

00:06 [Luz Pimentel] Okay, and I think I'll go next.

00:08 Hi everybody.

00:09 My name is Luz Pimentel.

00:11 I am a sophomore at Suffolk University and I'm also the Community Partnerships Scholar at the CCE.

00:19 [Adam Westbrook] I can go next.

00:22 Hi everybody.

00:24 I'm Adam Westbrook.

00:26 I'm the director of the Center for Community Engagement.

00:34 And I'm excited about our conversation today.

00:35 [Tre'Andre Valentine] Hi everyone.

00:36 My name is Tre'Andre Valentine.

00:37 My pronouns are he and they, and I am the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition.

00:43 Thanks for having me.

00:47 [Dennis Harkins] I don't know if we're just introducing speakers or CCE staff, but I'll go and just say I'm

01:04 Dennis. It's nice to see all of you.

01:07 I'm the Assistant Director of the Center for Community Engagement here at Suffolk and thanks

01:14 for being here.

01:24 [Pimentel] Okay. I guess we'll begin, please feel free to, at the end, if you will add anything or if

01:42 you would like us to repeat anything, feel free to cut us off if needed or at the end.

01:48 But yeah, we'll just go ahead and start.

01:55 [Leila Ndiaye] Sure. So thank you again for joining.

02:00 So we are hosting this panel because the trans awareness month is a moment that the Center

02:06 for Community Engagement is dedicated to introduce and also give information to people.

02:12 So the goal of the trans awareness month is to educate students about trans awareness

02:18 in our local, national and global communities.

02:21 As well as to empower them with the information, tools, and resources or ways they can address trans awareness.

02:29 [Pimentel] Yeah, just to build off Leila, we hope to have some learning outcomes such as increased

02:38 awareness and gain a better understanding of all trans awareness issues, and surrounding their communities.

02:45 Discover resources, programs, and ways we can help combat these issues, and become self-aware

02:54 of one's personal thoughts and assumptions that we may have about it as well.

03:01 [Ndiaye] Sure.

03:02 So unfortunately, due to COVID-19, so this year we have been limited to only hosting

03:08 and participating in virtual events like this panel.

03:13 However, this by no means will limit the CCE, the Center for Community Engagement's passion

03:19 to help and educate the Suffolk community.

03:23 So, in the past, the Center for Community Engagement has done a lot of programming,

03:29 including workshops on gender identity.

03:32 Also observing a trans day of remembrance and doing programming for transgender awareness

03:38 month for the past five years.

03:42 [Pimentel] All right.

03:44 And again, we would like to thank you Tre'Andre, correct me if I'm pronouncing your name wrong,

03:51 for participating, taking the time to do this panel with us.

03:55 We definitely at the CCE will always take time to educate Suffolk students about ongoing issues.

04:05 Yeah, so we will begin by asking some questions.

04:10 And anybody, if you have any question, please feel free to add on or ask.

04:16 And you can put it in the chat if you would like to as well.

04:21 So one of the question is how has the environment of the organization changed since the pandemic?

04:30 [Valentine] Thanks for having me again.

04:34 So maybe I might start with sharing a little bit about the organization and what the organization does.

04:40 So people can have an idea because we have...

04:45 Pre pandemic, we were shifting directions anyway.

04:48 So it'll probably be good to give people a little bit of history.

04:55 The Massachusetts Transgender Political Coalition, or MTPC, works to ensure the wellbeing, safety

05:01 and the equity of all trans, non-binary and gender expansive community members.

05:08 And we were founded in 2001 as an all-volunteer organization to really bring trans people

05:18 together to change in terms of Massachusetts, the environment, or the landscape of really

05:27 like legal protections for trans people.

05:32 Because we did not have any legal protections.

05:36 We were the architects of the trans equal rights law that that was signed.

05:43 We began the work for statewide protections since 2002 and we didn't get any of those

05:52 laws passed until 2011.

05:58 And when we had that trans equal rights law that passed, that did not include public accommodations.

06:07 So meaning places like hotels, restaurants, healthcare facilities, and airports.

06:15 There weren't any protections for trans people in public places.

06:19 And so we also did work to get legislative protections for trans people in public places.

06:31 So that happened in 2016 and was then defended in 2018.

06:40 And since then, the organization has been asking itself, "Now that we have statewide

06:46 protections, what do we do with... what do we focus on now?"

06:54 And so instead of focusing solely on policy and legislative work, we've been doing...

07:04 trying to do more focus on community development.

