on what is the field right outside of Garland Hall. I walked in the office at 8:34 like, "I was here trying to find a parking space." And everybody looks at me like, "You're late." I'm like, really? I'm a salaried employee. What is wrong with you people?

Lynnise Norris: But anyway, the managers, they would walk up and down the aisles to make sure people were literally in their seat and working at 8:30. I'm like okay, but these are a bunch of adults. They have their job to do. They're going to do their job. I've heard people say that women especially if they're pregnant, the manager starts harassing them about doctors appointments and having to
leave, those kind of ... I'm like, this is illegal, but they did it anyway. But there was no retribution for it, no ramifications of it. They just did it and they got away with it.

Lynnise Norris: That whole mentality in finance has pretty much stayed the same. Things happen and I'm like, okay this is not such a good place. I should have stayed where I was. But, life goes on. I'm here now. I have to make the best of it. I used to talk to ... There was a lady. I think she did some kind of ... She worked in HR. Training management or something. I used to talk to her a lot. She was like, "Lynnise, don't leave. You can make a change." I'm like, "Uh-uh (negative)." I said, "This battle is too big for me to fight." And I was like, yeah okay.

Lynnise Norris: I've had opportunities to leave a couple of times. Foolishly, I'd do some kind of evaluation mentally and I never left because my plan was, as soon as you get this Master's degree, get it and go. And like I said, I've had job offers and I'm like ... As a matter of fact, to my University of Maryland, I had an offer. I was like, "I don't know," because the salary was the same. I was chasing the dollar at that time. The salary was the same, so I was like, "Well, what's the purpose? I'm doing well here being promoted and updated and things, so I'll stay."

Lynnise Norris: Then, things took a turn. Leadership changed and-

Shani Mott: At what level?

Lynnise Norris: The old controller left. We've had two or three since then.

Shani Mott: And what does the controller do?

Lynnise Norris: The head of finance. A lot of people said they didn't like him. I liked him. He was old school Virginia military, racist, whatever. But I would just bust in his office and I'd be like, "I need to talk to you about this." And he would just, "Mm-hmm (affirmative) ... " But I was like, "Look, I'm not redeemed from everything, so I just need for you to understand if any of these things happen to me, it's not going to be pretty up in here."

Shani Mott: And by, "These things," what did you mean?

Lynnise Norris: The things that the directors and managers were doing to people. One of the managers, she poked this girl in the head, "Didn't I tell you?" She literally put her hands on her. The girl left. She just never came back because I was like, "I would just call the police, file an assault charge on her," but she just left and she just never came back.

Jennifer Kingsley: And you witnessed this behavior was always directed towards people of color?

Lynnise Norris: No, no.
Jennifer Kingsley: Okay, so it was generally kind of hostile, but then-

Lynnise Norris: Mostly of color, but just a hostile environment. I wanted to tell her. I said, "When she comes back, I'm going to tell her." I thought she went to the ladies room or something. She just left.

Nathan Connolly: Wow.

Lynnise Norris: Yeah, she just never came back. Because I was going to tell her, "Call the police. File an assault charge on her," because that was just wrong. Put your hands on people, that's the premise of the Black Faculty and Staff Association being founded.

Shani Mott: No way?

Nathan Connolly: What do you mean?

Jennifer Kingsley: Right. I remember that story.

Lynnise Norris: A nurse or something slapped a black woman, hence Dr. [Savage 00:16:07] and that group got together and started the Black Faculty and Staff Association.

Shani Mott: Wow!

Lynnise Norris: That was in response to this incident happening.

Shani Mott: What year was that?

Lynnise Norris: I want to say it had to be '94, '95. Right around the time I got here.

Shani Mott: Interesting.

Nathan Connolly: So it was established when you arrived, but you had heard that the incident had happened?

Lynnise Norris: Yeah because I had been in meetings with them and everything and people over and over want to hear the story of what made this organization come to light. It was in response to a white woman putting her hands on a black woman.

Shani Mott: Wow.

Jennifer Kingsley: Since we're on the topic of the BFSA, did you join when you first came?

Lynnise Norris: Yes I did, immediately even though I really was so far away that I could not attend meetings and things like that. But that's what I'm saying. That's why I was like, "Oh, this is a good place," because as soon as I got here, I got an email. "We're the Black Faculty and Staff." I was like, "I'm joining. I don't know if I'll
Lynnise Norris: Then when I came to campus, that's when I found out how the organization got started and everything. I started attending meetings and things.

Jennifer Kingsley: What were some of the concerns when you got to campus and how did that relate to some of the experiences you were having in your specific environment?

Lynnise Norris: They were basically just saying it was equity issues, lack of opportunities for people of color.

Jennifer Kingsley: In terms of promotion?

Lynnise Norris: Yeah, promotion, hiring, employee retention. The same issues that we have now, which is sad. I voiced that to leadership that it's sad that we're still having these same conversations 20 years later and nothing has changed. Very little has changed or improved around here.

Jennifer Kingsley: Are you witnessing similar behaviors in your workplace?

