

Scott Andree Bowen Interview by Ian Davis-Huie

Tue, 8/4 4:24PM 54:09

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, food pantry, kids, winston, pandemic, church, food, salem, community, important, talking, local, food insecurity, poverty, roles, work, youth, protests, classroom, grew

SPEAKERS

Scott Andree Bowen, Ian Davis-Huie

- I** Ian Davis-Huie 00:03
Hello, this is Ian Davis-Huie with the COVID-19 Oral History project. I'm here today talking to Mr. Scott Andree Bowen. We're talking today over Zoom. I'm at home in Winston-Salem. He is at home in Winston-Salem, and it is July 23rd, 2020. We're talking about the COVID-19 pandemic and how it intersects with issues of racial justice. How are you doing today, Mr. Andree Bowen?
- S** Scott Andree Bowen 00:32
I'm doing well, Ian. You can just call me "Scott", make it easy.
- I** Ian Davis-Huie 00:35
All right. Thank you, Scott.
- S** Scott Andree Bowen 00:37
I'm excited, I'm excited to be doing this. Thanks for having me.



Ian Davis-Huie 00:39

Oh, we're thrilled to have you. I sent you a Consent form earlier in the week. Did you have a chance to look at that?



Scott Andree Bowen 00:47

I did, I, I looked it over, I got it, I looked it over and I read it and I give consent.



Ian Davis-Huie 00:52

Thank you very much, thank you very much. All right, let's get into it: um, first question, I just wanted to kind of ask you a little bit of basic stuff about how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted your life. So how, how would you say it's, it's impacted your life?



Scott Andree Bowen 01:12

Um, the biggest impact for me, (so I work at a church here in town, very close to Wake Forest. I'm the Director of the youth and a food pantry there), professionally, it has impacted me by, I have not been able to really physically interact with the youth of the church. I've done a few things here and there where I've gone to visit them, but nothing substantial. We've had to cancel three, or I had two mission trips planned that were canceled and we had a, a long retreat that was planned that was canceled. So for, on that end, it was, it was, it's been kind of hectic. For my, the food pantry side, it's also been pretty hectic because we are normally located in the basement of the church and we didn't want to have any kind of negative impact on people's health, so we decided not to hold our food pantry downstairs where we normally have it. But we knew that people were still going to be in need; just because there's a sickness and a pandemic going on around doesn't stop hunger. So we moved everything outside so we're doing a, a drive-thru model where we set up everything outside; we kind of have some prepackaged meals, or prepackaged groceries on hand. And so we've been doing that since, pretty much since the whole thing started and, as of now, we're scheduled to go at least until October. We've, we agreed that we wouldn't go back downstairs until Phase Three happened but we are also lining up with our church; we also agreed that we wouldn't go back downstairs until church, the worship, and the services start actually happening, happening inside. And we are, we've been doing everything online and actually, next week, we're actually starting worship outside. So we'll, we'll start going inside once everything is, is kind of inside. So that's professionally, you know, I've got two kids and a wife who's a, who works in education so that, that's been a, a difference, having the kids, the kids around. We've all learned to work from home, teach from home, setting up little education centers for my kids and whatnot, so but that's about it. That's, that's been my major differences in

life.



Ian Davis-Huie 03:47

I'm glad to hear you're taking it seriously and everything and taking the appropriate precautions.



Scott Andree Bowen 03:51

Yeah, yeah, yeah.



Ian Davis-Huie 03:53

Yeah. Are you, how is the drive-by? Have, have you found success with that, doing the drive-by food pantry?



Scott Andree Bowen 04:01

Yes, so we, (this might be something we get into later), but we average, the, the food pantry on average would see, before the pandemic hit, would average about 100 families a week. And I would say the first month, two months, we saw an actual increase of people come in through a week. Probably a combination of a lot of people were being laid off because of the, the, the shutdown, our, our normal customers were coming through. We actually lost customers because there's a the, the bus route that goes along the church has been changed so there's no actual bus stop in front of the church anymore. So people, I guess haven't really been coming as, as much, but there has definitely been an increase of customers and, but, but I'd say in the past month or so, it's been actually kind of dying down back to where we were. We, we, like I said, we had like, a 15% increase, kind of average those first two months, but now we're kind of getting back into almost normal, seeing about 100 families a week. But I would say it's been pretty successful. We've had to kind of redesign everything. I normally, when, in normal times, I was kind of a "behind the scenes" manager; I would get volunteers to come in, mostly senior citizens who would come in and work. And since the biggest, kind of the biggest population of people who were really having a negative impact with COVID were senior citizens, I asked all my, my volunteers to stay away. I took on a larger role where I, I would, I'm like, basically checking people in, putting the food in their car for them, and then I would have one to two volunteers kind of in the back, getting everything ready, putting it down in front of me, and I, I, I'd put it away. But I would say it's been pretty successful, pretty well received, both with the people who shop there, but also from people who know what we do in the community in the church. So it's been, it's been very, very well received and very, very

much needed. So, yeah.