07:07 And that was the beginning of the work that we were starting to do in 2019.

07:13 So we started off with doing a community needs assessment to have a greater understanding

07:19 of what the community is looking for.

07:21 Or is needing at the moment and how MTPC can help to address those needs.

07:29 So we did a community needs assessment, December of 2019 through March.

07:38 And we used the information from those needs assessments to inform our strategic plan for the next three years.

07:49 So we'll be doing more community development work, like community leadership and community leadership program.

07:57 Trying to be a more robust hub of resources because we're a small organization.

08:05 We don't have direct services for people.

08:07 We don't have a community advocate or anything like that.

08:14 Really it's one staff person, which is myself.

08:18 And so we really want to make sure that we are...

08:21 Even though we may not be able to provide the resource, that we can actually connect people to resources.

08:27 So really be a resource hub and as well as be a support training partner for other organizations,

08:38 businesses, schools on being more trans inclusive, and an inclusive of different gender identities.

08:49 And help build their infrastructure, their knowledge and skills.

09:00 So that was...

09:02 We were already starting to shift right in the beginning.

09:08 At the beginning of the pandemic, we were trying to shift.

09:11 And so this really... in terms of the environment, I think it just solidified the work that we're

09:24 trying to be doing, which is more so building up trans power, building up community leadership.

09:31 And I'm working from home a lot more now.

09:39 Thank goodness I have a job that allows me to do that.

09:43 So everything went remote.

09:44 We didn't really have any programs or anything that we put on.

09:50 What did happen was, well, we do the trans youth summit every year.

09:59 And that's a collaboration with BAGLY, the Boston Alliance for GLBTQ Youth, in addition

10:07 to Greater Boston PFLAG.

10:10 So we've been doing that every year and last year we weren't able to host it.

10:15 So this year we're doing that virtually.

10:18 And that's going to be interesting to figure out how to do that virtually with the youth  
10:22 from all over New England.

10:27 [Ndiaye Thank you, Tre'Andre for this introduction.

10:33 And the second question that we have is what advice do you have in improving trans awareness issues?

10:42 [Valentine] I think the advice I have is to continue to have the conversation.

10:50 That it not just be one month or one day, but that it's something that is ingrained

11:00 in conversations that you have or that we're having in general.

11:07 So if we're talking about issues of race, understand that trans people are also black,

11:15 and indigenous and POC.

11:16 We're talking about issues about disability and ableism that there are also trans people

11:24 who are disabled, that there are disabled trans people.

11:28 So it's to continue to have the conversation, but making sure that it is a conversation

11:35 that is nuanced, meaning that it's not just a single issue.

11:44 Because we are a complex people, we have many different identities and so that we're making

11:50 it as intersectional as possible.

11:56 [Pimentel] Thank you for your answer.

11:57 And building off to Leila's question, what do you think are some of the challenges  
and

12:05 difficulty when educating people about trans awareness issues?

12:09 Yeah.

12:10 So what are some of the challenges you come across being able to educate people  
about

12:17 certain issues about this?

12:20 [Valentine] I think one of the things that's difficult is that for people to then not just focused

12:33 on the trans-ness of a person, that that's the only identity that is held, that there

12:42 are multiple identities that can be held.

12:47 Because we're not just one thing.

12:49 So having some understanding of that and not just focusing only on trans-ness.

13:00 The other thing is, I think that there's sometimes only one conversation or one training, and

13:14 people walk away thinking, "Okay."

13:19 They did that training their job is done and it's not.

13:23 That it's actual internal personal work to try to de-gender spaces.

13:35 Which means being more inclusive meaning trans-inclusive, non-binary-inclusive.

13:39 And so, having people think or have the understanding that there is a lot more work than just one training.

13:52 [Ndiaye] Thank you.

13:55 So last semester, we had the chance to host panels on hunger and homelessness.

14:02 And we also learned that a large percentage of youth experiencing hunger and homelessness are LGBTQ youth.

14:09 So our question is what is the percentage of youth experiencing hunger and homelessness in your organizations?

14:18 [Valentine] So MTPC don't have... it's not like we have a membership of people.

14:26 And the organization doesn't think we serve all trans people, so there's not like we see

14:35 a percentage of youth that come in to the office or anything like that.

14:41 We do share an office with BAGLY.

14:45 Which is the Boston Alliance for GLBT Youth.

14:50 And so they are a youth organization, and they, I think have a much better idea of that number.

15:01 What I will say is that when we did our needs assessment, we had about 60% of people between

15:24 18 and 14 take the survey.

