

Michael Betts II ([00:00:06](#)):

Welcome to the Space of Justice. I'm your host, Michael Betts, II. My pronouns are he and his and today I'm joined by none other than filmmaker, activist, and director of the organization Durham CAN Tinu Diver. Tinu, before we jump into today's conversation, can you introduce yourself? Give us a little bit of background about who you are, what your relationship is to Duke in Durham, areas of interest, pronouns, and maybe a fact about yourself that you find interesting.

Tinu Diver ([00:00:33](#)):

Hello. Hey Michael. Thanks for having me. So my full name is Atinuke Diver. I go by Tinu. My pronouns are she, hers. My relationship with Duke in Durham goes back to when I first came to North Carolina as a college student to attend that other school up the road. I lived in Durham. I lived in Durham while I was attending law school at that same school up the road. Then my, I guess, reintroduction to Durham was after having moved away after law school, practicing in Boston for several years, moving back to North Carolina in 2015, and when I began the certificate program at the Center for Documentary Studies at Duke. So Duke has been my artistic and documentary community for several years. Then in 2019, I began working with Durham CAN, which stands for Congregations, Associations and Neighborhoods, which is a broad-based community organization that I know we'll talk a little bit more about in a minute, but started working with them as a community organizer and then became their lead organizer and executive director in November of 2019.

Tinu Diver ([00:01:48](#)):

And a fact about myself that I find interesting. Keeping with the theme of space, one of the things I was thinking about was that I've pretty much lived my entire life in three specific regions -

Michael Betts II ([00:02:03](#)):

You can tell.

Tinu Diver ([00:02:05](#)):

... one being Boston, which is where I was born. My parents came to the US from Nigeria in the seventies and went to school there. They were living in a Mattapan and my dad went to Northeastern, my mom went to UMass Boston. So I was born there. Then Boston is actually where, as I mentioned, I ended up working for a few years after law school. Then the DC, Maryland, Virginia area, DMV, specifically Prince George's County, PG County, Maryland, and which is where I was raised from the age of one till, and where my parents still live. Then the research triangle area. So yeah, I went to school in Chapel Hill, lived in Durham, and now, since moving back and live in Wake County, right over the Durham Wake boarder. So I've pretty much just been bouncing around those three regions literally my entire

Michael Betts II ([00:03:01](#)):

That's awesome. That's awesome. I love the fact that you already have partitioned yourself. You're like, this is when I was super young, this is when I was a little bit older and now this is everything else. So, I'm a big believer that life finds the work that your specific hands need to be in the middle of. How did you come to the work that you're doing with Durham CAN and how do you feel that you're enacting change in the world and how has that work necessary and why is that?

Tinu Diver ([00:03:32](#)):

Hmm. Yeah, that's a really powerful statement, belief. And my coming to Durham CAN was definitely a journey. I don't know if it's still the same way now in schools, but generally what happens in high school as you sit down with your counselor and they're looking at your grades and things and like, "Okay, you should be this," and community organizer is never really, I don't think it's in any of the books for careers. I don't know if that's changed. Maybe it's in some books in different parts of the country. I don't know. But I did not grow up in a union household. I didn't grow up around a culture of organizing in a formal sense. Now that I know more about what organizing is in a deconstructed way, I can see glimpses of how that was showing up in my world and in my life.

Tinu Diver ([00:04:22](#)):

But I didn't grow up with an idea and a concept of that being like a thing. I knew who Cesar Chavez was, but I never thought, "Oh, he's an organizer." I thought, "Oh, he's this farm workers guy," and et cetera. So my journey to Durham CAN happened at a time when I was being very intentional about... One, I had this realization of just how much of our lives we spend working, and wondering why in light of that, we didn't actually spend more time talking to young people, helping young people think about how they want to spend such a significant part of their life. It was also the first time in my adult life that I had taken the time to stop and ask myself what I wanted, what I wanted to do, what were my values, what was important to me and how I could align my life in such a way that was reflected.

Tinu Diver ([00:05:18](#)):

So it just so happened around that time I was actually working, I worked at two universities. I was working at a university, and actually my Alma mater, and had made a decision about taking some time to do that. So I what I thought was going to be a three month sabbatical turned into a six month sabbatical. But during that time, I ended up going to a training that was being led by folks from Durham CAN, as well as the national network that we're affiliated with, the Industrial Areas Foundation. The training was actually in Durham. By the end of the training, one of instructors approached me and said, "Would you consider a vocation organizing?" And I just looked at him like, "What is that? I don't know what you're talking about."

Tinu Diver ([00:06:09](#)):

But he asked me to consider talking some more about what that would mean and suggested some reading for me to do, which I did. I also just began talking to some other organizers that organized in other affiliated organizations, a lot of them actually in the Maryland, DC, Virginia area, and came to start learning about this particular discipline, organizing that stems from what people who study this would refer to as Alinsky style, referring to Saul Alinsky, who's noted as a founder or an architect of a certain particular kind of approach to organizing that was really rooted in organizing that happened in Chicago. Yeah, so I decided to consider it. I was actually considering like, "Well, what is even that idea of vocation mean? What does it mean to be called? Who does the calling?"

Michael Betts II ([00:07:08](#)):

Exactly.

Tinu Diver ([00:07:08](#)):

"Is it a one-time thing? Is it a process?" All these things. So I definitely got to a point where, one, I had been exposed to so many aspects of the work, including some of the actions that Durham CAN had been doing that I was really moved. Then I also felt like I wouldn't know unless I at least tried it. So had the opportunity to try it out. It was a process of me getting to know the organization, the organization getting to know me and me trying to figure out organizing.

Michael Betts II ([00:07:40](#)):

Right.

Tinu Diver ([00:07:41](#)):

Because most of my colleagues have come into this work maybe right out of college or had some experience in college. So I'm kind of the pink unicorn, pink glitter unicorn in that kind of came into this work in a different path and a different time in life.

Tinu Diver ([00:07:57](#)):

So that's how I came to the work that I'm doing. Most of my work has been focused on organizing the residents in the Durham housing authority communities, which I know we'll talk about a little bit. And of course Durham CAN is... So Durham CAN itself has been around since 1999, April, 1999 was when it was founded. It's really interesting because when talking about space, thinking about Duke, Durham CAN was founded by a lot of alums and students from Duke divinity school. So there's always been a strong connection. And I don't know that Durham CAN would be what it would be without Duke divinity school. CAN has been working on issues in Durham, a range of issues in Durham, for years. We were actually just having a conversation with folks from Congressman David Price's office in December, right before the holiday.

Tinu Diver ([00:08:51](#)):

And one of his staffers made a comment that actually warmed my heart. She said, "Durham is better because of Durham CAN." And she was reflecting back to some of CAN's early actions around lead abatement and residences and things. I feel like I'm enacting change in the world because the job of an organizer is primarily to develop the leadership of others. And I feel like that is also the gift that keeps giving, when you're able to help people step into this full sense of themselves and see them come alive in how that then affects how they show up in other areas of their lives.

Tinu Diver ([00:09:38](#)):

That is what really excites me. It's so funny because when a lot of people think about Durham CAN, a lot of it's because they've been to one of our actions. So it's like 600 people packed into a room and political folks make commitments, et cetera. But really the work of broad-based organizing is building institutions and developing leaders. And I feel like that is necessary because it is imperative for the survival of a functioning democratic society. And I think particularly being a part of a generation that is approaching how it relates to institutions differently. I'm barely a millennial. A Millennial Grandma is what... I borrow that term. I made it in. I'm not Gen X, I'm a Millennial.

Michael Betts II ([00:10:32](#)):

Just right under the wire.

Tinu Diver ([00:10:33](#)):

Yes. Which is hilarious now because I literally am the bridge generation in that you've got the Boomers and the X-ers, there's me. And now I've got interns who are like, I guess, Gen-Z. Then I heard the new term is Gen-I or something like that, Because they're on all their-

Michael Betts II ([00:10:54](#)):

All the 'I' stuff.

Tinu Diver ([00:10:56](#)):

... 'I' technology, yeah.

Michael Betts II ([00:10:57](#)):

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Tinu Diver ([00:10:58](#)):

Which makes sense because you get to Z, you're at the end of the alphabet. So I guess you got to...

Michael Betts II ([00:11:01](#)):

You got to come up with a different letter.