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. I brought it to the finance office that at first, we had no people of color in any leadership positions. So, supervisor and below, yes. Managers, directors, no. As I walked around, I called it the little glass ... Everybody had offices except for the people who weren't in leadership positions. So, I was like, "Leadership row, all white." This is what started my fight.

Shani Mott: And what building is this in, just so I can picture the glass? What did you call it-

Lynnise Norris: I'm in Keswick now, so it's a complete circle. My supervisor at the time, my manager, he was like, "You don't appear to be happy." And I was like, "Well-

Jennifer Kingsley: This was the military guy?

Lynnise Norris: No, no.

Jennifer Kingsley: A new one?

Lynnise Norris: Yeah.

Jennifer Kingsley: Okay, got it.

Lynnise Norris: They changed. He just called me in his office one day. He's like, "You don't appear to be happy." I said, "I'm not." He's like, "Well, what's wrong?" I said,
"I'm looking around and I don't see a place for me to go here. I see no opportunity for advancement. When I look around at the leadership in this particular office, I see no people of color, no women of color." No, I said no minorities. That's what I told him, no minorities.

Lynnise Norris: He looked at me like I had lost my mind and said, "There are minorities in leadership." So I'm thinking, okay maybe I missed something. I'm literally in my head going around to the director of every department, the managers in every department and I was like, "No. There are no minorities." He's like, "Yes there is. Barb's a director." I said, "Did you notice Barb's a white woman?" He's like, "Yeah. She's a minority." I said, "You know what? On that note, let's end this conversation because you don't get it. You don't get it." It was beyond his comprehension that a white woman was not a minority in my eyesight.

Nathan Connolly: Just to be clear, this is Barbara Landau? Or no?

Lynnise Norris: No. What was her last name? Warren.

Nathan Connolly: Barbara Warren.

Lynnise Norris: She was the director of the tax office.

Nathan Connolly: Okay, got it.

Lynnise Norris: So, he didn't get what I was saying.

Jennifer Kingsley: And this must be early 2000's, right?

Lynnise Norris: Yes. So, he totally just didn't understand. And on top of that, he had made several stereotypical comments to people of color and things like that. I was like, you know what? This is a waste of my time to even try to have a conversation with him because he's not going to get it. He lives in Cecil County or Carroll County, somewhere out there. So I was like, you know what? Just leave it alone because there's nobody that I can talk to that's going to understand what I'm saying.

Lynnise Norris: When I look around the room, he had a diversity meeting. They invited all the directors, the managers, the supervisors and telling us about some diversity plan or something. So I'm sitting in a room with probably 70, 75 people. I'm looking around the room and it's me and one other black lady. I was like, "Yeah. You can't tell me about diversity. Look at this group here."

Shani Mott: What was the point of the diversity meeting?

Lynnise Norris: I don't know. I tuned out. When I looked around the room, all I kept saying is, "You've got to be kidding me." I think I might have spurted out, "Bullshit," somewhere in the middle. I'm like, "Really?" For all these years, there was only
myself and another African American female in any supervisory or management position. But I’m talking about moving up the ladder. I know I’m qualified, my educational background, my experience and stuff, but there’s no room for us at that top. And that’s fine. I’ve accepted that. I’ve since accepted that and I was like, I’ll just fight the battle on another level.

**Lynnise Norris:** So through the Black Faculty and Staff Association, I’ve had the chance to be vocal about things, which I really like. I really, really enjoy that because I can take that battle to the people who can do something about it or at least, they hear me.

**Nathan Connolly:** Who are the kinds of people that you call meetings with to bring issues to the table?

**Lynnise Norris:** Ron Daniels, Heidi Conway, Kenny Hewitt, anybody in a key leadership position. If I find it necessary, that I think you can advance my agenda, we’re going to have a meeting. They feel like they can’t refuse to meet with me at this point because it would really look bad on them because we’re the largest affinity group on campus. And so if I say, "We need to talk. We need to whatever," they just... Sometimes they try to ignore me and then I have to send the, "I know you’re not ignoring me because I sent you an email a week ago." "Oh no, no. I’m just looking for some time." "Fine. Find it."

**Jennifer Kingsley:** So, you don’t have access as an employee but you have access as a leader in the BFSA organization?

**Lynnise Norris:** Yes. One of the ladies like I said in HR, she was in training I think. It used to be training and education or something, Lisa. She kept saying, "Lynnise, just hang in there. You’re going to get through." I’m like, "I don’t know if I can keep fighting this battle because in addition to this battle, we have our own personal battles going on. Home life and life, life. I’m politically aware of things that are going on. I’ve got all this other stuff going on but you want me to fight this work battle too? It’s easier to just leave."