I Ian Davis-Huie 06:26
That's terrific that it's been a success.

S Scott Andree Bowen 06:28
Yeah.

I Ian Davis-Huie 06:29
Yeah. So your title: Director of Youth and Food Pantry Ministries at Maple...

S Scott Andree Bowen 06:35
Yes.

I Ian Davis-Huie 06:36
...Springs United Methodist Church.

S Scott Andree Bowen 06:37
Right.

I Ian Davis-Huie 06:38
Was, so could you go a little bit, (you you touched on this already), are there any more roles and responsibilities to that job other than what you've already talked about?

S Scott Andree Bowen 06:47
So my, my time is split. Before I was, before I came on the church, those two roles were separate. And I think that the church was trying to find a way to pare down both roles and see if they can be done, kind of combined. So my role is I'll spend three days a week or so, or two and a half days a week, really focusing on the food pantry, volunteer recruitments, making sure that everything's in stock, developing and maintaining the relationship with Second Harvest Food Bank of Northwest North Carolina, making sure that the bills are

paid, developing a vision of what everything's going to look like if something's not working or something could work better, developing a way to, to make it better, working with the church staff to kind of work on times because we, we do maintain a large space in the church so we don't want to like, take up too much space and, and get in the way of any other ministries that might be there. But most, my, my biggest my two biggest roles are, for that are volunteer recruitment and, and maintaining relationships with Second Harvest Food Bank. As for the, my youth position, that runs anything from, uh, checking in on the youth, teenagers, seeing how they, they are, was spiritually, physically, mentally seeing how their, their life is, checking on their, on their schoolwork, their family life, um, teaching Bible study once a, once or twice a week, planning retreats, planning trips, (I like to do a lot of local mission work in the community, so like, for teacher workdays, instead of the kids just taking the day off, they'll come to church and we'll go out in the community, go to like, to Crisis Control, do some work, go to Second Harvest, do some work, try to, try to teach them about the issues going on around, in the community so that they can have, be aware of it but also see what they can do to make it a better place to live). Let's see what else...that's kind of the, the main things that I do. Also kind of looking at volunteer recruitment, um, but that's the kind of main gist of it.

I Ian Davis-Huie 09:15
That's great.

S Scott Andree Bowen 09:16
And then any, and then anything else they, the, the pastor says, "hey, I need you to do", so.

I Ian Davis-Huie 09:21
That's awesome. Do you have a sense of, (I know you were talking about how it's, the pandemic's affected the people you work with as the, the Food Pantry Minister)...

S Scott Andree Bowen 09:35
Right.

I Ian Davis-Huie 09:36
...do you have a sense of how the, the pandemic is affecting the youth you work with?

S

Scott Andree Bowen 09:41

Yeah, so, they are all out of school. Some, for, for those of you who aren't aware, majority, well I guess the majority of my kids are in public school and ranging from sixth grade to seniors in high school, and they had to do online learning, but it was kind of a, if you do it, you will, kind of, we're only kind of going to judge you on your grade up to a certain point and then that's kind of, pretty much the rest of year. Some of those kids took it really seriously and, (especially the kids who were kind of in AP courses and trying to earn those extra credits, they maintained and worked hard), and then there were some kids who, when school was out, they were done for the year, and that include, and that included a couple of seniors who were like, "alright, I'm going to graduate, I'm done." And, but they're, you know, got, some of those kids are going to college next year and they're, they're great kids. Some of the kids' parents have kind of allowed more lenient rules so I've seen pictures on Instagram of kids going to the beach and having fun, going to other people's houses, but I, I think I have some other parents who take it very seriously and their kids haven't really left the house except for with them in the past five months or four months. Some of the kids are, you know, going crazy because they've been having to stay home so I try to kind of reach out to them and check in on them. I'm a very, I, I encourage people to complain and unleash the, the, the things that are bothering them because if, if you just keep it all pent up inside, you're just gonna get frustrated. So if you're having to live with your brothers and sisters and you don't see them all the time and your moms and dads, that can get annoying and, and especially for, you know, a middle school or high schooler, so I try to just check in on them, see what's going on, allow them the the safe space to speak freely. Unfortunately, I actually have had a few kids who have actually have had some pretty tragic things happen in the past couple weeks, a, a couple of months. So trying to socially distance myself but also be there for them, and it's, it's been a, it has been a challenge for the kids, but I think they're, they're becoming adjusted. I think there are some kids who are not excited about the first quarter of next year, the public school kids, but I can think of maybe one or two who are pretty excited, so.