Tinu Diver ([00:11:04](#)):

But being a Millennial and being part of a generation that is relating to institutions in a way that it's different from prior generations is also something I think a lot about. So I think for healthy-functioning democracy, whether nationally, statewide, locally, it's important to have healthy institutions in these interim, , these mediating institutions in particular, and it's important to have leaders. It's important to have people who are in their communities, care about the communities, know what's going on and are able to build power that's necessary to counteract the dominant power that is often the cause of a lot the pressures that our families or loved ones or communities face.

Michael Betts II ([00:11:57](#)):

I want to circle back to, you talk about this organizing feature within your work. I'm curious. You're a trained lawyer. How does that help your organizing abilities?

Tinu Diver ([00:12:12](#)):

I'm chuckling because it's actually really hard.

Michael Betts II ([00:12:15](#)):

I figured.

Tinu Diver ([00:12:15](#)):

Because one, I enjoy being a lawyer. My licenses are still current, I enjoy being a lawyer. Because I do have colleagues who come to organize... It's funny because actually I think the reverse is more common. I guess I'm on the reverse Obama plan because he was an organizer then he went to law school.

Michael Betts II ([00:12:40](#)):

Right, right, right.

Tinu Diver ([00:12:41](#)):

I did the reverse. And that's pretty common. You'll see folks who are organizers who then decided to pursue law as another kind of approach to change. And it's really hard because I have to be really clear with myself and with leaders that I'm the organizer and I'm not the lawyer. Because advocacy is a different theory of change. It's not less than. One's not better, one's not worse. But it's a different theory that focuses and centers different things. So when you're the advocate, that word, that root word advocate comes from the Latin word for voice.

Tinu Diver ([00:13:23](#)):

So when you're an attorney, you're an advocate, you're standing up, whatever, in front of the judge, in front of a court, whatever, and you're the voice for your client. But you're the one who's talking in your voice, in your advocacy, in your argument or gifts of persuasion are what centered the outcome in that situation. Whereas as an organizer, I have to often step back. We teach what's called the iron rule in juxtaposition to the golden rule, but the iron rule, "never do for others what they can and should do for themselves." That's really hard. That's probably one of the hardest things about organize is figuring that out.

Tinu Diver ([00:14:02](#)):

Like how do you know if someone can and should do something for themselves? And even if they can and should do something, is there still another reason why they might make a certain decision. I'm thinking about a story someone shared with me. One of our member institutions, First Presbyterian Church, they've been doing quite an amazing job of providing rental assistance and utility assistance for folks during COVID. And Jane Williams, one of the leaders there was sharing a story with me about a gentleman who basically had to make a decision about paying his rent or paying for a laptop for his son who had just started college and his college had gone remote. So in order for his son to be able to attend school, he needed a laptop and he was going to get his son that laptop.

Tinu Diver ([00:14:47](#)):

So I would imagine that there are aspects of being a lawyer that are helpful, particularly because most of my career was in the federal government.

Michael Betts II ([00:15:02](#)):

Right.

Tinu Diver ([00:15:02](#)):

So I'm not too intimidated by navigating-

Michael Betts II ([00:15:10](#)):

The system.

Tinu Diver ([00:15:11](#)):

... that whole Alice in Wonderland, all of the regulatory frameworks of agencies. So there's a comfort level there. I think there's also a level of ability to focus on the issues as opposed to making it personal. Like layers, and I think it's just because of our training. Like I could go into court with someone on the other side who I might consider a friend and we can go at it in court around that issue intensely, but still be able to speak to each other afterwards.

Tinu Diver ([00:15:45](#)):

We're able to think about how we're focused on addressing the issue in court because you have that duty to provide you that zealous representation for your client. But for it not to get personal.

Michael Betts II ([00:15:57](#)):

Right.

Tinu Diver ([00:15:59](#)):

I think that there's also a way in which, because again, part of our training, you're able to have the space to look at all these different sides of the issue. I always tell my leaders, there's always at least five sides to every story. I think that comes from that training as well. But it's challenging because I think I almost sometimes have to, what's the word, restrain myself because there are things that I would do actions I would take and I just have to take a deep breath and not sabotage the development of people. Now, there are times when I see stuff and I'm like, "Nah, this-"

Michael Betts II ([00:16:38](#)):

This is not right.

Tinu Diver ([00:16:41](#)):

"... I'll handle things," to use an Olivia Pope phrase, handled. But it is hard to just not swoop in and try to shortcut that. And I think that that's something that's endemic and this might come up later. But I do think that something that's endemic in how we approach a lot of challenges in our community, particularly around housing and space is like, "I'm the PhD, I'm the JD, I'm the whatever, I'm the expert, I've got the answer, I've got the key," and that's not always helpful.

Michael Betts II ([00:17:21](#)):

So actually I want you to push into that because we're about to do some actual definitions of things. But can you push into that function of being the expert and thinking that you have the key in that potentially being the disconnect. Can you talk more about that?

Tinu Diver ([00:17:38](#)):

Yeah. We have a lot of educated, degreed folk around, and I just think it's really dangerous when people who are actually, I think, who are experiencing the brunt of some of the challenges and issues around housing, around space are ostensibly excluded and kept out of being part of those solutions or they're those experiences, aren't part of the solutions. And trust me, Durham CAN, we take research really seriously. We don't play. We do our research. We believe in data. That's all part of how we approach our organizing. And we are about building relational power, and building relational power involves spending a lot of time talking to people, relating to people, hearing their stories, understanding what makes them

angry, understanding what gives them joy, understanding their journey, and what we'll probably talk about later, their self-interest.

Tinu Diver ([00:18:42](#)):

And that all gets short changed when people approach addressing things, whether maybe from a policy standpoint, by just going in and running to a department at their university, going into a closet and then coming out with a policy recommendation that they've actually never maybe talked to any of the people who are infected by that policy to see if that makes sense or if that works. So that's something that I really push our leaders around is always like, okay, "Where should we be listening? Who should we be listening to? Have we listened enough? Are we asking the right questions? Who else should we be listening to?" So a lot of listening for sure is how I push against that.

Michael Betts II ([00:19:27](#)):

Well I do want to take the step back now and I do want to ask you some more direct questions connected to some of the initiatives and outcomes that Just Space as an organization is after, regarding anti-racism. This term has kind of floated a lot in the last handful of months, especially given the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and the racial reckoning that's happening in the United States, writ large. We have this thing showing up in campus spaces where folks are feeling obligated to be anti-racist and how they go about approaching whatever they're doing. So I'm very curious, it's a two-front question, and you'll get used to me asking multi-partners. I like to do it. I know that that's probably, I don't know, there's probably better ways to interview people, but I like to give you all the questions that I want to ask so that you can kind of build a case for it rather than piecemealing it sometimes. But how would you define anti-racism both for yourself personally, and then professionally, and then how does Durham CAN define that?

Tinu Diver ([00:20:41](#)):

So I think of anti-racism as being intentional about acknowledging the realities of racial oppression, and then also taking intentional steps to dismantle them. I think that fits for me both personally and professionally for myself. And that the second part is really interesting because I don't know that Durham CAN, we defined it until really recently. I think it was, let me get my years. So 2020, January, 2020, we were having our strategy team retreat and the strategy team at Durham CAN functions like our board, and one of the things that we did, we did a few things. One is we had made this explicit decision that we were going to name race, racism, whiteness, and white supremacy, and how it shows up in our organizing and in our organization. One of the things that we did is I'd come across a book called Poverty, North Carolina. I think I got the title right, but written by Gene Nichol who, depending who you are, you love him or hate him.

Tinu Diver ([00:21:53](#)):

But Dean Nichol is the Dean of the law school for two of my three years. He was my constitutional law professor. And I remember being in the car. I had started working with CAN and his book had either just come out or it's getting ready to come out, and he was on Frank Stasio's The State of Things. And Dean Nichol was making this observation about how we often think about poverty as being in the eastern part of the state, or in Appalachia, the western part of the state, but that in North Carolina, when you look at census tracts, some of the most severe poverty was in the middle of downtown Raleigh, in the middle of downtown Durham, in the middle of downtown Greensboro, all these larger cities.

