

**Queer Newark Oral History Project**

**Interviewee: Denise Hinds**

**Interviewer: Kristyn Scorsone**

**Date: April 12, 2022**

**Location: Zoom**

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Today is April 12, 2022. My name is Kristyn Scorsone and I'm interviewing Denise Hinds for the Queer Newark Oral History Project. We're doin' this interview over Zoom. Just wanna thank you again for doing the interview, the oral history for us.

*Denise Hinds:* No worries.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* The first question is just very simply, when and where were you born?

*Denise Hinds:* I was born July 13, 1957, in Brooklyn, New York.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Cool. Who raised you?

*Denise Hinds:* I grew up living in a, I guess you could say multigenerational home with my grandparents, who really raised us, my brother and I, and my mother, uncles and aunts, all living in one brownstone in Brooklyn. My grandparents and my parents and my aunts and uncles were born in Trinidad, West Indies, and my brother and I were the first of our family born here in Brooklyn.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Wow. What was that like, growing up in such a big household?

*Denise Hinds:* *[Laughs]* It was crazy. Really, really strict Caribbean grandparents. It was one of those situations where they ruled the roost and you didn't do anything that they didn't want you to do. My mom was a young parent, so she kind of gave over full control to them.

There was a lotta rules, but at the same time, I grew up on a block that was a very tight-knit, mostly mixture of American Blacks and Caribbean Blacks, but family units. Lotsa young kids our age. My brother and I, we had tons of friends on the street. We could be out on our block playing stickball or whatever 'til all hours of the day and night without a lot of fear for anything. It was a really nice environment to grow up in at that time.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* I'm curious. What did your grandparents—did they work for a living, and your mom? What did they do?

*Denise Hinds:*

Yeah. My grandfather was just such an interesting man. He was a chef. He traveled the world on like Merchant Marine ships cooking until probably his 50s, where he then started doing his own catering. Our basement was turned into an industrial kitchen. He catered parties every weekend for the United Nations and all kinds of places. I mean, he was a real master chef. Then he taught at the Maritime Union in Manhattan, which was on like 14th and 7th, which now is, I think, a fancy hotel. *[Laughs]* I grew up going there and hanging out. They had a swimming pool in there and everything. He was just a really cool dude.

My grandmother worked for Gimbels, which was like a Macy's type place in Manhattan. My mom, she ended up working in a bank, but she did a number of things and put herself through college with two kids. She was just a hardworking person. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:*

Do you recall any big moments in your early childhood or anything, pivotal moments or things that shaped you?

*Denise Hinds:*

*[Laughs]* Like a ton of things! *[Both laugh]*

*Denise Hinds:*

Like lots of pivotal moments! I grew up in a very—well, I'll say I grew up in a household that was very Catholic. Caribbeans tend to be staunch Catholics. We went to Catholic school. I think that from K through eight, that really shaped me around my own spirituality, my understanding of right and wrong, my feeling of wanting to do good and be good. Yeah. That was those early pivotal moments. I was taught by nuns kindergarten through eighth grade.

By the time I went to high school—I went to Erasmus Hall High School, which is probably one of the largest high schools in New York City and it was one of the scariest experiences of my life 'cause I went from like a little Catholic school to this *huge* public high school with like five thousand students. I was glad that I had the grounding that I had, but at the same time, it didn't really prepare me for what it was gonna be like when I walked in there. I used a lot of the skills that I learned in Catholic school to get me through some of the initial harder times there and I continued to be very involved in that Catholic Church. I think a lotta that helped me. Yeah.

I had a really interesting high school experience time because my mom—it's a long story, but my mom ended up going to Africa to teach and she left us with my grandparents. I was raised all through probably from 13 to 18 by my grandparents. As with most teenagers, that's kind of a tough time. I had some really difficult

periods, kind of dark periods, for me becoming, coming into my own and tryin' to figure out what I wanted to do and living in this very strict home. I used the adults outside in school and church. They became my mentors and real support. Even to this day, many of them are still in my life and have really supported me through pretty much everything.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Do you mean like teachers?

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. Teachers. A number of people that I met through my Catholic school. A number of nuns that I was very close to through that experience are still a part of my life now. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* How do you identify?

*Denise Hinds:* I identify as a lesbian. I came out later in life. Another interesting part of my life. I spent 13 years as a Catholic nun. *[Laughs]* Very few Black Catholic nuns. I don't think I had met one until I was probably in my mid-20s. Yeah. I became a Catholic nun for 13 years and met my partner, fell in love with someone, in the last year and a half of that experience and left the convent and realized I was gay and moved into a relationship from after leaving the convent. *[Laughs]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* That's amazing. *[Hinds laughs]* Wait. First of all, what are your pronouns, I should ask?

*Denise Hinds:* She/her/hers.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Okay. So did you not become aware of your sexuality or your queerness until you met the person that you fell in love with, or did you have some ideas before that?

*Denise Hinds:* I think close to meeting that person I started to realize some things, but I wasn't sure. I think that propelled me. *[Laughs]* And as that relationship grew, obviously I knew somethin' more serious was happening. It was a period of time where, yeah, I really wasn't focused on that. Was very much into being a nun, doing the work that I felt really called to do. I was in graduate school. There were just a lot of other things that were really important to me.

I also just fought that for so long because it didn't quite fit with the profile I had *[laughs]* created for myself. Then also the Caribbean thing, and how would that work? Could I ever say that to my mother? All those kindsa things. I just tried to push it aside, but once I got into a relationship, I just felt like I had to be honest with

myself. I was really happy. I mean, some people are tormented by that. I wasn't. I was really, really happy, but I was really scared. It was that mixture, but I never felt this torment that God was gonna strike me dead because I was gay. I didn't buy into that.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* How did you not buy into—how did you have that—?

*Denise Hinds:* I don't know. I think that's just who I am. The other thing is that I knew so many lesbians. It seemed like most of the women that I was attracted to in terms of people that I looked up to were all lesbians, so I saw them, for the most part, living really great, healthy lives and so I never really thought that something bad was gonna happen to me. Most of them were somewhat closeted, but I kind of figured it out and knew that it was a possible life for myself, so yeah, I wasn't scared. Then was I already playing softball? Yeah. I was already playin' softball in Park Slope in the Lesbian League, so! *[Both laugh]*

*Denise Hinds:* I played softball for, what, probably 10 years as a nun in the Lesbian League. It's like nobody else was surprised when I came out.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* That is so cool. I love that. *[Both laugh]* All of this, so cool. *[Both laugh]* The women that you looked up to that were lesbians, they were on your league, or was it other women as well?

