Okay, and I think I'll go next.

Hi everybody.

My name is Luz Pimentel.

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

[Adam Westbrook] I can go next.

Hi everybody.

I'm Adam Westbrook.

I'm the director of the Center for Community Engagement.

And I'm excited about our conversation today.

[Tre'Andre Valentine] Hi everyone.

My name is Tre'Andre Valentine.

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

Thanks for having me.

I don't know if we're just introducing speakers or CCE staff, but I'll go and just say I'm

Dennis. It's nice to see all of you.

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

for being here.

Okay. I guess we'll begin, please feel free to, at the end, if you will add anything or if

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

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

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.
All right.

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

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

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

Yeah, so we will begin by asking some questions.

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

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

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

Thanks for having me again.

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

So people can have an idea because we have...

Pre pandemic, we were shifting directions anyway.

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

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

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

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

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

like legal protections for trans people.

Because we did not have any legal protections.

We were the architects of the trans equal rights law that that was signed.
We began the work for statewide protections since 2002 and we didn't get any of those laws passed until 2011. And when we had that trans equal rights law that passed, that did not include public accommodations.

So meaning places like hotels, restaurants, healthcare facilities, and airports. There weren't any protections for trans people in public places.

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

So that happened in 2016 and was then defended in 2018. And since then, the organization has been asking itself, "Now that we have statewide protections, what do we do with... what do we focus on now?"

And so instead of focusing solely on policy and legislative work, we've been doing... trying to do more focus on community development.

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

So we started off with doing a community needs assessment to have a greater understanding of what the community is looking for.

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

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

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

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

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

We don't have direct services for people.
We don't have a community advocate or anything like that.

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

And so we really want to make sure that we are...

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

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

businesses, schools on being more trans inclusive, and an inclusive of different gender identities.
And help build their infrastructure, their knowledge and skills.

So that was...

We were already starting to shift right in the beginning.

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

And so this really... in terms of the environment, I think it just solidified the work that we're trying to be doing, which is more so building up trans power, building up community leadership.

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

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

So everything went remote.

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

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

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

to Greater Boston PFLAG.

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

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 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. That it not just be one month or one day, but that it's something that is ingrained 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, and indigenous and POC.

11:16 We're talking about issues about disability and ableism that there are also trans people 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 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 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 difficulty when educating people about trans awareness issues?

12:05 Yeah.

12:10 So what are some of the challenges you come across being able to educate people about 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.
13:55 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 people, to really make sure that we're staying accountable to our work and our mission.


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
needs assessment was employment.

Trans people face triple the rate of unemployment.

And if you add other identities, if it's a disabled person, if it's a person of color, if it's a person of rural area, that goes up to about five times the rate of unemployment.

So we're really trying to help build a bridge for folks to be at a place where they are invested in, in terms of their skills, and their abilities and their capabilities.

And connect to businesses that we're working with and helping them support, be more trans-affirming in their place of employment.

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

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

And we're hoping once the program is launched, that we'll be also providing even stipends or scholarships for people to actually attend the program so that they're building their skills, honing their...

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

Thank you. And I think that's a great idea.

I think it will highly encourage people to want to participate.

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

You touched a little bit on it earlier, but what are some of the misconceptions that you often come across about trans people?

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

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

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

I think that's one misconception. I think people think...

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There is definitely degrees to that. Yes.

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

So, yeah. I definitely agree with social media portraying this image and doing so.
And not to say that there doesn't need to be focus on the violence against trans people. Absolutely. Yes, there should be. And at the same time, that's not the only narrative.

I also believe that the media also plays sometimes a negative role in presenting and in the portrayal of transgender people. Because they don't educate enough people on how, as you said, transgender people can be black and have a nationality.

So that's a huge problem until now. And I've noticed that the media doesn't really explain and show people that transgender people are people like us.

Yes, absolutely. Super.

Yeah.

So our next question is what kind of legal advocacy work does your organization do and are there any efforts to change laws and expand protections for transgender people?

Yeah, so we don't really do any legal advocacy work.

There are no lawyers in our organization.

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

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

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

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.

We do provide the trans ID project.

A service that connects people to free legal advocacy.

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

And so this bill would allow you to do that.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

Again, as we were saying earlier, social media plays a huge role and including myself, I know a lot of younger population use social media.

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

Some of the challenges that I have either seen, observed or experienced have been the...

I definitely see ageism happening.

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.


35:43 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.


36:57 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.


39:37 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.