Tinu Diver ([00:22:40](#)):

This light bulb went off because it's so affirmed I had been seeing and experiencing, which was this dissonance of how folks in Durham, depending on their social locations, we're having way different experiences of Durham. So I got copies of the book and had Dean Nichol come to our retreat. I think that period of time started us down this journey of being really intentional about addressing race in a way that I don't think CAN had prior to that.

Tinu Diver ([00:23:19](#)):

And I'm really grateful because fast forward another year, and well actually let me rewind. I'm really grateful because the issue of race came up I think most saliently for us as an organization when we were having conversations about the \$95 million affordable housing bond and the fact that the Fable Street projects was excluded from the funding from that bond that would go to fund the first five years of the Durham housing authorities redevelopment. So naming those tensions and moving toward that discomfort was really important, and I think that's another aspect of anti-racism.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:24:04]

Tinu Diver ([00:24:02](#)):

That's another aspect of anti-racism that is important to name, is that leaning into, and that willingness to move toward discomfort as part of that process of dismantling racism, because I think that's why so often folks either choose not to look or to pay attention or just kind of don't want to think about it, and that's what privilege affords you. But I hope that answered it.

Michael Betts II ([00:24:37](#)):

Yeah, no that's perfect. You talk about poverty almost as this impetus, this thing that was the motivator specifically where it was showing up, and we as an organization at Just Space. We're always talking about, the justice of space. And I would imagine that poverty pushes into what that justice can show up as and what it looked like. So, thinking of that as kind of an underliner and underlayment, if you will, how have you defined something like Just Space or spatial justice? What does that look like? Because it sounds like the vast majority of the work that Durham CAN does. That's what I would imagine is your focus as it is, but how do you all, if you were to sit and think about it intentionally now and, articulate it just as cleanly as you did the definition of anti-racism for the organization, how does Just Space get defined as well?

Tinu Diver ([00:25:44](#)):

I think Just Space is space that honors the dignity and the humanity of the folks that occupy it. And I'm going to take a step back and then come back to that question about how do you define anti-racism and how does CAN define anti-racism because going back to the kind of the origins of Durham CAN and being connected to this Alinsky style approach to organizing like the fact of the matter is that legacy was rooted and kind of developed largely by white kind of European ethnic men. And so I straddle this really interesting fence, lack of a better term, in terms of like, that's the kind of the legacy of the organization, but then I'm the product of the struggle for black liberation in the South. And so, folks like, Ella Baker and, Fannie Lou Hamer, are these guideposts for me.

Tinu Diver ([00:26:46](#)):

And so kind of holding those intention has been, I think a lot of my formation as an organizer, what informs me, how I'm being shaped, how that shows up in my work and how I organize and think about organizing, and I think frames the way that I approach the work differently than some of my colleagues. The other thing I thought about was I was recently talking to a friend about that iconic scene from Spike Lee's Malcolm X, when Denzel Washington who's playing Malcolm X is in prison and you know the dictionary scene, ugh! God, I love that scene, such good cinema.

Michael Betts II ([00:27:23](#)):

We also have to acknowledge before you go too far, the scene where they're outside the jail, where the police officer's like, "no one man should have that much power", that scene also is one of the ones that like shakes me to the core. Anyway, go ahead. So you're talking about the dictionary scene now.

Tinu Diver ([00:27:42](#)):

I've been thinking about that scene in terms of just going back to the question about how do you define anti-racism? And I think one of the reasons why there's that discomfort is because part of whiteness is this assumption that you're pure, like you literally like a purity to everything. Everything that you do is pure. So anytime that narrative is interrupted, whether, by another white person or black person, it's like this reaction, like being attacked, in terms of your very personhood is attacked because you have bought into this lie that your whiteness connotes on you just universal goodness, pure intention, never being wrong always right. And so I think anti-racism inherently requires people to interrupt that narrative.

Michael Betts II ([00:28:40](#)):

Wow. It's funny that you would say that because I was just rereading a couple of different pages last night of Aime Cesaire, Discourse on Colonialism, where he's specifically talking about the barbarism that white individuals have to go through to be able to finally get to the brutalization of other humans and accept it as just a part and parcel of the way in which the world works. And so you talking about that, whiteness basically bestowing on you this purity and this goodness and this whatever, while also this other dissonance coming into play, were to be "good", you have to ignore, overlook, disavow, the things that you have been doing and, or have been complicit in doing that have benefited you. To be able to be seen as the resident expert, so-and-so, and so forth. So that's a very beautifully framed way to kind of get at this. And I also want to come back to, I really love how you define Just Space as space that honors the dignity of the people that occupy it.

Tinu Diver ([00:29:56](#)):

Yeah, so I spent most of my legal career working for the US department of transportation in Cambridge, Massachusetts at the John Volpe National Transportation System Center. And John Volpe was the son of Italian immigrants and he was governor of Massachusetts. He was Secretary of Transportation under Nixon and the campus that the center is on used to be part of NASA. And then President Johnson moved NASA to Texas for obvious reasons and left this empty campus. It can be square right by MIT vacant. And so John Volpe was like, "let's turn this into a transportation resource center". And so I worked there and really got this amazing kind of education and seeing the intersections of civil rights and transportation and how that shows up. And so I notice things like bus shelters and like why the bus shelters and certain parts of town, look real, just run down and others don't.

Tinu Diver ([00:30:56](#)):

I notice things like crosswalks, where there are crosswalks and where there aren't, why is it that you got to?... I call them goat trails, you know what I'm saying, where there's no sidewalk or a sidewalk that just randomly ends, it doesn't make any sense. And obviously highways and where they go and where they don't go and how 147 bent around certain buildings, but then plowed through others. It's a reflection of a certain philosophy and particularly a certain racialized philosophy about what communities were expendable and which weren't. And so I have one of my interns, Erin Lite, she's a Durham native Jordan high school grad. And she's taking a gap year from her studies at the University of Southern California and Architecture.

Tinu Diver ([00:31:47](#)):

And so this is like her jam. So she's the one who's been my spatial justice Sherpa, which I really appreciate because she brings that perspective into even so many of our actions. Our criminal justice reform action team was meeting, and I can't remember what we were talking about, but that action team has been really focused on kind of keeping an eye on what's happening at the Durham County jail during COVID and actions with Sheriff Burkhead and DA Deberry. And, she was just kind of reflecting on how architecture and design shows up in prisons, and again, how that's reflected and just things I hadn't really thought about before in certain contexts. I think going to kind of Just Space, I think that's why so much of the work, particularly when I reflect on the work related to the Durham housing authority, last year there was a documentary that came out called East Lake Meadows, and we watched it together as a group.

Tinu Diver ([00:32:50](#)):

And we actually had a discussion about it with leaders, from the Durham housing authority board of commissioners, the CEO. And I think there may have been some staff there and it was so scary how eerily similar, I'd tell you, Michael, if you watch that film, even like the same architect, I literally thought they cheated and came to Mc Dougald Terrace and shot footage at Mc Dougald Terrace and used it for the film. That's how similar it was, but the same issues in terms of just, it's not even just the disrepair issues in terms of what's going on inside the units. But it's like the fact that it was often because of what the type of housing it was being built and who was living there, folks who would use cheaper materials, that wouldn't last as long.

Tinu Diver ([00:33:41](#)):

The fact that the land that a lot of these places were built on were like some of the worst, the poorest conditioned land or the way that it's sloped was prone to flooding, prone to sewage backups, or built on sites that had been contaminated by leaks and things like that, in the earth and the ground. And so I think that zooming out in terms of when I think about space and all the ways that it shows up in how that intersects with race, I'm definitely trying to get an expanded kind of way of how I think about that. So it's been an eye-opening and then for CAN, I mean the biggest image of how race, racism, whiteness, and white supremacy shows up around space in Durham is Fayetteville street projects.

Tinu Diver ([00:34:36](#)):

So that vacant land, which, actually I was thinking about this, about how the first time I actually saw the Fayetteville street projects is, and I'll make a note about language. So we refer to that site, even though I know that the projects are no longer there because the people we know in the community still refer to it as Fayetteville street projects. We've decided that's how we're going to refer to it. I know some people refer to it as Fayette place, just in terms of just that. But the first time I saw it was actually when I was

taking a class at CDS and we were doing the Aya Shabu with Whistlestop tours was giving our group a tour and we were walking along Fayetteville streets. So I didn't even realize how big it was.