*Denise Hinds:* A combination. I played basketball in college, volleyball and basketball. My college coach. A number of folks I looked up to spiritually who had been in the convent and left. It was a real mixture of people. I think I was just surrounded by them. They gave me a lotta sense of confidence. Not even needing to talk about that, but just seeing how they lived their lives made me feel like it was an option for me.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* What did you go to graduate school for?

*Denise Hinds:* Social work. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Where did you go?

*Denise Hinds:* I went to Hunter School of Social Work in New York City. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* What years were you a Catholic nun for? What era—?

*Denise Hinds:* I entered a convent in '81. No, '80, and stayed in for 12 years. Had a year of what they call dispensation, like as you process coming

out of the convent. You don't just walk out. You go through a process for a year before you get dispensation from your vows. Yeah. In total it was like 13 years. I made final vows. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Wow. How did you wind up coming out, then, or did you come out to your mom and your rest of the family?

*Denise Hinds:* Oh, yeah. Came out to my mom in the car one Sunday. *[Laughs]* I was already living with my then-partner. It was like this back and forth. We kept going back and forth about when I was gonna tell her, and finally one Sunday in the car, I just let her know that we were more than friends. We'd been living together. We kept up the separate rooms kinda thing in the apartment for a while. I finally told her. True to who my mom is, she was like, "I love you regardless. I just want you to be happy."

I mean, similarly to when I left. I mean, for her, the whole Caribbean thing. For them, they felt like they were blessed beyond belief to have a daughter who was a nun. Leaving, I think in some ways that was harder for her, but at the same time, she knew that I was struggling with a number of things that had nothing to do with sexual orientation for sure and that I needed to—that I was really unhappy just dealing with some of the things that I felt were kind of inequities at the time that I couldn't even figure out but I came to the sense that it wasn't a good thing for me.

I was the only Black person in the community of nuns that I was in. Although I knew that I was loved by many of them, I also felt at times really disrespected in ways. We talk about microaggressions now. If I really look back on it, there were a million of them. There were things that you couldn't really name, but you knew that they felt bad.

The last couple of years were very hard. Leaving needed to happen for my own sanity at that time. Yeah. I think in many ways that was harder for her. Then once that happened, I guess she was like, "Oh, well, *[laughs]* I can take this." Yeah. She really handled it very well. I was very blessed.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* When you say like "Caribbean upbringing" and all that, I'm not familiar. Is it very strict, Caribbean culture?

*Denise Hinds:* It's very strict. It's very based in the Bible and, well, Catholicism for sure. Just there's a lot around—a lotta homophobia in Caribbean culture. A lotta those things get played out. I think it's definitely improved over the years, but certainly at that time it wasn't

something that people accepted in their children. I think a lot of the culture, like I said, is really based in religion and this structured Catholicism that at the time, certainly, was even worse than it is now, where homosexuality was definitely not—it was considered a sin. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Your grandparents, did you let them know?

*Denise Hinds:* My grandmother had already passed and my grandfather died around my graduation time from college. He was already gone. My uncles and aunts knew. For the most part, it was okay. Yeah. For the most part, it was okay. I mean, I think that most people in my family—and my brother was certainly fine. I think that most people in my family really saw me as, and still do, as someone who pulls people together and brings them together. I think that there is a great deal of respect for me, and people, for the most part, really just wanted me to be happy.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Uh-huh. Another question I have just about the softball team. Did you find that—did you have the same—was that team mixed race, or was it a lot of white lesbians?

*Denise Hinds:* The Park Slope league is still fairly white. It's definitely shifted more. I think at that time there might have been. I definitely played with one or two other Black women, Asian women. A little bit of a mix but I wouldn't say it was heavily mixed. Certainly in different neighborhoods, like if you played in the Manhattan league, it might be more mixed, or up in Harlem or something, but I was living in Park Slope, and that's where my people were. *[Laughs]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* You didn't experience the same microaggressions with that, right? Or was it more—?

*Denise Hinds:* With softball? No. I mean, no. In softball it was cool. I had friends who were really great. I had friends from softball then that I'm still very, very close to now. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* How long did you play? I forget if you said.

*Denise Hinds:* I played for about 20 years.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Wow, that's cool. What position?

*Denise Hinds:* Second base. Played 'til I couldn't play anymore, 'til my knees didn't work anymore. *[Laughs]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* That was my position, too.

*Denise Hinds:* Oh, really? Well, actually, I played until the first summer I moved here to New Jersey and just got to be too much 'cause I had a one-year-old by then, and yeah, it was a lot goin' back and forth.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* You have a spouse now, right? It's not the same—is it the same person that you had initially—

*Denise Hinds:* No. I have a partner now and she lives in Brooklyn. No, I divorced. It's about six years now, six or seven years. I was with that person for 21 years. Yeah. I make those 20-year commitments. *[Both laugh]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* You have a one-year-old now with your partner. Do you have any other kids as well?

*Denise Hinds:* No. My one-year-old at the time, she's now 19. *[Both laugh]* That was with my ex, who I married and divorced. Yeah. We were together. We were both each other's first. Yeah. We stayed together for 20-plus years. Yeah, so we have a daughter who's 19 now.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Aw. How did you meet the first—meet your wife?

*Denise Hinds:* Well, she *[laughs]* was planning to go into the convent, and we met. Yeah. *[Both laugh]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* How did you meet the woman you're with now?

*Denise Hinds:* Oh, we met through a mutual friend. My former softball coach introduced us. *[Both laugh]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* So Sapphic. *[Both laugh]*

*Denise Hinds:* We kind of knew each other, like had met a number of times at different events. Yeah. It's different meeting people when you're a little older. It's harder. It was cool that we had kind of a easy connection through a friend. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Mm-hmm. Was it difficult to raise a child being a lesbian—in a lesbian relationship?

*Denise Hinds:* I wouldn't say it was difficult. I mean, I think that we chose to live in a community that was accepting. We literally chose to move to South Orange-Maplewood. We checked out the community. My daughter, K through eight, I think—well, K through five, at least,

when you know her friends and her classmates and their parents, I would say that she was never in a classroom—from even preschool, nursery school, she was never in a classroom where she was the only kid from a LGBT family or where she was the only kid from an interracial marriage.