15:29 As well as we had about 11% of people who were 15 to 17 take the survey.

15:40 And maybe two people were under the age of 15.

15:43 And one of the things from that, given that percentage, one of the things that we did

15:48 ask people was about concerns regarding basic needs.

15:54 And about 28% of people said it was food insecurity.

16:01 So given that, I would say that it's probably comparable to the percentages that you're

16:09 seeing in your previous conversations on hunger and homelessness.

16:18 That whenever there are issues faced in our community, especially the LGBTQ community,

16:27 that youth are going to be experiencing that as well.

16:35 So I would say that it's definitely comparable.

16:41 [Pimentel] Yeah. And this is just a thought that I had.

16:47 But as you were saying earlier, I think it's very easy for people to forget the intersection

16:55 between being trans and other issues.

17:00 It's not like, "Oh, okay. You're trans, so you may not experience this issue."

17:04 No, everybody could experience hunger and homelessness.

17:08 So it's definitely something that people should be aware of.

17:14 And then I have a question, what means does the organization use to help transgender people

17:24 or youth have their voice in leadership?



17:28 So how do you guys shape and develop people to have a voice in leadership?

17:36 [Valentine] Absolutely.

17:37 I think one of the things in doing that is recognizing that people already have a voice.

17:44 I think it's about giving people the platform, giving people the support.

17:52 Sometimes it's about giving people encouragement, because we can all be leaders and it's about

17:59 recognizing that anyone can be a leader at any time in their life.

18:07 So it's giving people the opportunity to have input in what the organization does by providing

18:19 them...when we did the community needs assessment, that really shaped what the organization is going to be doing.

18:29 Having input over some of the policy and legislative work that MTPC does.

18:37 That we're not just doing what the organization thinks, but we are doing that informed by the community.

18:50 As well as we will be developing a leadership program so that people can hone their skills,

19:02 have more support, have more access to resources, to really propel them into their next phase

19:11 of leadership, whatever that looks like.

19:14 But I think it just goes back to having the values that everybody has a voice.

19:27 And that MTPC really listens to the voices of our elders and the voices of our young

19:35 people, to really make sure that we're staying accountable to our work and our mission.

19:45 [Ndiaye] Sure. Thank you.

19:47 And jumping off from the leadership program, can you explain more about this program and

19:54 how often does the needs assessment happen?

19:58 [Valentine] Yeah, so the needs assessment, I think the last one was done in 2009.

20:06 But that was really to have more understanding of what the community thinks the organization should be doing.

20:17 So that's really what we use the needs assessment for.

20:21 I'm sorry, can you say the first part of your question?

20:32 [Ndiaye] Sure. So I was asking if you could explain more about this leadership program.

20:38 [Valentine] Yes, that's right.

20:39 That's when I lost my train of thought there. Yes.

20:43 So the leadership development program has not been... it actually has not been developed yet.

20:49 We're in the beginning process of doing so.

20:52 But really the idea's to... because there are many trans people who are unemployed and underemployed.

21:03 And also I think there needs to be a lot more support for businesses in terms of their understanding

21:14 of gender, and gender identity, and really how to support a trans employee.

21:22 So the leadership development program would really be a place for community members to

21:31 learn more about leadership styles, more about management, more about...

21:39 It's more so professional development for people for job readiness.

21:49 So that we're trying to really build a bridge between our community, the trans community

21:57 and the business community as well.

22:02 So that more trans people are employed.

22:06 Because that was the biggest concern that people had in terms of basic needs for the

22:13 needs assessment was employment.

22:18 Trans people face triple the rate of unemployment.

22:21 And if you add other identities, if it's a disabled person, if it's a person of color,

22:31 if it's a person of rural area, that goes up to about five times the rate of unemployment.

22:37 So we're really trying to help build a bridge for folks to be at a place where they are...

22:47 they have been invested in, in terms of their skills, and their abilities and their capabilities.

22:58 And connect to businesses that we're working with and helping them support, be more trans-affirming

23:07 in their place of employment.

23:12 So we are getting community feedback on that leadership development program.

23:21 Community is going to be a part of actually building the curriculum for it.

23:26 And we're hoping once the program is launched, that we'll be also providing even stipends

23:34 or scholarships for people to actually attend the program so that they're building their

23:39 skills, honing their...

23:44 Building their knowledge, their abilities, while they're also being paid the same time.

23:53 [Pimentel] Thank you. And I think that's a great idea.

23:58 I think it will highly encourage people to want to participate.