Tinu Diver ([00:35:25](#)):

I guess we were standing, I couldn't see how far it went back like towards the freeway. But even then, I wonder when I think back to that moment, I wonder why I didn't have a stronger reaction, why wasn't I more outraged? Why wasn't I angry? Or like all the ways in which we've internalized these expectations of like, Oh this is, whatever the hood, why have we come to accept things in certain communities that we wouldn't accept otherwise? And I mean, obviously, that's all tied up in race.

Michael Betts II ([00:35:57](#)):

Right, it's just social conditioning and assimilation. I mean, both of those things, to your point, like we've been told, this is what it's supposed to manifest as, and then we've been told to be like our white counterparts. So the amount of self-harm that inflicts upon black and brown bodies that have internalized those things, you don't even realize that you should be devastated.

Tinu Diver ([00:36:26](#)):

Yeah.

Michael Betts II ([00:36:28](#)):

So it's funny though, that you had previously interacted with that space outside of the context of your work, or shall I say, while wearing a different hat.

Tinu Diver ([00:36:40](#)):

Yeah. It was almost like foreshadowing. I had no idea how significant that place would become in my life

Michael Betts II ([00:36:47](#)):

I am curious, that was a perfect segue into this question of, what do you see the role of the University ensuring spatial justice is created? Because that was the CDS class.

Tinu Diver ([00:36:59](#)):

Yeah. And I think that one is for a university to see itself as like a responsible party in the work, not just kind of over here on the side, doing our thing, whatever, but like seeing itself as part of understanding how it has been part of the problem. And therefore it has to be part of the solution and emphasis on part, meaning that you are coming to a table with other folks, as a participant, as opposed to, some type of, kind of more like top-down, edict, this is what we going to do, kind of approach. I think one of the beautiful things that a university can do in ensuring justice is created, is being that mediating institution, where that brings people together, who otherwise might not ever meet or know each other.

Tinu Diver ([00:37:55](#)):

And then that creates and spurs movements. It creates and spurs ideas. It creates and spurs things that could actually counteract the damage that's been done in a community. Again, going back to CAN's origins, how important Duke as a space was for bringing together these students, clergy alumnus to begin imagining, wow it would look like for us to build power and to see a different story in Durham. One of the things that has surprised me, so I've got three interns right now, TJ Bryant, who's a first-year

MDiv at Duke Divinity, Aaron, who I mentioned who's on her gap year from USC saying architecture, a Durham native Jordan high grad, and then Rachel Hefner, who is doing her field Ed with us. She's a senior BSW student at Meredith. She attended North Carolina school of Science and Math.

Tinu Diver ([00:38:57](#)):

So she lived in Durham while she was there. And what has shocked me is how all three of them who all have some connection to Durham or Duke have never heard about Hayti, didn't know about Fayetteville street projects. Didn't know about 147. I'm like, "what are they teaching you people?" I still am shocked. I remember asking Aaron, so they teach you this at school at Georgia? He's like "no", and so I think to the question, the role of the university, hopefully through this and other actions can be amplifying a broader narrative of the reality of the space that it is in.

Michael Betts II ([00:39:42](#)):

Well, and the peoples that it's displaced to have that space. So we could spend all this time on this conversation of university responsibility and things of that nature, but I do want to take a quick moment to kind of jot over and start to establish a better understanding of the history of the \$95 million bond that happened back in November 2019. Can you walk us through that bond a little bit and how it's supposed to be used? I know it's supposed to show up in tandem if I'm not mistaken with 65 million more dollars from federal and local funding sources for affordable housing in the community. And so, if you could kind of talk us through that a little bit, and what are the commitments that mayor Schule and city council have committed to, with relation to how that money is supposed to show up in the Durham community?

Tinu Diver ([00:40:45](#)):

So I'll answer that, I guess, through my specific lens. My introduction to the bond, like many, I guess that would have been maybe January, February 2019, I had started working with CAN round MLK junior weekend. And around that time had also been invited to hear a presentation that the Durham housing authority CEO, Mr. Anthony Scott was giving at one of our member institution's first Presbyterian church about the DDNP, which is the Downtown Durham Neighborhood Plan. And it's the plan that the DHA has to redevelop all of its properties over the next decade. So, DHA is in an interesting position in that it owns lands in a lot of areas of Durham that are now really attracting, let's say development opportunities. And so I was listening to this presentation and at a certain point, Mr. Scott mentioned how there was a 60% unemployment rate amongst work able to adults living in DHA communities.

Tinu Diver ([00:41:55](#)):

So I clearly was like, I know that is not, he misspoke, sounds like, excuse me, did you just say 60, six zero? He said, "yes". I thought my goodness, the height of unemployment during the great depression was like 24, 25%. And this was back in early 2018. So at that time, there was relatively low unemployment, kind of nationwide and locally. And so I thought, how is this the same Durham? We have all these jobs and all this growth. And then we have this highly concentrated unemployment crisis. And so as I began to get to know CAN, and I began to get to know our member institutions and the historical relationships that a lot of them had had in DJ communities.

Tinu Diver ([00:42:41](#)):

I began to question whether we were building relationships with mutuality, whether we really understanding, like what the concerns were that folks had versus just dropping off a book bag or a hot

dog, which very well be what someone wants or needs, but maybe it could be different. And so shortly after around that time was when mayor Schule announced the 95 million-dollar affordable housing bond. And as we began to look at this, my first reaction was like, Oh my God, this is going to be like the most transformative thing to happen, particularly for the DHA communities because of the money from the bond, that was earmarked to go to the Durham housing authority to support its redevelopment efforts for first five years. So I'm like, all right, this is going to be transformative.

Tinu Diver ([00:43:31](#)):

This is significant, and as we began to dig into the plan, I will never forget sitting at Monument of Faith Church pastored by Bishop Laney. And I think it was around March, and it was like that moment where people realize particularly for that... So basically it was an info session about the plan. And so you had a lot of folks who were from, so Monument of Faith is in Hayti community, right near Fayetteville street projects. And you can just kind of see and hear the growing dislike, disappointment as people realize the Fayetteville street projects was not included in the bond.

Tinu Diver ([00:44:10](#)):

It was just like this weight. And then things that the community has been asking for like a grocery store, not prioritized, I should say. And so it became very apparent that that was the case. And considering that Durham CAN's organizing is what led the city to give the Durham housing authority, the money to buy back that land from a Philadelphia developer who decided they no longer wish to develop that land. We view that as a significant missed opportunity. To right the wrongs and legacy of unkept promises to particularly as our historically African-American communities in Durham. And so that was gosh, spring-

Michael Betts II ([00:44:59](#)):

We know that those communities know what the promises were and which promises were not kept.

Tinu Diver ([00:45:03](#)):

Yes. And I'm so glad you said that. I mean, folks got receipts. So even like the plan that is being shot by the Durham housing authority, folks will notice it's very rental heavy. I believe maybe in the JJ project, there's a few first-time homeowner opportunities, but it's very, very rental heavy. And we asked cause we were like, why was Fayetteville street projects excluded? And so we were told it was a market study. We did a market study, all right, we want to see the study. And we waited and we waited and we waited and we waited, where's the study. You just made this big old decision about \$95 million based on market study that nobody's seen, like hold up, like what? Finally, we get the study and maybe some people don't know this, but a market study is not necessarily an objective document.

Tinu Diver ([00:45:55](#)):

It's framed by certain parameters. And so if you're a city that's trying to generate revenue from commercial or from rental or from whatever like you're framing what the market studies going to say. And it was a market study that, reflected lots of people who are moving into Durham and rentals and things like that. But when you talk to like, Ms. Brenda, Ms. Pam, and Ms. Joanne and Ms. Vivian, who are leaders over on grade street, whose families have been in that community for generations, they're like, "no, we were promised homes", like when 147 came through, that was the promise. To replace single-family homes, houses, homes, ownership, equity. And so to your point, even the plans that are kind of put forth as like the plans, calls into question, how valid are these plans? If they actually don't reflect

what the community has articulated that it wants to see? And to your point, what was promised? Whose plan is this?

Michael Betts II ([00:46:54](#)):

And to your point from way earlier, when we were talking about this idea of experts coming into a space and having the "key", but never talking to the people who are actually in the space. I feel like you could easily pass this off as, well, these were the smart folks that told us what we should do, so we're going to follow their actions.

Tinu Diver ([00:47:17](#)):

Yeah and sometimes people are wrong.