**Lynnise Norris:** I’ve seen people just like, "I can’t do it anymore." They walk away. Overly qualified black people that can’t get a promotion or can’t find a new job here and they’re more than qualified. But-

**Shani Mott:** So what did ... Oh, I’m sorry.

**Lynnise Norris:** Go ahead.

**Shani Mott:** No.

**Lynnise Norris:** Then people who are lesser ... Once incident, applied for a tax manager job. African American lady, she had dual Master's degrees and a CPA. She applied for the job. The job went to a white dude who had just gotten his Bachelor's
degree. She left. She was like, "I don't have to do this. I can do this somewhere else and be valued for what I have." And so, these types of incidents that happened all across finance on a regular basis where people who are not qualified or lesser qualified but they're white so they slide into those positions.

Nathan Connolly: Relative to your position, do you still have the tax accountant title now?

Lynnise Norris: No. I'm a Sponsored Project Supervisor now.

Nathan Connolly: Sponsored Project Supervisor.

Lynnise Norris: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Nathan Connolly: And that gives you supervisory power over tax accountants, or who?

Lynnise Norris: Over just regular accountants.

Nathan Connolly: Regular accountants.

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. I've shifted gears now. So not the tax, but for your grant and everything, we oversee your grant monies and things like that.

Nathan Connolly: [foreign language 00:25:06]!

Lynnise Norris: We make sure that your awards get setup in the system so that you can charge your grants and things like that. That's basically what we do now.

Shani Mott: What does promotion look like? What is the process by which one gets promoted? Why do you think there are so many qualified black people who are overlooked? Is there a grievance process? And do they bring people from the outside in? Are they promoting internally?

Lynnise Norris: Okay, you're asking a whole lot of questions. Basically, what happens is after I started complaining, complaining, complaining, they did hire two African American females as managers from the outside. So then, I was like, "Okay, that's fine. I'm glad they're here. But again, my main concern is we still have no black men in any leadership positions here. Second of all, what is that saying to the people that are already here that you had to go outside to bring people in when we've been here doing this job?"

Lynnise Norris: So then eventually, they promoted one person up to manager from the ranks. But I'm like, "Okay, you people still don't get it." Again, like I said, we still have no men of color in any leadership positions. So I don't know whether it's an intimidation factor. One controller said that we're just not qualified.

Jennifer Kingsley: Is it relatively recently?
Lynnise Norris: No, this was a couple of years ago.

Jennifer Kingsley: A couple of years ago, but that's relatively recently for me.

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. I think that was probably when the bullshit comment came out of my mouth.

Nathan Connolly: But that came up in the diversity meeting, that comment.

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. He was standing there talking about what ... Because somebody did ask the question, "How come we have no people of color in leadership positions?" He said, "Well basically, they're not qualified." I was like, "Bullshit!" Most of us come to the table with, we know we have to have more education, more experience in order to be even considered. That's just wrong that he said that. But anyways ...

Jennifer Kingsley: Can I ask? Just take a step away from Hopkins for a minute. You mentioned that one of the things that's tiring is that you're carrying a lot of battles or fights or burdens. I'm interested a little bit. What place does Baltimore play in that in terms of where ... You talked about personal, but I imagine you're also thinking about community. I'm interested to hear more about that part of your life.

Lynnise Norris: Okay. Like I said, I've been in West Baltimore all my life. My son was murdered in Baltimore City violence.

Nathan Connolly: Oh my goodness.

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. But yet ... This is probably what gives me the strength to say, "Is that all you've got to throw at me? Because I've been to the wall and back so whatever you throw at me at this point is nothing that can compare with what I've been through." That was the thing that cut me to the deepest core. Losing a child, it's unexpected. We always expect that we'll have to bury our parents and elders and things like that but to have to bury a child, there's nothing that can compare. I'm at the point where if that didn't take me out, nothing you guys can do. And I'm fighting because I know he would want me to fight.

Nathan Connolly: Would you mind saying a little bit about what happened to your son?

Lynnise Norris: He was murdered. Gun violence, Baltimore City. Thank you. As a matter of fact, not far from where I live at now. He was in the neighborhood, so he wasn't on that side of town or anything like that. I think the thing that hurt me the most was I had went out of town. It was Thanksgiving weekend and I had went out of town. So, November is normally a bad month for me because all that comes back, even though it's been 20 years now.

Nathan Connolly: 20 years.
Lynnise Norris: But it's still always in the forefront of my mind. I went to visit my dad because I was worried about his health. I tried to get him to go and he's like, "No. I'll be fine. I'll stay home." I got a call that Friday after Thanksgiving that he had been killed. So, I had to drive back home and do what I had to do.

Lynnise Norris: I'll never accept it. I'll never get over it, but it's a part of my life now and I'll just move on.

Jennifer Kingsley: Is your neighborhood one of the places where you're working and fighting? I don't know how to phrase that.

Lynnise Norris: No. I don't do a lot in my neighborhood because I don't know. The street violence is ... And it's not particularly my neighborhood. It's all over Baltimore City, so even though I thought I was in a pretty safe area, we just had a murder a couple of days ago a couple of blocks from my house. It's nowhere to go. You can't run. You can't hide from it. And now, the violence has extended out into the counties, so what do you do?

Lynnise Norris: Politically, I just try to support people that I think can help in that fight.