24:02 And the next question that I'm going to ask is...

24:06 You touched a little bit on it earlier, but what are some of the misconceptions that you

24:13 often come across about trans people?

24:16 That you see in your day to day basis, that you come across.

24:19 [Valentine] I think there are many misconceptions about trans people.

24:23 I think one of the first misconceptions are that there are no POC, black, indigenous, Latin X, Asian trans people.

24:33 That trans people are only white and that's not true.

24:36 I think that's one misconception. I think people think...

24:41 When they think about trans people that they only think about transgender women and have

24:45 a very specific view about who that is or what a trans woman looks like.

24:54 I also think that because of media and how trans people have been portrayed, people only

25:07 think of trans people as sex workers and that's not true.

25:15 And also when we do hear about trans people in the media, it has often been negative or

25:26 it's been about a trans person who has been killed or murdered.

25:33 So there is this, I think, misconception that all trans people live lonely, depressed, traumatic lives, and that's not true.

25:48 There is definitely degrees to that. Yes.

25:51 But there are also trans people who are thriving and doing well for themselves.

26:01 So I think it's been about the way in which trans people have been talked about that has led to a lot of these misconceptions.

26:14 [Pimentel] Yeah. And thank you for touching on that.

26:18 I will definitely say that I, myself have sort of experienced it.

26:22 When I log into my social media platforms, the first thing that you see about transgender

26:30 people is, "Oh, somebody has been killed and they're transgender."

26:37 But you never see any of the positive aspect or something outside something negative related towards transgender people.

26:48 So, yeah. I definitely agree with social media portraying this image and doing so.

26:59 [Valentine] Yeah.

27:00 And not to say that there doesn't need to be focus on the violence against trans people.

27:04 Absolutely. Yes, there should be. And at the same time, that's not the only narrative.

27:14 [Ndiaye] I also believe that the media also plays sometimes a negative role in presenting and in the portrayal of transgender people.

27:23 Because they don't educate enough people on how, as you said, transgender people can be black and have a nationality.

27:32 So that's a huge problem until now.

27:36 And I've noticed that the media doesn't really explain and show people that transgender people are people like us.

27:43 [Valentine] Yes, absolutely. Super.

27:46 [Ndiaye] Yeah.

27:47 So our next question is what kind of legal advocacy work does your organization do and

27:55 are there any efforts to change laws and expand protections for transgender people?

28:01 [Valentine] Yeah, so we don't really do any legal advocacy work.

28:08 There are no lawyers in our organization.

28:12 Like I said, at this point it's only me.

28:16 I would love for there to be a lawyer at some point.

28:19 For us to have a staff lawyer. That would be amazing.

28:26 So we don't really do the kind of legal advocacy that we would do is we would connect people to lawyers or other legal advocates.

28:39 We do provide the trans ID project.

28:44 A service that connects people to free legal advocacy.

28:51 But we do that in collaboration with GLAD who is the LGBTQ legal advocates and defenders, as well as two other law firms.

29:08 We work with them with the ID projects so that we can provide free legal assistance to community members.

29:21 If someone is having... needs anything in terms of they need a lawyer or anything like

29:30 that, we may be able to connect.

29:33 It really depends on the situation, what people are looking for.

29:36 but we may be able to connect someone to a legal advocate more so i think we have a little

29:47 bit more experience doing that when it comes to um health care like um did not uh denial

29:58 of care or denial of services or denial of um insurance coverage um but we're not we're

30:05 not like a legal advocacy organization there are some laws at this point there are some

30:16 bills currently at the state house that is

30:20 But we may be able to connect someone to a legal advocate.

30:23 More so, I think we have a little bit more experience doing that when it comes to healthcare,

30:25 like denial of care, or denial of services or denial of insurance coverage.

30:26 But we're not a legal advocacy organization.

30:27 There are some laws at this point.

30:28 There are some bills currently at the state house.

30:29 There are things that... whatever laws there is, it affects everybody.

30:32 But specifically for trans people right now, we do have a gender marker expo, which is

30:40 a bill to add a non-binary gender marker on all ID documents.

30:48 Currently, you can only get it on your driver's license or non driver state ID.

30:56 But you can't get it on your birth certificate, on your social security card, on any other documents.

31:05 And so this bill would allow you to do that.

31:13 And since people already can get it on their driver's license, a lot of folks are now walking around with mismatched IDs.

31:21 So it really only makes sense for this to be offered on all forms of ID.