Michael Betts II ([00:47:17](#)):

Right. Well, and it also allows you a bit of cover because the city can say "hey, we went to these other folks, these are the resource people who know what's good for us". They know what's good for us rather than knowing that the community knows what's best for itself.

Tinu Diver ([00:47:39](#)):

Yeah. I think particularly, again, going back to like the importance of having a democratic society, I think to the extent that you are still open, because again, we don't approach things as like, we don't like experts, we don't like research, we don't like market studies, we don't like data, publicly available transparent data is my love language. I think that's all-important, but I think.

PART 2 OF 4 ENDS [00:48:04]

Tinu Diver ([00:48:03](#)):

... love language, like I think that's all important, but I think when you rely on that to the exclusion of the social intelligence of a community and of history, then that's what becomes problematic. And it becomes very undemocratic. Like, the bond itself, when you look at the numbers in terms of registered voters and the people that voted and who voted for the bond, I mean, you're actually only looking at 13.6% of the Durham electorate that voted in favor for the bond. But what comes out is, oh, is this overwhelming decision. And so I think, again, I'm always going to err on the side of pushing for democracy and folks who are going to be the most impacted by these decisions having agency.

Tinu Diver ([00:48:56](#)):

I mean, I think to be effective and good in this work, you have to fundamentally believe that people have the ability to guide their lives. And that means even if they make mistakes, even if they do things differently than you would do, you have to believe that fundamentally. My concern is that sometimes there's a sense in which you feel like either certain folks are talking to people like they're stupid or like they're not going to understand, or, oh, it's too complicated. And the fact of the matter is is a lot of our neighbors often will know more than certain ... or have done the reading more than some of the officials that are pushing things.

Tinu Diver ([00:49:39](#)):

And so I think that there has to be that balance in understanding, valuing, and including those voices. I mean, I think about the DHA redevelopment in one of the HUD requirements ... So the program that the Durham Housing Authority is using is RAD, but does the rental assistance demonstration, which really focuses on leveraging private investment to redevelop communities. In the case of Durham, they're going to be higher- density, mixed use, mixed income. And so part of the thrust is breaking up what's referred to as kind of quote unquote concentrations of poverty. But one of the essential parts of these plans is feedback from residents, DHA residents. Because again, a lot of them are going to be impacted.

Tinu Diver ([00:50:32](#)):

And so not seeing that happen, again, going back to the same kind of comment with the DDMP is like, well, whose plan is this? And if these folks haven't been a part of it, then how legitimate of a plan can we say it is, particularly if that's actually like a HUD federal requirement?

Michael Betts II ([00:50:52](#)):

How much of the bond is ... or at least the market development for it, how much of it is predicated on the attraction of things like the Obama Administration's opportunity zones?

Tinu Diver ([00:51:06](#)):

Yes. So I've totally forgot. I'm glad you said something. I forgot. So the [Fable 00:51:12] Street projects are one of, I believe, seven opportunities zones in Durham.

Michael Betts II ([00:51:15](#)):

So real quick, before you go too far into it, can you define what that is for our listeners, please?

Tinu Diver ([00:51:20](#)):

I will my best. So opportunity zones are locations that I believe each state got to decide where those locations were. So I'm assuming Governor Cooper, folks in the Cooper Administration, made decisions about where these zones were located. But the idea conceptually is that these are areas that are viewed as having quote unquote low investment or not a lot of investment in the community. And the idea is to essentially give people the ability to write off capital gains taxes by ... instead of paying what they're paying capital gains tax, they can take that money and put it towards development or investment in one of these regions that are identified by the state.

Tinu Diver ([00:52:07](#)):

So Fable Street Projects is one of those over in Southeast Raleigh. I believe the site where the ... I can't remember what they're calling it now, but with the soccer field and all that, or stadium, I believe that's also an opportunity zone project. I've been working on a documentary project out in Rocky Mount. And it just so happens that the area where the person I've been documenting with works, it was also an opportunity zone project. So it essentially creates an incentive for folks to who would otherwise be paying capital gains taxes to invest that in redevelopment in under-invested communities.

Tinu Diver ([00:52:52](#)):

And so I think the concern about opportunity zones comes into play in terms of like, well, then what happens after you ... Let's say you have someone who decides to invest X amount of dollars, let's say the redevelopment of Fable Street Projects. Well then, who's calling the shots, right? Like, who's making the

decisions about what happens on that land? And then how do you maintain an obligation for the residents to be at the table?

Michael Betts II ([00:53:19](#)):

So with regard to this, we're ultimately having a large conversation about substantial affordable housing being available in large quantity in the city of Durham. And that's what this bond is supposed to be doing. But I would imagine you're ... We have this initial complaint and substantial complaint from Durham residents saying, like, "Hey, one of the large housing spaces is not being considered for this bond." I would imagine that there are other missed opportunities for supporting folks that have happened or that are included or not included within the scope of this \$95 million.

Tinu Diver ([00:54:04](#)):

Yeah. I mean, the challenge is that ... At least I think the argument has been, we need to do the bond because essentially the federal government for years, decades, has not been funding public housing programs in a way that can sustain them, can sustain habitability requirements, repairs, maintenance, et cetera. But the pitch has been that we need the bond because particularly, for the DHA projects. And I want to say ... Let me take a step back. There are a lot of good things in the bond. I want to be clear about that, too. And so there are a lot of things in the bond that are good, but the exclusion of Fable Street Projects, particularly for Durham CAN, was a particular issue.

Tinu Diver ([00:54:53](#)):

But anyway, going back forward, but the pitch has been that the funding from the bond is what's going to be needed in order to address all of these longstanding maintenance issues, which many of us have come to know better than we would like to because of our organizing work with residents at Hoover Road and the resident inspection that they did in 2019 as well as just ... I mean, what unfolded that McDougald Terrace last December and then ... Excuse me. No, that was December of 2019. Excuse me. And then even-

Michael Betts II ([00:55:31](#)):

And can you briefly tell us just like a highlight of what happened?

Tinu Diver ([00:55:37](#)):

At McDougald?

Michael Betts II ([00:55:38](#)):

Yes.

Tinu Diver ([00:55:39](#)):

So what came out in the media was that ... I think it was probably right after Christmas, but essentially I believe it was actually an EMT that noticed a significant number of people from the same area in the city who were reporting or showing up or showing symptoms of carbon monoxide exposure. And they triangulated that and realized it was coming from McDougald Terrace. And what I recall is that there was also, I think, a letter that the former city manager had sent to the CEO of the Durham Housing Authority that seemed to indicate that this was an issue that had been raised prior to December.

Tinu Diver ([00:56:23](#)):

And so based off of ... the DHA did some more kind of looking kind of inspections and they decided to evacuate the entire community so that they could, I think, figure out what the issues were and also do some repairs. Many of the leaks were had been thought to come from some old stoves. And so there was a bunch of replacement of the gas stoves and electrical work that had to be done. And so, yeah, so you had a large community of residents who were displaced and put in hotels last year and those repairs have yet to be completed.

Michael Betts II ([00:57:13](#)):

Wow. Wow. So you were kind of going down the list. The only reason I wanted to stop you is I remember as a grad student hearing about this and being a part of the action to help in support is many of those displaced residents as we possibly could. So I just wanted you to kind of talk about it from an eagle eye perspective, bird's eye perspective, kind of of the [inaudible 00:57:38].

Tinu Diver ([00:57:39](#)):

And I want to name the fact that ... So that happened, that would have been like a month after the bond was passed. But I also wanted to lift up that three months prior to that, in September, Durham CAN held an action with Mr. Scott at Hoover Road and brought up there actually a number of issues. One was around evictions. One was around specifically the court fees that are assessed to residents when they're evicted and just the process DHA had used, but the other was around repairs. And we had seen the exact same issues that kind of surfaced in the larger, I guess, consciousness of folks at McDougald Terrace we had seen it Hoover Road several months before. And so, yeah, so I'll just leave that there.

Michael Betts II ([00:58:27](#)):

Yeah. That also goes against kind of the statement you were making about East Lake Meadows, the documentary and the direct similarities, one of those being things that get into utter disrepair that cause other problems that we could've solved sooner, but because we used cheaper materials, we're injuring folks.