Nathan Connolly: Do you have a church home?

Lynnise Norris: No I don't. That rocked my faith, so I'm just in limbo I guess. That's how I would put it. Certain things, like I said, you can accept but I still can't accept it and it has rocked my faith. I'm just being honest.

Nathan Connolly: No, sure. Things happen like that.

Lynnise Norris: So, here we go. We're still fighting the fight. You know.

Nathan Connolly: Well, this is fascinating because you're very active here at Hopkins. I get the sense that you actually see that change is possible. Clearly, you're in a position to try to affect some change.

Lynnise Norris: You know, after fighting this battle for so long, I'm finally starting to see some change, which makes me happy. It should have been done a long time ago.

Lynnise Norris: I met with the vice president I guess. I don't know. Senior vice president? Whatever Daniel is, finance and administration because I forgot to tell them [inaudible 00:31:26] at the reception or whatever. I've been meeting with him because he's over my work area and to let him know people of color are totally unhappy. They're feeling bullied. There's retribution going on. They're devalued. One lady told me she just walked out. She's like, "I have never felt so disrespected in my life."

Lynnise Norris: Basically, most people you can't even walk through the door without a Bachelor's degree so it's not like we're uneducated or anything like that. I was
like, "I need to talk to Daniel." So I did. I scheduled and appointment with him. We met and we talked. I was telling him things that I thought needed to be addressed in the finance area because he’s over the entire finance and administration area for the university.

Lynnise Norris: I had been taking this issue to HR because I thought that that was where that issue belonged. I said, "I've asked them to do exit interviews with people because people of color walk out the door. They don't say anything." That little online exit interview thing they have that people don't even know about. They just leave. They're like, "I don't have to fight this battle. I'm just going to go somewhere else." So I said, "You're losing extremely, highly qualified people to the disruption that the directors and managers bring to the people."

Jennifer Kingsley: With institutional knowledge on top of it all.

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. Years of knowledge. Most recently, one guy. He was here when I got here, so he's been here over 20 years. He literally just walked out. What could you do to a person who's been here for ... If you've been here 20 some years, you've already been through the middle, so what could you possibly do to him to make him just walk out the door? I heard he just threw his badge on the desk and just ... You know.

Lynnise Norris: So anyway, I was asking HR and I had been asking them for about three years now. "You need to do exit interviews with people of color, especially that have walked off. Not people that have transferred internally, but people that have left the university because most of them left with a bad taste in their mouth about Hopkins. They'll probably badmouth Hopkins from here on out. So, I think you need to find out and if you're concerned about employee retention, you need to talk to these people and find out why they're leaving." The fact that they left. They're just kind of like, "Oh, they left. Okay, let's just post the position and get somebody else." You don't know why these people are leaving and then you wonder why the turnover rate is so high with people of color.

Shani Mott: And you're talking to the director of HR?

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. The VP of HR, yeah. No, the VP. I go straight to the VP because I don't ... Cut the middle man because I don't get the response I need from those so I go straight to the top. And President Daniels. I don't really care. At this point, I'm going to be heard.

Shani Mott: Excuse me.

Nathan Connolly: Right.

Lynnise Norris: She kept saying, "Well, we're working on it. We're working on it." The last time she said she's working on it, I was like okay, this is what I can do. I went and
talked to Daniel Inez. He covers the whole entire finance and administrative area, which is where most of these people that I know are leaving from.

**Lynnise Norris:** So I told him and he was like, "Well, what do you mean they said they're working on it?" I said, "Just what the hell I said. They said they're working on it." And he was like, "Oh, no. It's going to happen." So less than 30 days later, I got confirmation from him and from Fenimore Fisher that they already had an independent group talking to faculty of color that left. So, they just changed the scope of their business. Now, they're doing these exit interviews with people of color that have left finance and administration.

**Shani Mott:** Oh, interesting.

**Lynnise Norris:** They've already begun the exit interviews. People have reached back to me and told me that they talked to them. I'm very interested to see what the result is because don't stand here and tell me, "I care about employee retention of people of color." That's bullshit. You have to do what you have to do and until you find out why people are walking away, you're not going to ever fix the damn problem. The problem lies with the lack of accountability in that intermediate leadership role. I told Daniel I truly believe that he, Heidi, and all those other key leadership people believe in President Daniels' issue of diversity and inclusion. But once you get below that, they're like, "We don't care what you say. We're going to do what we've been doing." They've been doing it for so long.

**Lynnise Norris:** So I said, "Trickle down doesn't work." I told Daniel, I said, "You come into our office. You talk to the controller and he tells you everything is fine and you walk away. But that's until you run into me and I have to put you on point." So now when he comes up and if I run into him, he's like, "No. Tell me exactly what's going on. Tell me the truth." So I've had several conversations with him to let him know this is now what he's saying it is. He must say, "Oh, yeah everything's fine." I said, "And you march on back over to campus or wherever you go." No.