She never really experienced a lot of prejudice or discrimination. She never felt like she was any different than anybody else. She had friends that had two dads, friends that had two moms. Also she had always in her class kids who were adopted, 'cause she is adopted. All those things were just made easier because of the environment that we lived in. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* That's really great. So you come to Maplewood and South Orange area. How do you get involved in Newark?

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. Well, I got involved in Newark because I knew Janyce Jackson Jones. *[Laughs]* I knew her through that same softball coach who introduced me to my now-partner. Over the years I had met Janyce a couple of times over the years starting in Brooklyn, actually. My friend, her name is Julie, she was on the board of the LGBT Center in Newark because Janyce pulled her in. They were all old friends.

She was tellin' me about not only the Center, but also about this church in Newark and I was dying to go. I had long been wanting to—I had kind of stopped going to Catholic church by then and was looking for something, and she was tellin' me that Janyce was a reverend now and all that.

So one Sunday we went to Unity Fellowship in Newark. I think I didn't miss a Sunday for a good year. *[Laughs]* That's how much I was really just connected. I loved it. Yeah. I joined Unity. I was involved in Unity for quite some time, for a couple years. Joined the choir. Did some other things there. Throughout that period, Julie kept tryin' to talk to me about bein' on the board, and then Janyce talked to me about bein' on the board. That's how I ended up joining the Newark LGBT Center board.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Wow. Okay. I have so many questions.

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. *[Laughs]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Okay. Julie. Okay. When you went to Unity Fellowship, it was now Unity Fellowship, right? It wasn't Liberation in Truth, right?



*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. Yes.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* After, I guess, 2012 is when Unity started as Unity in Newark, like when Janyce [34:17]—

*Denise Hinds:* It sounds about right. I joined about 2014, 2015. Yeah. ‘Cause I joined right after my separation. Obviously, it was that time where I just needed somethin' to help me get through that time. I needed church and needed to lean on that spirituality that I had always grounded myself in.

I wanted to be involved in the Black church because when I lived in Brooklyn, even when I was in the convent, I went to a Black Catholic church. I sang gospel choir and all of that. That had a lotta meaning for me. I was looking for something similar to that and I hadn't found it here. I had heard about Unity and a few other churches but I'd heard about Unity here in Jersey. When I heard about that connection, I was like, "Oh, yeah. Definitely I wanna go."

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Was Julie involved in the church, too?

*Denise Hinds:* No, but Julie had gone a few times. Julie's Jewish, but she knew. She loved the music, too. She was like, "You gotta come and hear Janyce preach and blah, blah, blah." It's funny, I had been looking it up on Facebook and different things for several months, so it was nice because she was willing to go with me. I remember that day we went, it was like the breast cancer walk was happening downtown Newark.

I don't think I had ever really been in downtown Newark like that, driving around, and *[laughs]* we didn't think we were gonna be able to find parking to even get over to where the church was, ‘cause at that time, it was on Rector Street. It was in part of NJPAC's—that smaller little building they have. We used to have church there. And so we parked over by the Center. She showed me where the Center was and then we walked across Broad Street over to Rector, to the church. Yeah. I was like, "I don't care how we get there, but let's get there." *[Both laugh]* "I'm just this close. I gotta make this happen."

*Kristyn Scorsone:* What was it like walking in?

*Denise Hinds:* I mean, it was cool. It wasn't a church, right? It was not really a auditorium, but like a big community room in this place. It was cool. Soon as the music started, all the reverends and the choir, and

everybody's marchin' in, and that music starts to hit you. It was like just bein' in the right place, bein' home. You knew you were in the right place. I felt that sense of comfort that this was kind of just what I needed.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Do you feel like—it seems like so many folks—almost like Unity Church is a very much such an important community hub. It seems like a lotta folks get involved in Newark activism that come to Unity and then join other organizations. Do you feel like it fosters that sort of civic-mindedness or community activism at that church?

*Denise Hinds:* I mean, I think that it's talked about a lot. So if you have that sense and that desire, the options are there. I know that when I first joined, people were going to march in this and that. I didn't really know a lotta people. I knew Janyce, but I didn't know her well. Julie went with me the first time, but she clearly wasn't gonna go every week. It was a community I had to get to know. Certainly you heard from the pulpit, both Kevin and Janyce talking about activism. Yeah. If you really were interested and motivated that way, the options were there for you.

They had a lotta small groups that you could join, different groups. Initially, you're just takin' everything in, tryin' to see where you fit in. I mean, because even at that time, I was tryin' to figure out just who I wanted to be as a single person. I was just lookin' at people, tryin' to figure out, "Okay, well, is that person single?" Not that I was hunting *[laughs]* at all, but just tryin' to figure out, like, "What is it like? What is that like?" I had never really been single, so it was a lot that I was tryin' to figure out, but I was more so going there to just be fed spiritually, to be honest, in the beginning.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Yeah. I imagine that must feel really unmooring, to be suddenly single after 20 years.

*Denise Hinds:* Oh, yeah. Yeah. It wasn't like I was—when I came outta college, I went right into the convent, so I was never single. I was never like just on my own, you know? Yeah, it was quite a change. *[Laughs]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* You said the small groups—do you know what kinda small groups they were?

*Denise Hinds:* They had a group for masculine-presenting women. They had the choir. They had the ushers. I became a usher. Hospitality. They did this thing where they collected food and stuff like that. I think

those were the people who—I forget what that was. Yeah.  
Different groups like that.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* That's really cool. Do you ascribe yourself to any sort of, I guess, like butch or femme?

*Denise Hinds:* I definitely see myself as butch now. I always used to say I was soft butch. Now I think I'm just butch. I really think being butch is cool. I'm comfortable with that. I think there are probably many more butches that are much more hardcore than I am. I feel very comfortable considering myself butch and I kinda like it. *[Laughs]* I live in that. I wear my baseball caps now every day. *[Both laugh]* And I no longer—I used to have a closet of skirts. I think it's been about seven, eight years now, they're gone. I gave those away. Yeah. It's funny 'cause my kid, even when she was little, she used to always say I was like the dad of the house. She always recognized it from the *[laughs]* beginning, no matter if I was tryin' to hide it. *[Both laugh]* You know? Yeah. I would play that dress-up role for work and stuff, but I don't do that anymore.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Was there a lotta other butch lesbians at Unity?