31:31 I think there's another bill, that's the gay and trans panic defense bill.

31:38 So that removes the gay and trans panic defense from being something that people can claim.

31:47 In terms of whether it's a hate crime or any kind of crime against a trans person.

32:03 And then the other bill that I know that's happening is a gender neutral bathroom bill.

32:08 Which is really just a bill that will change building codes so that any new buildings or any renovations to current buildings, will allow for gender neutral bathrooms.

32:28 [Pimentel] And before we move on, if anybody has any questions, you can feel free to ask it now.

32:37 Or again, interrupt us if you have thought or a question that you would like to ask.

32:42 Feel free to just jump in. If nobody has a question, I do.

32:59 What are some of the challenges in working with a younger population?

33:04 Again, as we were saying earlier, social media plays a huge role and including myself, I

33:12 know a lot of younger population use social media.

33:16 So what are the challenges that you come across when working with a younger population?

33:25 [Valentine] Some of the challenges that I have either seen, observed or experienced have been the...

33:37 I definitely see ageism happening.

33:44 Where people don't value the voices of young people, or think that young people have any

33:55 say in making decisions or anything like that.

34:01 So one of the things that I have seen is actually having young people be respected in terms

34:10 of what they bring to the table.

34:16 I think also, one of the things that can be challenging working with a younger population

34:27 is, sometimes I think as an adult, sometimes adults forget that they were also young people once.

34:45 And forget what that has been like.

34:48 I see sometimes that there is not always... what do you call that?

35:04 Multi-generational communication or interactions happening.

35:14 And I think that a lot of young people are looking for connection to history, connection,

35:23 to knowledge, just connection to other people like them, but don't always have the access

35:35 or the avenues to actually have those connections.

35:40 [Pimentel] Yeah.

35:43 And just a thought that I had, the cons would be, you're saying younger people trying to

35:51 know their history and trying to communicate with the older generation.

35:58 Because trans awareness has changed throughout the years and it continues to change as more

36:06 people are becoming more advocates.

36:08 And you have organizations like yours that are helping to bring light to these issues.

36:14 So I think it's very essential to have that communication between generations to be able

36:21 to build a bridge and definitely learn more.



36:29 [Valentine] Yes, absolutely. We did a couple of dinners.

36:36 I think we call it intergenerational dinners.

36:41 Where we had young people and some of our trans elders just had dinner together and just talked.

36:51 And I would love to see that continue to happen.

36:56 [Ndiaye] Sure.

36:57 Thank you for answering these questions.

37:03 I know we don't have enough time, but our last question would be, what are some urgent

37:09 needs of your organization currently and what can we do to help?

37:13 [Valentine] Yeah.

37:14 I think, one of the things is that, like many organizations, and many other places and individuals,

37:25 that the pandemic has just exacerbated the issues that people are already facing.

37:31 So already facing homelessness, already facing unemployment, already facing food insecurity.

37:46 I think just that those things are really just exacerbated.

37:51 And one of the ways in which people can help support is either by definitely supporting

38:00 the organization in the work that we're doing.

38:03 I think also in general, you all can look up other trans-led organizations and also follow them and support them.

38:18 See if you can volunteer there.

38:23 I think there are many different ways to get involved and it's really about a way that fits with you the most.

38:31 It's not about like, "Okay, now you got to go march the streets, and bang on doors and demand change."

38:38 That can look so many different ways.

38:42 Could be even just picking up the telephone or emailing your senators, saying, "Sign the equality act."

38:53 Or you can volunteer your services or whatever talents that you have at an organization.

39:02 I think there are many different ways in which you can get involved.

39:07 It's about what speaks to you the most or what works best for you.

39:12 [Ndiaye] Thank you. So thank you, Tre'Andre for answering all of these questions and also thank you all for coming.

39:21 We appreciate your time and attention, and if you have any more questions, so please feel free to email us.

39:28 So I will put our emails in the chat.

39:33 [Pimentel] Yeah. Again, thank you very much.

39:37 Thank you everybody for coming.

39:40 We have another panel next Monday the 29th with Youth on Fire.

39:45 And it's at the same time, 6:00 to 6:45.

39:47 So if you're interested, please let us know via email and we'll be happy to send the link over.

39:55 But thank you so much for your time.

39:57 We really appreciate it.

39:59 Yeah, and thank you and feel free-

40:03 [Valentine] Yeah. Thank you for having me.

40:06 [Ndiaye] Thank you.

40:08 [Westbrook] Take care.

40:11 [Pimentel] Bye.