**Lynnise Norris:** So I met with him and I brought a ... he asked me to bring a couple of other finance people in. I did and they told their stories and stuff. So now, I finally see some movement and some action, at least to find out what the problem is. But it's basically the treatment of people. Everybody can't, experience the younger people are not going to tolerate being treated like crap. They went to school. Most of them have student loans and whatever. They're not going to be in a job being treated like crap. They have no opportunity for any advancement. Or they come in, people of color, and they see their counterparts who are not of color just being promoted boom, boom, boom, boom and they're still sitting in the same spot. So, they leave.

**Lynnise Norris:** I think the patience level is a whole lot lower than it is when I came through. I'm like, "Okay, I'm going to stay in fight." And they're like, "Okay. We got your back, but we out of here. Let me know if you need anything." I don't know what the-
Jennifer Kingsley: It sounds like the changes you're talking about have happened in the last couple months. I mean, really recent.

Lynnise Norris: Yes. Just started.

Jennifer Kingsley: A perspective of and we don't yet have the full ...

Lynnise Norris: Right. I'm interested to see the outcome of me being vocal because I'm not going to stop and I think they know that. I'm surprised I'm still here. I expected to be fired a long time ago because I won't stop talking.

Jennifer Kingsley: Have you experienced any retaliation yourself?

Lynnise Norris: Oh, absolutely.

Jennifer Kingsley: For being vocal?

Lynnise Norris: Yeah.

Shani Mott: What does that look like?

Lynnise Norris: It looks like, I went to HR and told them, "Look, I was just mentioning. I don't really care at this point. I am so beyond caring about what they do or think. Like I said, you don't know where I've been so there's nothing that you can do to me that's going to put me in that place."

Lynnise Norris: My director has a habit and I think it's ... I personally told him, "I think you're trying to set me up." He will send me an email, "I want to meet with you about your productivity," or something. So I'm like, okay fine. I go to his office. "Did you respond to that email?" I was like, "Yeah." He's talking about, "Oh, okay." So I'm like, "But you titled this meeting productivity or something." So to me in my eyes, it's saying, so I can go to HR and say, "I scheduled a meeting with you about your productivity." There's no recording of what we talked about, but this is what it says in the subject of the meeting. I'm like, "You could have asked me that on the phone or sent an email saying, 'Did you respond?' Or whatever." "Okay. Next time, copy me in." "Okay. What does that have to do with my productivity?"

Lynnise Norris: He's done this several times, so I'm like okay this is a setup. So, things like that where you can't say it's an attack, but it's kind of covert stuff.

Jennifer Kingsley: And cumulatively. He's putting you on notice, "I'm watching you."

Lynnise Norris: Right. "I'm going to keep stacking this." And I'm like, "Whatever. Do what you've got to do." I guess I've moved beyond caring at this point. And like I said, my whole goal is to make it better for people of color, the next generation that comes through here because Hopkins is located in the middle of Baltimore City.
So people of color will be coming through here. My only hope is that they're treated fairly, that there is equity, that there is opportunity here for them so that they don't have to leave and go somewhere else. Hopkins doesn't realize how many people they've lost to the University of Maryland. They're a state institution, but they treat people a lot fairer than it is here.

Jennifer Kingsley: I'm interested in that because it sounds like you've kept in touch with people who have left-

Lynnise Norris: Absolutely.

Jennifer Kingsley: ... and have a sense of difference between how Hopkins is operating and some of these other places. Can you talk a little bit more about that and those experiences?

Lynnise Norris: Well, because I think the University of Maryland is a state institution, their criteria for promotion is a lot different. They quantify people's jobs. Here, things are very subjective.

Jennifer Kingsley: Qualitative appraisals. "Oh, this person ..."

Lynnise Norris: Yeah, so it's a big difference in the whole promotional setup. The state does this thing called best qualified, which is based on your experience, your education and things like that. So, they rate you and it's through a big system. It's not personal relation-

Jennifer Kingsley: Supervisor to-

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. It's more so you move into that best qualified area.

Jennifer Kingsley: So you know how to get there because you know what they're measuring.

Lynnise Norris: Right. They have clear measurements and it's very quantitative so you don't have that gray area. A lot of times, people get a promotion, I'm like, "How the hell did that happen?" I'm like, okay. But I've always said that here. It's not what you know, it's who you know that moves you go the next level. And I guess I don't know anybody important. Not that I really care because I like being who I am and I don't want that taken away from me because if I move into some leadership role, then I would have to quiet down and tone it down. I don't want that, so I'm perfectly comfortable with where I am right now.

Jennifer Kingsley: I'm very interested in you saying that, that if you moved into a leadership role, you'd have to quiet down.

Lynnise Norris: Because this is what I found out, which I thought was, not really strange but ... In my current department, for everyone who was promoted, they were hand picked by my director. But now, they owe him. They have to be loyal to him. We
sit in the meetings and it's amazing from 2001 when I first went into that department I was the only African American in a supervisory management role. I'm still the only black person in a supervisory management role 17 years later. He's had opportunities. He's hired. I think we went from three supervisors to eight supervisors, from one manager to three managers, but I am still the only person of color in that department.