Tinu Diver ([00:58:49](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. Or just, I mean, the other thing that people bring up is the fact is that there are two large, public housing buildings kind of built around the same time: one for whites, Few Gardens, and one for blacks, McDougald Terrace. Few Gardens was torn down a while ago. And so I think that's the other ... I mean, that's a very, I think again, going back to the kind of whole topic of space and how that intersects with race, I mean, just the visibility and awareness of that I think is something to consider.

Tinu Diver ([00:59:21](#)):

And I think that going back to the question about the bond, I think one of the questions I've had is ... So taking that approach in terms of the federal government is basically getting out of the business of public housing and it's moving towards privatization, and we need to leverage this private investment. But I think, but again, the bond only pays for the first five years of the redevelopment. And I just don't know that we as a community in good conscience can allow folks to continue living in some of the conditions that we're aware of, particularly our children. Like, to me, that's full stop.

Tinu Diver ([01:00:06](#)):

And so the communities that are in that redevelopment plan for the first five years, but what about the larger communities that are not in that plan? So we're basically asking folks to live with certain things for another decade. And I think there's still some questions about seeing the math on exactly how the private investment generates the profit that then can be moved taken and moved. There's still, yeah, questions about exactly how the plan works and plays out.

Tinu Diver ([01:00:35](#)):

A the other part of this, and I think you've raised this is that the bond is just one part of a larger kind of investment that the public is making in the Durham Housing Authority. It's the bond, but it's also other city funding, funding the city's already given DHA, its low-income housing tax credits. And it's interesting because, again, when we talk about these issues, one of the things people talk about is the fact that the federal government isn't funding ... Public housing authority, they're not funding public housing. But it's interesting that the approach that we're taking emphasizes ... what's the word? It's incentivizing solutions that are tax exempt.

Tinu Diver ([01:01:32](#)):

So we're talking about tax credits, we're talking about bonds that are exempt from federal taxes, taxes that might otherwise go to fund HUD or go to fund public housing. Right? So it's this really interesting question about, well, who is benefiting from this particular paradigm and approach, because it's like, between the opportunity zones and the tax credits and the bonds, it seems like if you're someone who has either capital gains tax that you're trying to avoid or investment money from an investment kind of bent, sounds like you have some opportunity there, but it calls the question, at whose expense?

Michael Betts II ([01:02:10](#)):

In your honest opinion, and I'm going to read this the way I wrote it because there's a lot here, what are the equitable, civic, and anti-racist responsibility which a university like Duke, that is rooted so deeply within Durham, has to the wider Durham community with regards to supporting mandates and opportunities for substantial, dignified, affordable housing? And this is knowing that Duke brings in a ton of grad students that don't make a ton of money and so they themselves benefit from the auspices of something like an affordable housing act for affordable housing access. So what are the things that, from your perspective, are things that Duke needs to be doing to support the community as a whole?

Tinu Diver ([01:02:54](#)):

Yeah. I mean, this makes me think about, we talk about, in our discipline of organizing about self-interest. And often self-interest gets a bad rap, right? Because it sounds super selfish, and like, I'm just about me and mine. But I think the magic of organizing is expanding this idea in a sense of self, right? And the relational work, connecting you to people, connecting you to communities, to where you see that your wellbeing is tied to theirs. And even we teach that the root word of that word self-interest, interese, means among and between. So it's this idea that my self interests are actually not just about me, but it's about how those interests are met among and between others. Right? And so I think that what ... I'm trying to [inaudible 01:03:52] with the question. But I think the -

Michael Betts II ([01:03:52](#)):

You're good. We were talking about Duke's responsibilities to Durham. So among and between.

Tinu Diver ([01:04:00](#)):

Yeah, I think it's understanding and articulating its self-interest among and between everyone outside of kind of the formal Duke institution, right? So understanding and seeing its wellbeing to the community. It's funny that you brought that up about grad student housing, because I remember one of the actions we had last year was around the Willard Street Apartments. And so just to go a few years back, one of CAN's actions was around pushing the city to build affordable housing on public land in close proximity to public transportation.

Tinu Diver ([01:04:39](#)):

And so it focused on these various lots kind of in the ... what's referred to as the downtown core, one of them being the one right by the bus station where Willard Street Apartments are, I think, almost done, actually. And so 505 W Chapel Hill Street is the former police headquarters, right next to Duke Memorial, which is one of our member institutions. And so, but also part of one of these lots of land that CAN had identified of, let's push the city to choose a developer that's going to build affordable housing on public land in close proximity to transportation, jobs, et cetera.

Tinu Diver ([01:05:14](#)):

And so in the conversations with the developers, Fallon and Wynn, it's interesting that this very issue came up. And it was clear that it ... And it helped us actually expand our sense of self-interest, like being sensitive to like, "Oh, wow, we hadn't thought about the needs of certain students to have access to affordable housing," which is also the same as the access needs of public housing residents to units that are well-maintained, as well as to senior, like our teachers. I mean, I think that's been of the most shocking things for me is how many teachers I've talked to who've lamented about not being able to live in the community where they teach.

Michael Betts II ([01:06:00](#)):

Yeah. And I mean, and this is where we get into the problem of systemic inequities relative to wages and things of that nature. Like, if the cost of living exceeds more than, I think ... I'm trying to remember what the algorithm is, but it was the cost of living should not exceed more than 25% of your total take home for a month or ... So when you have teachers who are having to work two and three jobs because the cost of living exceeds greater than 50, sometimes 75% for them to live close to where they actually teach, to be in the community, which we know research-wise says that if a student interacts with their teacher outside of school, they are far likely to do better in school.

Michael Betts II ([01:06:45](#)):

So you are taking the educator out of the community and then still mandating that students perform at higher levels. That's the first thing. We're overtaxing the teachers because we actually require them to have multiple jobs. And then lastly, they're not able to do the substantive teaching load work because they themselves are now having to figure out survival tactics.

Tinu Diver ([01:07:08](#)):

Right. Even though maybe that teacher isn't necessarily ... I mean, they may or may not be a student at Duke or alum or whatever, but sees those connections, right? Like if Duke says, "Oh, we're concerned about the community that we're in, we're concerned about the downstream impacts, we're concerned on what's going on with DPS, we're concerned about what's going on with transportation," like seeing these connections and understanding that the wellbeing of the community is going to be attributable to its wellbeing.

Tinu Diver ([01:07:36](#)):

The other thing I thought about was we have a sister organization in Baltimore, Build, and they have been engaged in several actions over the years with Johns Hopkins University, which kind of a ... not the same, but kind of a similar relationship in terms of having this institution that is a significant employer approximate to certain neighborhoods in Baltimore that they wanted to see kind of have a stronger relationship with the university. And I'm thinking about this image I have, and forgive me because I can not remember the name of the president of Johns Hopkins, but one of my colleagues was with the president Johns Hopkins door-knocking in East Baltimore and talking to residents, and having what we call probably like a quick relational meeting.

Tinu Diver ([01:08:22](#)):

But I think part of that action of expanding self-interest is building those relationships across the community and hearing and listening and actually understanding like, okay, who is my neighbor? What are the interests? Oh, thank you. President Ronald Daniels of Johns Hopkins. Yes, that is [inaudible 01:08:52]. But in thinking about even, like our jobs living wage campaign was very much focused on building that type of relationship and support with Duke university, with President Price and Dr. Washington of the health system being such significant employers, how can Duke show up in a way that affirms the inclusion of folks who face some of the highest barriers to employment? And do we understand how that's a good thing, right? Like, that that's good for our community.

Michael Betts II ([01:09:26](#)):

The conversation of what is good for a community, and that conversation being rooted from the community's standpoint out rather than from the top down to decipher what is good. I think that's a whole nother can of worms that we could get into.

Tinu Diver ([01:09:46](#)):

Yeah, again, for me, it's always going back to democracy, like the ...

Michael Betts II ([01:09:50](#)):

Right. Right. Exactly.

Tinu Diver ([01:09:51](#)):

That is the work that we have to do, is, I mean, you and I, Michael, there are things that you want, there are things that I want. I'm not going to get what I want a hundred percent of the time. You're not going to get what you want the hundred percent of the time. And how we negotiate that in a way that doesn't result in staging a coup at the Capitol is the work that we have to do, how do we negotiate that. And yeah, to your point, it's among and between. It's understanding that, yeah, Duke is going to have certain interests in terms of what its purpose is, financial, people, bottom lines, et cetera.