*Denise Hinds:* Oh, yeah, definitely. Definitely. Yep.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Oh, so I guess that's why they had that group, then, I'm sure.

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. Exactly. Exactly. Yeah. You probably know half of them.  
*[Both laugh]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Was it just like a social group or a support group?

*Denise Hinds:* I don't know. I never went to it. I just knew they met. I think they had a group for married couples and a lotta different things. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* So cool. What was being in the choir like?

*Denise Hinds:* Oh, bein' in the choir was great. I loved it. I loved it. We used to practice on Saturdays at the Center, so I got to be there on Saturdays, even, for choir rehearsal. There's a real strong connection between the church and the Center when it was on Halsey. The church didn't really have its own space at the time to leave a lotta their things and stuff like that. They used different spaces but they didn't really have space for meetings and things like that outside of the rented hours that they had services.

So the Center served a lotta that purpose. When they had a social

luncheon or something like that, they would have it after church, we would go to the Center. Or church choir, we'd have it at the Center. Things like that. I think they had their business meetings and things like that. So there was a real connection between the Center and the church. But they then got their own space more recently.

Some of that was much more divided. I think with Janyce leaving the Center, some of that shifted as well. We're really fortunate that Reverend Jerri Lee is on our board now, so we still have—and Beatrice Simpkins is a deacon, soon to be a minister in that church. She's the executive director of the Center.

So that tradition continues. There isn't a time that we haven't needed support from Pastor Kevin that he's said no. He's always there if we need him to speak or help us lead something. He always says yes. He's always willing to come in. That continues to be a relationship that's important. At the time where the Center was its most vibrant in terms of activities, I would say that a large part of the membership was from the church. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Mm-hmm. Just to clarify, Beatrice Simpkins and Jerri Lee-Mitchell, they're both involved in Unity Church.

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. Pastor Jerri Lee is co-pastor with Kevin E. Taylor. Beatrice is a minister. I think she's a deacon and soon to be a minister or soon to be a—I don't know. I don't know all the determinations. I don't wanna get that wrong. *[Both laugh]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* No problem. No problem. How long did they—when did they move to Broad Street? Do you know? Like roughly?

*Denise Hinds:* Oh. I'd probably say 2018, maybe, to be on the safe side. Yeah. Somewhere around there.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Okay. You got involved with the board of the Newark LGBTQ Community Center also in like 2014-ish or later?

*Denise Hinds:* Later. It's probably more like 2016, somethin' like that. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Okay. And you joined just as a board member first?

*Denise Hinds:* I joined as a board member. Do you know Alicia?

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Heath-Toby?

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah, Toby.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Yeah, yeah.

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. She was the board president. I remember my first conversation with her in my bathroom at my house. *[Laughs]* I don't know why. I think it was the only place I could get quiet from my kid at that time. *[Both laugh]* We had a long conversation about board membership and why I wanted to do it and what I could bring. I thought she was really cool, and I said yes, I was ready to invest my time and energy. I wanted to do something local, an opportunity to give back to the community.

Yeah. I joined the board then. And Alicia was—she was great board president. Then one day she said to me she—well, Janyce, I think, first, was step—was going to be moving. She was fully retiring and moving to South Carolina. Then Alicia said that she was going to resign as board chair. I was like, "Oh, my God." *[Laughs]* She was like, "You should do it. You should do it. I'll be there to help you. I'll support you."

Yeah. They were all very encouraging. I had never been like a chair of a board before. Oh, my God. I was a nervous wreck. It's a big responsibility and a commitment to ensuring that the Center stayed open. I mean, I think at the year before that, our fundraising was like we were desperate to just keep the lights on. I knew that I was takin' on somethin' that was gonna be a challenge.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* What year was that when you became board chair?

*Denise Hinds:* Ooh. I keep forgettin' these years now. *[Scorsone laughs]* It must have been 2017. I don't think I was there more than a year when all this happened. Yeah. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Wow. Wow. When did Beatrice become—So Beatrice became the president?

*Denise Hinds:* No. Beatrice joined the board around that time. 'Cause right when Janyce was leaving—I think Beatrice joined right before she left. She was a board member. We decided to try to find an executive director who we knew would never be able to give us the kind of time that Janyce was able to do, especially with no salary. Janyce was retired, and she was able to do that, but we figured it would be hard to find somebody.

Anyway, we went on the search. We found Jim Cramer, James

Cramer. He stepped up. He was retiring. He stepped up and stepped in to become the executive director. Jim was really great. He was available. He really knew his stuff around the finances and things like that.

We had a really great fundraiser that year. The dance-a-thon did really well financially. I think it was the best one we had financially. That was our big fundraising effort annually and I think we raised maybe almost close to \$25,000. We were like out of our minds that week. We were able to do that. Steve—I can't remember his last name. He's a board member.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Malick.

*Denise Hinds:* Steve Malick. Yeah. He and Jim together really helped pull that off. It was good for a couple years and then Jim ended up working more than he thought he would as a retired person. He ended up pretty much getting a full-time gig as a consultant. He just ended up not really being able to give the time that he felt he should or wanted to. That's when Beatrice stepped up and became the president, or executive director.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Okay. What are the responsibilities of a board chair? *[Laughs]*

*Denise Hinds:* Calling the board to meetings. Tryin' to keep us on task around staying true to our mission. Trying to help the executive director to do the work that they're trying to do, give them all the support they can. I mean, it's a lot different because we don't have a staff, right? If it was a larger organization, in some ways the responsibility would be less if it was bigger.

Because we are small, it's almost like you're playing a role of a staff person in some ways as well as a board member. In a true board, you don't want your board in your day-to-day operations. You wanna run your—you wanna run your program. But I think because we are small, I always tell people, "You wanna be on the board? That's great, but this is a working board. I need you to walk away from the meeting with an assignment and get it done. We don't have a staff to fall back on."