Lynnise Norris: So as he says something and I just laugh. I can't help it because he'll go around the table, "Well, what do you think?" And they're like, "Okay, okay, okay." And I'm like, "Oh, hell no." So, he sits there. Lynnise said hell no. Sure did. But I don't care at this point. I'm out there.

Shani Mott: Where did he come from?

Lynnise Norris: He came through the ranks there.

Shani Mott: So he started at Hopkins?

Lynnise Norris: Mm-hmm (affirmative) and he went to HopkinsOne when they started the new SAP project. Then, he came back as director.

Jennifer Kingsley: I actually had a question. The people he's promoting and hand picking are white?

Lynnise Norris: Absolutely.

Jennifer Kingsley: And they're coming into this supervisory role and then you're seeing them become less resistant? Did you feel they were perhaps resistant or more willing to-

Lynnise Norris: No, no, no. They'd never resist him.

Jennifer Kingsley: Okay, so they're continuing that role?

Lynnise Norris: Mm-hmm (affirmative), but more-

Jennifer Kingsley: But you still feel if say he hand picked you and brought you in, had you ...

Lynnise Norris: He would have thought that there should have been some loyalty there and-

Jennifer Kingsley: I see. So he would expect you to be quiet.

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. There's an expectation of loyalty that you won't go against him or say anything that's against what he just said. I'm like, "You inherited me so you inherited the problem. That's all I can say."
Lynnise Norris: Like I said, I tried to leave a couple of times and every time I get to the final where they have to contact your current management, even though I'm the best qualified for the position, whatever, whatever. I've had departments internally call me and say, "Just don't make any moves. As soon as we finish this reference check," or whatever. As soon as they have to call my current management, "Oh, we gave the position to somebody else." That's happened four times. So hence, I have just not even bothered anymore because I'm like, "Okay, well then that's your stupidity because now you're stuck with me. You should have just given an okay reference and let me go and I would have been somewhere else."

Shani Mott: What do you think they tell these potential employers?

Lynnise Norris: I don't know. I probably should have reached out. Not that they would tell me the truth because they're all connected. I never asked, but I noticed that like I said, when I had people calling me, "The interview went great. As soon as we get the reference check." So you'll check my external references and then as soon as they get you the ... They always save your current supervisor until the last. Then all of a sudden, it's like, "Oh, we got somebody else for the position." Okay.

Lynnise Norris: Like I said, that's happened four times. So after that, I'm like, "Okay so now you got me." That's all I'm saying.

Nathan Connolly: You mentioned that there has been some improvement in recent months. What kind of things would you say have gotten better?

Lynnise Norris: They're moving forward with the exit interviews. I don't get harassed anymore, probably because of my BFSA position and my connection directly to Daniel Inez and Ron Daniels and things like that.

Jennifer Kingsley: So you have personal protection in a sense? But its not extending necessarily to other colleagues?

Lynnise Norris: It's not extending to other people and I don't think that's fair because there are people still there that are suffering. Like I said, my hope is that once Daniel goes through the results of this exit interview, he will see what kind of toxic environment is created right there in the finance area, especially central finance and maybe he will take some action. That's all I can hope. But I will continue to lead them down their investigative path to find out what they need to know in order to fix this place like I said because people of color are going to continue to come through here. And at the rate they're going, they're going to continue to come and go. You would want to have some type of stability or at least pretend that you're going to be diverse and inclusive and provide opportunities and your equity and stuff like that, but we'll see.
Jennifer Kingsley: Can I ask your sense, given that in the BFSA you can see many, many different units? I'm interested in I guess a kind of comparison or what feel you have for how the finance department say, where you sit, might compare to some other units. I remember you saying at the beginning when you were at ... that I can't say.

Nathan Connolly: Jhpiego.

Lynnise Norris: Jhpiego.

Jennifer Kingsley: Jhpiego! That it was a different culture.

Lynnise Norris: Since I've started this venture, I've had people contact me from other areas. They asked me to setup something with the dean of the libraries because the library says they're having the same issue with either people leaving and lack of people of color in positions of power. So, that's my next step. As people bring issues to me, I don't hesitate to put it out there.

Jennifer Kingsley: So, it's very broad from across the-

Lynnise Norris: I think it's across the board at Hopkins. I really do. That concerns me. I don't know what the resolution is. I'm just going to keep fighting the fight. That's all.

Shani Mott: If you had to ... I'm sorry.

Nathan Connolly: No, no. Please, please.

Shani Mott: When you think about the finance department or the university more broadly, if you had to institute one or two changes that you believe could make a huge difference in terms of keeping qualified black people, people of color in positions or promoting them, what would you recommend?

Lynnise Norris: What I would personally like to see is that these people that are creating these toxic environments or lack of opportunities, that they be disciplined. I'm not saying fired because I don't want nobody to lose their job, but they need to understand that it's not a joke because I think right now, they're taking this whole diversity and inclusion thing as a big joke, like it will go away, whatever. Like I was telling President Daniels, "If you have any intention on meeting this goal by 2020, you've got to step up your game."