Tinu Diver ([01:10:35](#)):

And then in the community is a very broad term, and even within the community, you have different interests. But, to your point, that needs to be a negotiation and a conversation, and a discussion, and a back and forth. It's power. We teach about relational power being power with as opposed to dominant power being power over. And so I think that's what we want to see and to practice ourselves is that power with. And so, again, often that means going back to kind of what I was talking about before,

about the challenges of showing up in certain spaces as a lawyer is that often, in that whole root word of advocate being a voice, but often it's not about being someone's voice. It's you just need to pass them the damn mic and let them speak.

Tinu Diver ([01:11:23](#)):

And I think if this work isn't changing us as people and causing us to pause and to reflect and to understand where we got to step back, or we need to ... there should be someone else that should be in this space or speaking to this issue or whose experience and stories should be centered, being aware of that and naming that.

Michael Betts II ([01:11:47](#)):

Exactly. Exactly. Okay, so I always love to ask these kinds of questions. The, if this was happening, what would you do? What would you say? It's one of my favorites. And then I guess the followup to that is kind of, what mandate would you leave for folks?

PART 3 OF 4 ENDS [01:12:04]

Michael Betts II ([01:12:03](#)):

And then I guess the follow up to that is what mandate would you leave for folks? So if President Price or Mayor Steve Schewel called into this recording session right now and said anything you say in the next 15 minutes, Duke and Durham have partnered to make it a reality, what are you telling them?

Tinu Diver ([01:12:19](#)):

Hmm, I would invite them both to come with me and leaders from Durham CAN to the next session of eviction court, because I think if you want to see systemic racism in Durham, it's there. I think that I would tell them that there is a significant focus on really planning for how to deal with some of these severe disrepair issues in DHA that the Durham Housing Authority communities that the city needs to invest in.

Tinu Diver ([01:13:04](#)):

I would say that there needs to be a re-prioritization of the affordable housing bond, spending plan and phasing. And I know it's a little counterintuitive because it's going against your question, but I actually would probably do more listening than I would telling. One, I would invite them to meet, practically speaking, I'd probably invite them to a gathering of leaders and residents, whether it's our clergy council or a metro council or Thursday meeting that we have with DHA leaders and invite them into listening to a broader spectrum of our community. And I would also listen to them and understand who they are and their motivation and their self-interest, and what's important to them. And why of all the things you could be doing with your life, do you choose to be university president, or why do you choose to be a mayor. And so that's where I would start.

Michael Betts II ([01:14:12](#)):

So with that in mind, what are the mandates? You've got folks listening right now. What are you asking them? If you were going to say this one or two actions that you can do would be really beneficial to both the Duke Durham community, yourself, whatever, what are those, what might they be?

Tinu Diver ([01:14:35](#)):

Well, I'll say one really practical thing. And I wanted to say as a way to also affirming the work that so many folks in Durham, in addition to Durham CAN are doing is I would encourage folks if you haven't, to read the racial equity task force report that came out last year, just really comprehensive. And then also applaud the work of that task force and the recommendations, because that report really, I feel like coalesces a lot of different things that have been going on and issues that people have been talking about for a long time. And so if you haven't, I encourage you just as a way of background, particularly if maybe you're newer to Durham or maybe newer to thinking about housing or want to inform kind of your thoughts about spatial justice because there's some really great recommendations particularly focused on housing and space. That's one.

Tinu Diver ([01:15:42](#)):

It's really challenging to answer that in COVID times, because I want to balance everyone's, taking the precautions that they need to in terms of their health and individual decisions. The two most transformative things for me, and then I would imagine folks working with us have been our proximity to the communities that we organize with. And so whether that's the conversations and the one-on-ones and the relational meetings with our neighbors and being in spaces that are beyond the two mile radius within which we live our lives day to day.

Tinu Diver ([01:16:27](#)):

So actually going back to our question about if president Price and Mayor Schewel called in, I think I'd also extend them an invitation to, thinking back about that picture with president Daniels at Johns Hopkins and my colleagues talking to residents, I would invite them into those spaces, whether they're virtual or physically distant outdoors. So anyway, I think I said that in the answer, but I was just imagining that in my mind. I think that one of the things that I appreciate about being the lead organizer of Durham CAN is that I don't have the luxury to not understand the history of the place in which I organize. And I think that in addition to reading the racial equity task force report, which I think brings people to speed in terms of current date, I think really understanding the history of where you are is so important. I remember when I moved back to North Carolina, after we'd been in Boston for seven years and sitting down with someone who, and that's what she said, she's like, "You need to understand that there ..." And it wasn't in Durham, it was another part of North Carolina, but she was like, "You need to understand that there's a community that has been here for years and you need to know them. You need to get to know them."

Tinu Diver ([01:17:52](#)):

And so I would say the same thing for Durham, going back to that observation about my interns having never heard about Fayetteville Street projects, Hayti, 147, et cetera, I wonder if just that baseline historical context can help explain some of the current day dynamics, excuse me. And then in terms of action, if you are part of a institution, any type of beloved community institution, definitely check out CAN and give us a try if you'd like, because I think one of the things that's really important to me is for people to see themselves in organizing, no matter what their background is or what they do. I think sometimes that people think to be an organizer, you just, I don't know, wake up punching in the air every morning. But one of the joys of my work have been seeing people bring their full selves to the work. So no matter if you're a statistician or a general contractor or a microbiologist or you have a food truck, whatever, seeing a place for yourself in the work has been really has been really important to me.

Tinu Diver ([01:19:14](#)):

And so I think in terms of action, I would say follow your curiosity. Like if you are interested in housing, maybe sit in on the next DHA board meeting or committee meeting, or maybe sit in on the next city council meeting and just observe and see what's going on. Have a phone, I feel like phone calls are so radical right now because everything's on Zoom.

Michael Betts II ([01:19:39](#)):

You are not joking.

Tinu Diver ([01:19:40](#)):

Man, this stuff, I can get responses to you when I call people not that I'm like, oh, I'm just going to call you from now on. Email is a black hole. So it's like, yeah, I emailed you about that. They're like, yeah, yeah. I haven't seen it yet. Let me just go, let me just follow up. And then in an hour I'm like, oh, look at this. But yeah, inviting someone into a conversation about their experience, whether it's someone who's on the board of commission, the DHA board of commissioners, or on the affordable housing bond implementation committee, or maybe one of the members of the racial equity task force, one of your elected or appointed officials, one of your neighbors that you know is really involved in things going on in the community, your roommate, assuming that you like your roommate. Well, even if you don't like your roommate, you'll figure it out.

Tinu Diver ([01:20:35](#)):

Again, a lot of people see CAN's work as the 600 people in a large, usually church or sanctuary or something or a temple. But none of that happens without the one-on-one, that foundational just one-on-one conversations, meetings, understanding who people are, understanding their stories, understanding how we're connected even though we think we're so different. We couldn't have anything in common. I'm always amazed. One of the things that I've learned in documentary work that serves me in organizing is this whole thing about suspending judgment. And I feel like there've been some I reflect on all these relational meetings that I've had where I go in judging, making certain assumptions, and by the end of it I'm like, oh my God, I had no idea.

Tinu Diver ([01:21:35](#)):

And I think also the most important relational meeting that you have is the ones you have with yourself. And so I think all the outer work and outer change that you want is great, but understanding who you are and what your self interest is? And who you are, where did you come from, who did you come from? How have you been framed, how do you show up in the world? What's important to you? What you care about? What makes you angry? What grieves you, why? That's the most important foundational part of the work.

Michael Betts II ([01:22:23](#)):

No, that makes sense. That makes sense. Well, Tinu, it's been an absolute pleasure to have you today.

Tinu Diver ([01:22:31](#)):

Thank you for the invitation.

Michael Betts II ([01:22:34](#)):

Anything else you might want to steer us toward, elaborate on, or generally talk about regarding Durham CAN's initiatives towards affordable housing or things that you think that the city of Durham or Duke University should be doing in general? Is there anything else you can think of that you want to share with us?

Tinu Diver ([01:22:48](#)):

So there's three things, actually, and I think they came up because I'm thinking about ... So I became a lead in, let's see, November, 2020 or excuse me, November, 2019, this whole year changed. It's got me mixed. I'm still catching up on my language.

Michael Betts II ([01:23:11](#)):

You good.