I serve on another board that's a national organization. They have five-plus-million dollars a year. It's not the largest, but they have money. They have 20-plus staff and that kinda thing. The responsibilities of the board chair are much different than what I'm doing. I'm like rollin' up my sleeves and organizing Drag Bingo Night. *[Laughs]* You know? Normally you have program staff that

do programs. It's just that kinda thing. They were asking at work on a Zoom. We always do check-in questions. The check-in question was like "If money and time were no object, what would you be doing with your time?" My answer was I'd be volunteering full time at the Center and being able to really give it the time and energy that I would like to do 'cause I think we could get a lotta stuff done, but that's not an option 'cause we all work full time. I mean, Beatrice has a full-time job. It's just not that kinda program. But the significance of what we do, I think, is really important, which is why I continue to wanna see it grow and thrive, you know?

*Kristyn Scorsone:* What is the mission?

*Denise Hinds:* Our mission is, well, I don't know the mission. I don't have it memorized. We have a new mission, actually. It's all about creating a safe space for LGBT folks to be able to thrive, to feel safe and to thrive in the Newark community. Anything that comes up where we can be involved and we can support LGBT folks in doing that, that's what we wanna do. But we've had a hell of a time because we don't have the backing and financial support that I think we deserve to have to be able to do that, to really have our mission really take wings and fly.

We need our own space. That costs money. We don't have it. We need program staff. That's something that I would love to see happen, but again, you need to get a grant. The way a lotta these grants work, if you don't have a history of doing X, Y, and Z, you're not gonna get the grant. That's a constant struggle.

I feel like there's so many organizations in Newark, East Orange, Orange that want to do more. There's just no grant money for those things to happen, so we're all kind of like hustlin' for donations and whatever little pots of money there is. We're all tryin' to figure out how to get it.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Yeah. I wanna ask about space, but—You all lost the space in 11 Halsey because of development?

*Denise Hinds:* That's what we were told, although I haven't seen anything being developed [*laughs*] in the last three years. Now I know COVID hit, but, I mean, we were told we needed to leave. I mean, literally we were told that for a good year and a half, even more.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* By the city or corporate interests?

*Denise Hinds:*

By the building owner. We hadn't been paying rent. We actually couldn't afford to pay rent over time. You could tell that they were just letting things fall apart. I mean, the ceiling fell in at one point. It was a hot mess in the back of the Center. The front looked fine. I mean, the writing was on the wall. Then we were being told that it was gonna be sold to a developer and there were big plans for that. And there probably still are. They just haven't started yet.

We knew we needed to leave. We were hustling. We were talking to—we talked to Rutgers. We talked to other building owners and all kindsa folks. And at the time, the executive director of the library had just joined the board. He was on a call with us, with Rutgers, with the president of Rutgers. We were talking to them about whether or not there were any spaces or buildings that they owned that might be a possibility for us. He stepped up and said, "I'll give you space" and at no cost.

We were thrilled. I don't think we ever really thought it was a long-term option for us. It was not gonna be the best option for us long-term, but we knew we had somewhere we could go and that we could grow on, spend some time trying to save some money and figure out how to find another space. That's where we ended up. We were treated very well. I mean, he really fixed up that back area, created a really nice space for us.

*Kristyn Scorsone:*

Is it in the James—was it in the—is it in the James Brown African-American Room?

*Denise Hinds:*

Is that the one on—the one on the first floor all the way in the back. I don't know what it was before but it's the LGBT Resource Room now. But I think it's not the best space for us. It's tucked away in the back of the library. These are the things as you get into a relationship, you realize we can't have anything outside of the library that says we're here. You know, nobody's gonna walk by the library and say, "Oh, there's a LGBT center in there."

That was one of the beautiful things about being on Halsey. Having that storefront where people could just walk in and ask questions. It allowed us to provide a service. We were the kinda place where we had a young trans person who couldn't wear their clothing, their dress or whatever, home. They would stop there to get changed. That kinda thing.

We could be that resource in a way that we can't be now just because we're not seen. It's not that the library wouldn't allow it, it's just not—you know? And then COVID hit for two years. I tell



you, it's just like every chance that we got to get our footing, something else comes up. So we're trying to kind of revive ourselves again *[laughs]* at this point, yeah, comin' outta COVID.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* So was it 2019 that you moved to the library or—?

*Denise Hinds:* Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Okay. Jeffrey Trzeciak was the director?

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* He's no longer there, right?

*Denise Hinds:* He's no longer there. And we're really not sure about our fate 'cause our first meeting with the director there was her telling us that our M.O.U. was like ending. We were like, "No, we still have another year." We are concerned that we are going to, at some point, need to find another space. Even though we know and we want to, we're also worried that it may happen before we are ready to.

We're having conversations now as a board and then trying to meet with folks. Really, one of the things is just who else is out there as another LGBT organization that might wanna partner with us in space because there's a lot of little organizations that, like us, that are grassroots. Maybe we can pool our resources together. Those are conversations we are trying to have right now.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* What's an M.O.U.?

*Denise Hinds:* A memo of understanding. It's like a contract that you have.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Then I was curious, if you don't mind me asking, what did you all pay in rent for 11 Halsey?

*Denise Hinds:* Oh, gosh. It was somewhere around fifteen-hundred, I wanna say, a month.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Do you think the rents now are—can you find something for that amount, or it would be a lot more now?

*Denise Hinds:* Oh, yeah. *[Laughs]* Yeah. No, we wouldn't be able to find anything. That's why we would have to do it with someone. I mean, we might be able to find like an office, but I don't think we'd be able to find a big space where you have communal space. We used

to have communal meetings, community lunches and dinners and things like that. We need a little space where we can do those things. Yeah, I mean, to find something that would allow us that is gonna cost us. It's definitely gonna cost more than that.

*Kristyn Scorson:* That makes me wanna ask also how do you feel about the revitalization of Newark, like all of the redevelopment that's going on?

*Denise Hinds:* Well, I mean, I'm concerned because that's why we don't have a home. When we were initially told that the developer was gonna come in, it was "They're gonna find a way to give you space. You might have some space on the ground floor." That sounded really attractive. Then a few months in, that just went away. That wasn't even part of the conversation. That worries me. I mean, it worries me in the same ways that I'm much more connected to New York City through my work, and you see neighborhoods that used to be places where participants that we work with lived, and they can no longer live there.

I'm not as familiar with downtown Newark, but that's the feel that I get. I mean, it's nice, but where are the people that need the services? 'Cause you know they're still there. Yeah. It's concerning. It's definitely concerning. We wanna have a space where people feel comfortable, they feel safe to come to. If there were somewhere affordable in the area, we wanna continue to be in this area.