Jennifer Kingsley: That's two years from now.

Lynnise Norris: Right. It's less than two years from now. We're talking about potentially a year and a half. It's the end of 2018, so something needs to be done. But you need to show people that you can't just treat people any kind of way and still hold your position of power. Hopefully, they will come up with something.
Lynnise Norris: We talked about institutional equity and things like that, but I think most of the people who are creating these environments are smart enough not to put it on the table for what it is. It almost turns into a he said, she said kind of situation. As I mentioned, we have a meeting with Kim next week. That's probably not going to be good. Basically, from past experiences I was glad they put that annual report out.

Nathan Connolly: [crosstalk 00:49:52]. The OIE annual report.

Lynnise Norris: Yes because just from word of mouth and hearing things throughout the years, we found out that pretty much OIE never sides on the side of the employee. They always take the side of the university. I'm like, "Well, that's where their paycheck comes from." I don't care what their position is. Their paycheck comes from the university. From dealing with Caroline before she left, I got that impression.

Nathan Connolly: Caroline [inaudible 00:50:17].

Lynnise Norris: Mm-hmm (affirmative) because after everything, she was like, "Lynnise, just keep fighting." You're not helping me, you know what I'm saying? But I get it.

Jennifer Kingsley: How much access does the BFSA get to all the information it wants? These exit interviews, will you be able to get the raw data? Or is that something that's-

Lynnise Norris: I've already reached out to them and told them that as soon as it's all available ... They're still interviewing people right now. A couple of people have interviews scheduled for the next week or two. So as soon as everything's ready, I've already emailed Fenimore and Daniel and told them we need to be in a meeting with both of them. We need to sit at the table.

Jennifer Kingsley: Because it's not just getting the info, it's reading the information.

Lynnise Norris: It's taking action on it too.

Jennifer Kingsley: And interpreting.

Lynnise Norris: The lady who was doing the, she's actually doing the interviews from the independent organization. I met her at the diversity conference and she's like, "It's not good." I was like, "Duh! I know that. I told you that." I said, "This is why I'm bringing the issue up." She was saying just as an overview, everybody that she has spoken to overwhelmingly said they would never come back to Hopkins.

Nathan Connolly: Wow.

Lynnise Norris: And we're talking about people that are young people and some people mid career. Hopkins is a huge place and it has plenty of opportunities but for somebody to make a concrete decision at that point and say, "I would never go
back there based on my experience," that's not good. So of course, you have these people who are out in the community or whatever and as soon as somebody mentions Hopkins, it's like, "No. You don't want to go there."

Jennifer Kingsley: This puts me back in mind. You were talking about when you were a kid, Hopkins didn't really play a role in your household. University of Maryland was there. Now as an adult living in West Baltimore and also working at Hopkins, do your neighbors, do members of your community, people you're engaging with, is Hopkins more visible or present on people's minds? Has that changed?

Lynnise Norris: People think about Hopkins and they think, "Oh, you work at Hopkins."

Nathan Connolly: Prestige.

Lynnise Norris: Yeah. I'm like, "Don't get fooled. Don't get it twisted. It's not. No, no, no." But a lot of my friends, even friends people who worked here at one point in time, so they already know and they're probably ... Even if they've left 10 or 15 years ago but they're still my friends. When we talk, just the mention of Hopkins is like ... You've been gone for 15 years. How do you still have this negativity ingrained in you about Hopkins? That's bad that you can't get over one of the worst work experiences you ever had. I feel for them, but they've moved on to bigger and better things and I just see that it's ... I'm not amazed because I know these people are talented, qualified, educated, to this level of success they've reached once they left Hopkins. When they were told here, they couldn't.

Jennifer Kingsley: Hopkins is holding them back.

Lynnise Norris: Yeah and that's why they left. One of my dear friends, she was a supervisor at the same time I was. She moved out to one of the departments and they told her she could never be a manager, so she left. Since she's left here, she's been the controller of a smaller university. She's been controller at another place. She's worked as a consultant. So, how could she not be qualified to be a manager here? When she's held the controller position at a smaller university but she couldn't be a manager at Hopkins. That ridiculous. It just goes to prove that people of color don't stand a chance here.

Shani Mott: If you had the opportunity to create your dream position here-

Lynnise Norris: Here?

Shani Mott: What would it look like?

Lynnise Norris: I don't know that it would be here. Yes it would. I would probably be Fenimore's right hand man, working with diversity and inclusion. Why? What?

Shani Mott: No, I got chills at the thought of that.
Lynnise Norris: Why?

Shani Mott: In a good way because I think sometimes when you have people in these upper level positions who are making decisions, they never know what's happening on the ground.

Lynnise Norris: And that's where I would like to be.

Shani Mott: Yeah. I was like, it makes perfect sense.