Tinu Diver ([01:23:11](#)):

We began 2020 being a year of disorganizing and reorganizing CAN. So one of the things that we teach is all organizing is disorganizing and reorganizing. And in light of the transition of my leadership, the specific emphasis that we're having around race, racism, whiteness, and white supremacy, and just some shifts that we want to make in the organization, we had ventured out and then COVID. And so it was then this meta just organizing and reorganizing, because we were doing it as an organization. And then we were figuring out, how do you organize in a pandemic, and when so much of our work is visceral and in person and heart to heart and soul to soul and eyeball to eyeball in terms of connecting with people.

Tinu Diver ([01:24:05](#)):

And I think we've adapted and we've pivoted and I think considering what happened in 2020, it's actually been amazing. And what I'm thinking about is just, Durham, the County and the city have this recovery and renewal task force. And those two words came up in terms of, what are we going to look like as a community post COVID in terms of our renewal and our recovery? And several of our clergy leaders have been involved in the task force, as well as a specific kind of clergy focus group that's focused on houses of worship and how they're trying to navigate all things COVID.

Tinu Diver ([01:24:49](#)):

And as I think about that, what I would like to see happen in terms of CAN in the city and Durham are around three things. One is just thinking about how COVID ... So we launched the jobs and living wage campaign a few years ago. And again, that was really focused on Duke, particularly being the largest employer in the area, as well as other large employers, employers who have gotten taxes incentives in Durham to lower the barriers to employment, to folks facing the highest barriers usually those who have some type of criminal record.

Tinu Diver ([01:25:29](#)):

And thinking about the domino effect of COVID on just unemployment and on that campaign, thinking about what it would look like to build a jobs movement and to see people who are from Durham, educated in Durham be ... I guess, zooming back out, I'm thinking about a talk I heard years ago in Boston, and this woman made this comment about how she felt that exclusion was the driver of most

conflict in the world. And it was this really salient and poignant observation. And so I thought about how Durham B, to say Durham bees.

Michael Betts II ([01:26:18](#)):

It is true. Durham bees.

Tinu Diver ([01:26:19](#)):

But how do we ensure with the growth, with the forward movement, with the development that we're including as many folks as we can. And seeing that we have talent here. Seeing that we have people here. It's not about someone coming here from Silicon Valley with their tech company. It might be, but we can also support and facilitate that here with folks already in our community. So, sorry, there's a little bit of a rabbit trail.[crosstalk 01:26:56]

Tinu Diver ([01:26:56](#)):

So building a job movement, creating a different way to approach evictions which is another issue that as I mentioned based off of-

Michael Betts II ([01:27:10](#)):

Because of [crosstalk 01:27:10]

Tinu Diver ([01:27:10](#)):

Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's an issue that's important to Congressman Price. It's an issue that CAN's been working on. We started a court watching campaign in the fall of 2019, and that's been, I believe the Mayor has referred to evictions as a crisis in Durham and folks like legal aid and the humans rights committee of the city have looked at and researched and wrote about that.

Tinu Diver ([01:27:32](#)):

And then the third thing is the redevelopment of the fable Fayetteville Street projects. So how do we understand and center the community in the plans for that property and that redevelopment. And so I think, and again, going back to I think, a prior answer about the bond, how do we move that up in the priority list for redevelopment.

Michael Betts II ([01:28:08](#)):

Wow. And it's fantastic though that you ... That's a very succinct. These are three major things that we're not doing. If we're not committing to making actions happen in these spaces, we're going to be having this same conversation at the end of the five years. We're going to be doing the same thing over and over again and it's going to end up injuring further more people in have a larger impact. We're identifying where the beginning of the inception point of the ripple, and there's a way to disrupt. There's a defined way to disrupt, and these are the things you've laid out.

Tinu Diver ([01:28:48](#)):

Yeah. And I think what we've noticed up to this point, action teams have kind of worked. And they were just doing their own thing, but I think this past year in particular, we've just seen this growing shift, these tectonic plates where our action teams have just seen all the interconnections and how the jobs and the housing and the Fayetteville Street and evicted, it's all tied in and it's all connected.

Tinu Diver ([01:29:13](#)):

And again, going back to the theme of the conference and space, I think these are visual and real representations of how space in Durham can be more just. One last story: I was going back to the eviction court the last time we were there. I want to say it was September maybe, but they've had new COVID protocols and so they have time session where they only let a certain number of people at a time. And I remember we were we're court watching and I walked into a courtroom and the judge looked at me and she says, "What time is your case?" Or "What time is your hearing?" And I'm like, who's she talking to?

Tinu Diver ([01:29:59](#)):

Obviously she was talking to me, and the reason why is because I look like the vast majority of people getting evicted in Durham, I'm a black woman. And so I think when you either, particularly if you've not been evicted, experienced an eviction, have someone that you love and close to you that's gone through that process, I think a lot of people have no idea. But again, this is a question of, is it in our interest as a community to ensure that we go about what is a legal process, but do it in a way that, again, affirms folks' humanity and their dignity.

Michael Betts II ([01:30:50](#)):

Tinu, thank you so much for joining us today. We are eternally grateful to both you and all of your interns and the folks that Durham CAN. We will make sure that for our listeners, that your information is available for them to be able to find you quickly via your website. Is there any other contact information you want to drive folks to?

Tinu Diver ([01:31:13](#)):

We're Durham CAN on all the social media; so Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and then our website. Yeah. That's about it.

Michael Betts II ([01:31:25](#)):

Awesome. Well, thank you so much. Again, you've been listening to the Space of Justice. I am Michael Betts, and we will see you next time.

Michael Betts II ([01:31:40](#)):

Thank you so much for joining us for this episode of Space of Justice. If you like what you heard today, be sure to stop by sites.duke.edu/justspace for the recording of this past year's Just Space Week, Duke University's conference centered entirely on the conversation of spatial justice. This year Just Space was focused entirely on anti-racism equity and connecting Duke to Durham in meaningful and just collaborations. Head over to sites.duke.edu/justspace/conference to check out the recordings today.

Michael Betts II ([01:32:15](#)):

A very special thank you to Durham CAN executive director, Tinu Diver, for taking time to talk us through the city of Durham's \$95 million housing bond and how both Duke University and the citizens of Durham can show up to support affordable housing initiatives for all of those within the community. If you would like to find out more about the work of the Durham Congregations Associations and Neighborhoods organization, you can find them at www.durhamcan.org. Again, that's [durhamcan.org](http://www.durhamcan.org).

Michael Betts II ([01:32:49](#)):

Today's episode was logistically possible because of the brilliance of Elmer Orellana, Paige Vinson, and Lindsey Miller Furiness. Our web presence is possible only because Tara Carty makes it so. Francesqa Santos and Matt Starke are the genius minds behind our assessments and analytics. To the fearless podcast team of editors and collaborators that consist of Samaiyah Faison, Ling Jin, Esra Uzun Mason and Brian Lackman, as well as the Just Space conference chair, who's pulling double duty, Kevin Erixson, thank you.

Michael Betts II ([01:33:20](#)):

Thanks to Marcy Edenfield's crew for making sure our equipment specs are just right. Just Space conference marketing is handled by the alumna Sarah Neff. And Sam Babbs keen eye keeps us all looking perfect and synchronized. Kathryn Lester-Bacon and Victoria Krebs ensure our online learning design is tight. Jeff Nelson and Jeanna McCullers are the tireless captain and first mate of this Just Space committee ship.

Michael Betts II ([01:33:48](#)):

Tasha Carty is kind enough to ensure that the office of student affairs at Duke University keeps us, the Just Space crew going one more turn around the sun. Our theme song [inaudible 01:34:01] is by Lassana Diabate. Engineering and mix of today's episode like always is by yours truly. Be sure to check back every Tuesday for the next episode. A special non-sponsored shout out to Zencastr for making it possible for our team to do remote recording sessions safely while in an international health crisis.

Michael Betts II ([01:34:21](#)):

Please remember to continue to wear your mask, wash your hands, and although the vaccines are here, we are not quite at the finish line. Also be sure to get all your questions answered so when it's your turn to get your shot, you can. It's been a pleasure to spend some time with you today and I can't wait to see you next week. As always, I'm Michael Betts, II and this has been Space of Justice.

PART 4 OF 4 ENDS [01:34:49]