*Kristyn Scorson:* Yeah. Yeah. Do you feel like it's important to stay downtown?

*Denise Hinds:* I do because then people can come from wherever. The buses, the trains can get you there. And again, I think people feel safe going. There may be other neighborhoods that some people may not feel as safe. But again, I don't know Newark as well. I came into Newark, into downtown, 'cause that's where the church was, that's where the Center was, and so I know the area. But I think we'd be willing to look at a couple of possibilities to see. I know Beatrice is out there talkin' to people as much as she can right now, tryin' to find some options for us, too.

*Kristyn Scorson:* Then I wanted to ask, too, the people that come to the Center, can you describe different people that have come to you all for sanctuary? Has that changed? Has the people that come changed over time, or is it generally the same?

*Denise Hinds:*

Well, when I first joined the center, it was a little bit of everyone. We had the over-50 groups. We had the young adult groups. We had the teens on Friday nights. We had the card nights, the crochet nights. That was much more of an adult group. A lot of those were, like I said, Unity Church members.

You'd go to the Center on any night, and you'd find the whole spectrum of folks. We had one period of time where we had these really amazing community dinners on Sundays. That was a real mixture of the community, some younger young adults through adulthood. That intergenerational piece was happening at the Center. Yeah. Trans folks, LGBT folks, like everybody just together.

Since we've gone to the library, I think the community piece of the Center has been harder for us to really capture anymore. That's what we really wanna revitalize. Again, I think that it's gonna take us—so what it's become much more is addressing the needs of the community as they get presented to us. Less of like these communal events, especially during COVID, we couldn't have 'em anyway. But less of that and much more of addressing the needs of someone who's looking for housing. We had a trans woman who'd been severely attacked and contacted us. We found her a D.V. program in New York City where she was safe.

And the Ashley Moore story and how that came to us. We took on a lot of the advocacy to bring that to the forefront. There was a gay man and his partner in Orange that needed our support and we were a big part of that. Much more around activism now than we had done. I think the initial founding of the Center was around the Sakia Gunn story, which was really important at that time. The Center didn't open for almost 10 years after that, but that was really a part of the reason for us coming to create the Center.

Coming full circle to a story like Ashley Moore, it just propelled us to wanna keep doing this because we realized that the need is still there. People are still struggling. We have parents that contact us through our Facebook page and ask us for ways to support their families.

We are going out and doing a lotta education. Bea is constantly going out to high schools and other community members who invite her in to speak about the needs of the LGBT community. Anything like that. The Center has become more of that education, training, support, doing that kinda work. I think it's really what

we're able to do with the limited resources that we have, but it's still really meaningful work.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Yeah. You mentioned Ashley Moore. She was the young Black trans woman that was found murdered, dead on the street in Newark. You all got involved. Was it through her mom?

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. Her mom contacted a woman just randomly, had gone to this really random vegan cooking class virtually. The person who was runnin' the class was in California. I guess she had said that she was a lesbian, and the mom reached out to her and told her this story. Her daughter had just been found and that person resourcefully looked up Newark and what was there and contacted Beatrice. And she later became a board member. *[Laughs]* Then she moved to New York and became a board member. It was through that.

Then Bea connected with the mom and really connected with her and really supported her through finding out what had happened to her daughter and really creating this whole advocacy and push to bring this story to light and hold people accountable. That was our whole summer.

Was that a year ago? Two years ago now. It'll be two years this summer. That's what we did. We were on Zooms and meeting with the mayor, and helping train the police department, and you name it. That stuff was happening. It in some ways really breathed new life into the Center because we really couldn't do a whole lot more, so we were poised to be able to take that on.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Do you feel like you were able to, like for the police, were you able to change any of their ways of dealing with trans folks or educating—?

*Denise Hinds:* I think that would be a good question for Bea. I think that she felt positive about it. I know that they brought in a new—I don't know if he's a lieutenant, but they brought in a new officer who's like the liaison to the community. I've heard nothing but good things about him. Definitely there was a shift.

I think at this point, though, our concern is that there was supposed to be the promise of a hotline. That hotline was supposed to be there to protect LGBT folks if they ran into trouble on the streets with police or they felt like they were being mistreated, *et cetera, et cetera*. That hotline has not really—it doesn't exist. It doesn't exist. If you call it, it's just gonna ring. I don't even know if it's

gonna ring, to be honest.

As I keep sayin', the fight is not done, but it's just like it takes a lot to bring people together around this stuff. Especially now, I think, with COVID, that people don't really—there's a little fatigue right now *[laughs]* for doing a whole lot. So we have to find the right time. But that's the next thing, is tryin' to hold folks accountable for the things that they promised around the time that Ashley died. Yeah. It's not over.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Yeah. Are there any significant events or organizing that you did over your years as executive director that you're—I mean, as board chair that you're especially proud of or were really memorable for you?

*Denise Hinds:* Well, I think that time was probably the most memorable. Being able to bring together organizations. I mean, I remember the first time we called everybody together after the story broke, getting on a Zoom. I don't know how many organizations came together. It was the first time I had experienced that in Newark around the issue. I'm sure it happens in other things, but this was one of my first.

The way we came together to pull off that initial rally was really inspiring for me. It just really showed what we could do. Beatrice bein' able to go into the mayor's office and sit with them and talk about this issue. I just really felt like we did some really, really good, meaningful work around that situation. We brought some really great people together. You know, Celeste Fiore. I didn't even know Celeste then. They came together pro bono to work on that case and support the mom as the attorney.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* From Lambda Legal?

*Denise Hinds:* Celeste is with, well, now it's Trans Affirming Alliance, but their law firm is a private law firm. Folks like that that we had never met before came on board. Medina from Equal Space and helping us organize that rally. Then we had the big town hall with a bunch of council folks and the mayor.

Just a number of things that happened as a result of that where I really felt like the Center took the lead and really tried to propel this situation forward and get justice for Ashley. Yeah. That's probably the most meaningful at this point. *[Laughs]* Hopefully we don't have to deal with anything on that horrendous level, but to continue to do things that support the community.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Yeah. That was incredible, to see the media reach, like how the word got out and spread. I saw it on a lotta different—I saw a lotta different articles online covering it.