Lynnise Norris: Fenimore is tied into the president, which I get. I'm glad we finally have somebody in that role. But as one person, he can't go to the individual departments and he doesn't have the connection like I do with the staff members where people don't fear talking to me. They're a little stand-offish with certainly people, especially if they know that person has a direct connection to the president. People are fearful about losing their jobs. The economy, they're just a little worried so it's best to shut up and not say anything and just go through the routine day-by-day, as opposed to being vocal as I choose to be. So they come and tell me stuff because they know I will be vocal about it.

Lynnise Norris: I would love to be that person who goes out into the departments and talks to people in the department saying, see what the problem is. Why are people leaving here? Why aren't we promoting from within? That would be my dream job.

Shani Mott: That makes perfect sense.

Lynnise Norris: I would love to be that person. Just so they can find out what's going on. It's almost like they have blinders on. They don't want to know.

Shani Mott: They don't want to know.

Lynnise Norris: How can you not want to know what's going on in your organization or within your respective department?

Jennifer Kingsley: Because then you have to change things.

Lynnise Norris: Right and it's easier because you don't know, you don't change. We need change. It's 2018. It's sad that we're even having these conversations, still going through these things at this point in time in the game. Everybody else in the whole world has moved on, has accepted diversity and inclusion as a part of everyday business. Hopkins is stuck. I feel bad sometimes when I see on the news, Hopkins is always into some meeting with the mayor for different projects or whatever. I'm looking and I'm like, "There are no people of color representing Hopkins." What's wrong with that picture in a city that is this black, that we have nobody of color representing Hopkins? It's usually President
Daniels and some of the whoever's whatever. But I'm like, really? I tell them because I'm really serious about this, that their leadership team needs to be representative of the city that it's serving. That's how I feel. And please don't tell me that we're not qualified because that's bullshit. It is.

Lynnise Norris: That would be my dream position. At first, I was like, "I don't want no parts of this," but ...

Jennifer Kingsley: Can I ask, just going back to the neighborhood for one second. I know you've answered this question a couple of times.

Shani Mott: You said back to what?

Jennifer Kingsley: The neighborhood for just a second.

Shani Mott: That's where my mind was too.

Jennifer Kingsley: I'm curious about in West Baltimore, do you feel Hopkins is present, visible, playing a role either negative or positive?

Lynnise Norris: Nope. Not at all.

Jennifer Kingsley: It's just not there?

Lynnise Norris: Through the BFSA, we've tried to do some things in West Baltimore because I feel like everything for Hopkins is focused in East Baltimore. They support the Hopkins Henderson School, the Barclay School, everything east. So when we do our school supply drops, we go out to the West Side because Hopkins has a lot of resources. They spend a lot of money. I get it, the area around the hospital or somewhere between here and eastern, but if we want to be an inclusive city, our work can go beyond East Baltimore. We do things in West Baltimore. We do things downtown. We go downtown and feed the homeless and we work with the veterans in South Baltimore. We're a whole city, not just East Baltimore so we do try to spread out our activities and events throughout the city.

Jennifer Kingsley: Are you seeing other universities getting involved? I know the Pennsylvania Corridor has been of great interest to a lot of historians and public historians and Morgan State and all these kinds of projects and activity.

Lynnise Norris: Yeah, well Pennsylvania Avenue was an historically [inaudible 00:58:54] area. At one point in time, it was the place to be with the clubs and all the stars coming in the theaters and things like that. So, yeah. It's historically good for-

Jennifer Kingsley: So other Baltimore institutions are looking a little bit around here, but Hopkins has been really turned in a different direction?

Lynnise Norris: They're focused in East Baltimore.
Jennifer Kingsley: Interesting.

Nathan Connolly: One last question. We're just at an hour.

Lynnise Norris: Sure.

Nathan Connolly: But in curious in your role as Black Faculty and Staff Association President what you'd like to see for that organization relative to the work that it's currently doing and that you're helping it do? What would you like to see at the next chapter of the BFSA's life at Hopkins?

Lynnise Norris: Continued growth. Continue to be vocal. Continue to hold leadership accountable. Those are the primary concerns. I don't know that we can literally do anything about employee retention and stuff like that because people are going to leave. But, make it a better environment for people. I would like for us to connect more with each other, with the students because I feel like sometimes I feel bad for some of the students because they're not from Baltimore. I think we need to be as staff members more accessible to them when they need because sometimes when you're away from home and going to school or whatever, you need that familiar face of color or somebody to talk to, just to guide you sometimes. The things that the students get at the HBCU's that they don't get here. I would like for us to be more involved in that.

Nathan Connolly: Okay.

Jennifer Kingsley: That's beautiful.

Nathan Connolly: Great. Well, thank you so much. This has been really wonderful.

Shani Mott: Thank you.

Lynnise Norris: Okay! This was fun.

Shani Mott: Thank you.

Jennifer Kingsley: Oh, I'm so glad.

Lynnise Norris: This was fun, yeah. Thank you for letting me speak.

Nathan Connolly: Please, of course. Yes. Let me stop this.

Shani Mott: We love hearing you.