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. Yeah. We got WNYC, NPR. I mean, we got a lotta coverage on it, but it was like a lotta people coming together to help us do that in a way that I hadn't experienced before.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Yeah. The rally was very powerful, too.

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. It really was. It really was.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* I'm tryin' to think if I have any other questions for you. Is there anything that I didn't think to ask you about in terms of the Center or in terms of you yourself that I didn't—

*[Pause 01:19:05 – 01:19:11]*

*Denise Hinds:* Oh no, did we freeze?

*Kristyn Scorsone:* I don't know—no. I'm here.

*Denise Hinds:* Did you freeze?

*Kristyn Scorsone:* I'm not fr—I'm here. Can you see me?

*Denise Hinds:* Oh yeah, you're frozen a little bit. It might be—yeah, it might be mine 'cause it's saying your internet connection is unstable. I can hear you though.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Oh, okay. Can you see me now?

*Denise Hinds:* I can see you. Your mouth is just not moving, so— *[Laughs]* There you go!

*Kristyn Scorsone:* As long as you can hear me.

*Denise Hinds:* There you go. Yay!

*Kristyn Scorsone:* *[Both laugh]* I don't know. I guess, it's just really interesting to hear all that's involved with running a center. How many board members are there usually?

*Denise Hinds:* We try to have 10 to 12, but right now we're probably down to about six. We might be a little bit more than that. We might have

eight. We are in the midst of—we just created a new application, and we're gonna be reaching out to a few more people to join. We have some really great people right now, so I'm really excited about that. Yeah. I wanna keep that momentum. They have a lotta great ideas for the future, but we do need a few new members.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* How do you find people?

*Denise Hinds:* Well, we just have a—we had a meeting the other night, a couple of months ago where we just threw out a buncha names of folks. We talk about what we're missing from the board, what kinda expertise we're missing, and then think about who's in the community that might be able to bring that. We also try to—we're tryin' to look at making sure that we stay diverse and that we have true representation from Newark. Priority to Newark neighbors and folks.

One thing we know we don't have right now is that we don't have any trans or nonbinary board members. That's something that we are committed to changing. We have a couple of people that we wanna talk to. That's our next step.

It involves people's time, so it's once a month, which is much more than a lotta boards. Like the other board I'm on is quarterly. We meet for a day every three months or so. This is a monthly meeting. Everybody's busy. If they weren't busy people, we probably don't want them. *[Laughs]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* True, yeah.

*Denise Hinds:* We ask for about \$100 a month—give and get. Still very low for a board member, but you can either do that, do something, some event or something like that to bring in money, or you can give on your own.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Oh, so that's what give and get means?

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. You either give it or you find a way to get it. *[Laughs]* You can throw a house party. We have one board member that's having a big party for Pride. He's gonna do like silent auction at his Pride party to raise money for the Center. That could be a get. Yep.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* I've seen you at other things. You go to Newark Pride and—

*Denise Hinds:* Oh, sure. We wanna support, but we also wanna do events during that time. Last year we had a big Drag Bingo event at the library.

Other years we've done different things. The last time there was a parade, we did a float. We had a float. That was our first year with a float, it was really exciting. Yeah. We usually participate in Newark Pride.

The other day I went to Montclair Pride. They had an event on Sunday. Just went as a representative of the Center, talked to people, get a sense of what other organizations are doing. That's kind of fun.

We also work with, there's something called CenterLink, which is a organization that works with all the Centers around the country. We get a lotta support from them. We've used them, like they will help us with a board retreat, or they often have trainings for board members or executive directors of Pride centers.

When we were going through the transition with Janyce leaving, it was a very scary time. Like were we gonna continue to exist? That's when we spoke with CenterLink about what they thought we could become. I'll always remember they said, "there's different kinds of centers." Some centers aren't even a building. They just are a virtual center where people know you exist, you have a phone number, you have a website, but you don't really have a building. Then you have New York City Center, that's like the ultimate.

In between that you have all kinds of programming. We had to really struggle with what were we gonna be. We decided we wanted to continue to exist as a building. But we may at some point have to revisit that if funding doesn't allow it. That's something I think we constantly have to look at. That's part of the board's responsibility.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Who does social media?

*Denise Hinds:* One of our board members. Yeah. We have a really great board member right now who's doing all of our social media. Instagram, Facebook, Twitter. At different times we—like we hired a consultant not too long ago to do our web page. I think it's pretty nice. Yeah. At different times we tap into folks in the community who—that work was done by one of our board members. Her wife did that page for us. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Yeah. It came out great. What was the float like? What did the float look like for Newark Pride?



*Denise Hinds:* Oh, the float was professionally done. We paid to get it professionally done. Then we—yeah, people were just on there havin' a good old time. We had a DJ—DJ Chanel. Yeah. I think there is a general float company that people use for Newark Pride, and we just tapped into that. Yeah. It was nice. I actually couldn't be there that day 'cause a very good friend of mine passed away suddenly, and so I had to be at that funeral so I wasn't able to go. I felt so bad. *[Laughs]* Yeah. Sometimes. Can't be everywhere. Yeah. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Yeah. Totally. I'm sorry to hear that. I think I wanna ask you, too, I know what it looks like in 11 Halsey. I have some idea of what it looks like in the library from Zoom and from the opening. Actually, could you talk about that, too? For one, could you just describe the space, like what it looked like at 11 Halsey and what it looks like now? Also with that opening, 'cause I know the New Jersey governor's wife was there.

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. The opening was fabulous. We felt like we died and went to Heaven because that space, that resource room, was really beautiful. He brought in new furniture. He painted. All those really cool flags waving. I don't know if you knew, but off to the side on the left was a little room. Technically, that's the Center.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Oh!

*Denise Hinds:* So the library—I don't think we knew that. *[Laughs]* And that was not painted, and that was not lovely. *[Both laugh]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Yeah, I thought it was the whole big—okay.

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. That whole big room. We've come to realize that if we don't sign that room out, we can't even use it.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Whoa!

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. One night we had the self-defense class. I thought we were gonna use the big room, and it was signed out by some crochet group or something and we couldn't use it. Yeah. The whole thing was like, they created that resource room and they hired someone—LGBT resource librarian. I forget what her name is now.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Oh, Rachel Paulus, I think.

*Denise Hinds:* Yes. She's no longer there. We were supposed to work in tandem, but honestly, what the idea of it was and what it became, it never worked. It never worked. We have this room off to the side of the resource room. That's where we've been kind of relegated to. We also know that that room is gonna be renovated, and we're probably gonna be moved to a different part of the library, but we don't even know yet when and where that's gonna be.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* How did you wind—how did Tammy Murphy come to be at the opening?

*Denise Hinds:* Jeffrey. Jeffrey worked that out. Yeah. That was his connection. Like I said, he was still on the board, so he worked that out. Yeah, I mean, that opening was great. It really was like what we felt was gonna be the resurgence. It was gonna work really well for us, but for many reasons, it just didn't. It didn't take off the way we thought it would.

I thought it had real possibilities because for us to do a lotta joint programming, we thought would be really good for the Center. But for many reasons, that didn't happen over time. I really feel like what we need now is—what was missing—you asked me about 11 Halsey. 11 Halsey was a much more communal space. It felt more like home to a lotta people. There was just something very welcoming about it.

People felt a lotta ownership over it. We had people who used to come just to put the garbage out. We had people who would come and they would volunteer every night to cover a night. If we didn't have people covering the nights, the Center didn't open. We always had people who volunteered to do that. There was this sense of ownership.

I don't think that we could recreate that at the library 'cause we don't even have it. *[Laughs]* We don't have a sense of ownership. To be able to invite people in, you always feel like an invited guest. It's a little different. It's not quite really what we want for the Center.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Yeah. Yeah. 'Cause like 11 Halsey, you could see inside this glass door.

*Denise Hinds:* Yep. Yep. Yep. Always a feeling of welcome. Yeah. It was small. The smallness of it, to a certain point, actually held you, made you feel like it was more homey. I mean, we certainly wanted more

room in some ways to be able to do other things, but you can't have everything. *[Laughs]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Do you think if you get another space you'll ever have a dance-a-thon again?

*Denise Hinds:* I don't know. I mean, after, I mean, the other great accomplishment, I have to say, and I have to take a lot of responsibility for, was our virtual gala. I mean, we raised more money than we've ever raised. We spent six months planning it, six or more months. I think we pulled off a phenomenal, phenomenal event. Entertainment. It went off flawlessly. And none of us had ever done a virtual event before. Yeah. It was really somethin' special. I mean, we raised \$35,000. Yeah. Yeah.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Wow. When was your virtual gala?

*Denise Hinds:* That was a year ago. You weren't there?

*Kristyn Scorsone:* I don't know if I was able to make it for some reason.

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. Harmonica and Pastor Kevin were the emcees. Cory Booker spoke. Ras Baraka. The lieutenant governor—what's her name? Sheila?

*Kristyn Scorsone:* I don't know.

*Denise Hinds:* Okay. I'm not gonna embarrass myself. The lieutenant governor. *[Laughs]* We gave out awards to Tyra Gardner, Dr. Dellapiazza, Celeste Fiore. It was fabulous. Listen, go on that link. You can still listen to it. It was fabulous. Yeah. We had singers. We had amazing performers. We had a fabulous comedian in the beginning of it. We got sponsorship. We got some big sponsors.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Like who?

*Denise Hinds:* Target. Oh, geez, now you gonna make me embarrassed.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* *[Laughs]* That's okay.

*Denise Hinds:* We had some good ones, though. You gotta look. You gotta look.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* I always forget these things—

*Denise Hinds:* I'm gonna send you a link. I'm gonna send you a link.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Yeah. Please do. Yeah.

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. It's only like a year ago. Now I keep getting all the reminders on Facebook 'cause like every day I was posting about it. *[Laughs]* I'm like, "Wow, we did that thing. We did that." I asked people for money, and some people gave us like \$2,000, \$3,000. I'd never had people give to the Center like that. It was amazing.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* That is amazing.

*Denise Hinds:* It was amazing. Now, I mean, it was a time. It was a time during COVID. It was during Black Lives Matter, Trans Lives Matter. People wanted to give. I think that was helpful, but still. All that to say, I don't know if the dance-a-thon is the way to go, or what we've been talking about is maybe doing a gala every other year now that we know we could do it and we know what it takes. We been talkin' about that.

We also were talking about doing—we have some plans—we've actually had our first meeting for not this year Pride, but for the next year, to do a film festival.

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Cool!

*Denise Hinds:* I don't know if I want you to put that in there. *[Laughs]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Yeah. Yeah. No. I'll make a note to remind you about that. *[Okay with Denise to keep 7/31/23.]*

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. I don't know if that's gonna be a fundraiser or what, but yeah. We're tryin' to think of different ways to do something. I'm excited to find something that would bring people together. In the beginning Drag Bingo was such a great way to bring people together, but it lost steam by the end. It was like I was pretty much begging people to come. *[Laughs]*

*Kristyn Scorsone:* Is it because it was over Zoom?

*Denise Hinds:* Yeah. I think people just got tired of it. We paid for it for the year, so that's why we continued to have it, but by the end of it, I think it was done. We'll do it again. We said we'd do it for big events, like big times during the year. Maybe even do one for Pride. We did one last year that was really successful. People like comin' out for that. That's somethin'. We could actually do it outdoors if it's not—it was really hot the last time, which is why we didn't do it outdoors, but that was the plan.

*Kristyn Scorsonone:* Yeah. Yeah. I was able to go to one, and it was a lotta fun.

*Denise Hinds:* Oh, just yeah. Just a great time.

*Kristyn Scorsonone:* Yeah. I guess—

*Denise Hinds:* You done with me?

*Kristyn Scorsonone:* I think so. I mean, unless is there anything else that you could—I'm lookin' over my questions, see if I missed anything. Yeah. I think that's everything I can think of. Is there anything else that I should have asked?

*Denise Hinds:* I don't think so.

*Kristyn Scorsonone:* This has been amazing. It's been really nice to hear you—

*Denise Hinds:* I shoulda warned you about the nun part. I'm sorry about that.  
*[Laughs]*

*Kristyn Scorsonone:* No. No. I love that. I love that. Thank you so much. I'm gonna hit stop so that it stops recording. Thank you.

*Denise Hinds:* Okay. Put me in the dark now.

*[End of Audio]*

p. 24 Confirm if statement about film festival should be kept off the record