I

Ian Davis-Huie 12:28

What's it like being a kind of spiritual or religious kind of guidance to these kids at this time?

S

Scott Andree Bowen 12:35

This time? Man, that's a great question. So I actually got into this because when I was when I was in high school and middle school, you know, it's not the easiest, it's not always the easiest time for everybody and there's a lot of, uh, lot of things out there that can draw people in and I was easily tempted into some things and I had some throughout high

school, and once I kind of got to that point where I was kind of say, getting clean, I relied on the guidance and mentorship of somebody else. And that person kind of shaped me and I said, "well, okay, if this person did this for me, I want to be that for somebody else." So that's kind of where I came in, that's, and so it is at those moments where the kid can be free enough, and not view me as the adult in the room but as someone who's there to actually, who cares about them; once we break that, once we break that barrier, it's, it's a really good relationship. There's some kids who I've known for four years who, all they ever do is look at me as the adult in the room and, but there's some kids who, who pretty quickly are like, "this guy, this guy's here because he generally cares and I can say whatever I want and not feel like I'm going to get in trouble with him." So yeah, that, that's, that, that's, that's the best part of the job, is the, is the kind of like that relationship building. As a Christian, it's important for me to teach the Bible and to teach the lessons of Jesus but if you're a kid who is not understanding life in general the, the, it's important to teach both the spiritual aspect and the life aspect at the same time, so.



Ian Davis-Huie 14:31

How's that been? Have you been doing it over Zoom or over phone? Have you been able to contact...



Scott Andree Bowen 14:35

Oh, man, so, what's, what's, what's funny is that...



Ian Davis-Huie 14:38

...any of the kids in the past few months?



Scott Andree Bowen 14:40

I tried to do some Bible studies, so before Zoom, (so zoom was nothing, I had no idea what Zoom was back in, or in, back in February), but the, when we first shut down I wanted to continue kind of doing stuff so I did like, Instagram Live uh, Bible studies and kids were just like, typing me messages and it was lame, it was so lame. And then, but then, the church got Zoom and so we started doing Zoom stuff and that, I mean, that's been as good as it can be. I've been going to, like, I would schedule kind of hangout times their front yards. So I, I go to the kid's house and just, we sit, we get some chairs and sit outside, just talk for 30 minutes or so, catch up, see how they're doing. Instagram, uh, most of the kids are on Instagram, so just sending them the DMs and just, uh, just check in, see how they're doing, what's going on. If I got a couple of kids who really like memes, so if I see a really funny

meme, I'll just like, and I'll like, it makes me think of them, I'll just send them a meme. And that's it, it's just simple things like that. Like I said, there there has been a couple of like, there was one incident where, where one of the youth, her brother passed away from a car accident. So like, trying to be there for that person, and, across the social boundaries has been, been good because this person feels comfortable talking over text so it was, it was easy for us to kind of maintain that relationship and she felt comfortable like, really opening up about her struggles with the passing, so that was, that's been good. So Zoom's been good. Instagram instant messenger has been good, and then just the, the traditional just see each other face-to-face has been good, so.



Ian Davis-Huie 16:39

That's terrific that you're able to stay connected. I think that's, that's awesome. So I want to switch gears a little bit.



Scott Andree Bowen 16:47

Sure.



Ian Davis-Huie 16:47

You work, you work as the Vice Chair of the Urban Food Policy Council...



Ian Davis-Huie 16:52

...is that right?



Scott Andree Bowen 16:52

Yes.



Scott Andree Bowen 16:53

Yes.



Ian Davis-Huie 16:54

And you also served for a while as the head of the Breakfast in Classroom Task Force on Mayor Allen Joines' Think Orange campaign?

S Scott Andree Bowen 17:03
Yes.

I Ian Davis-Huie 17:04
Could you talk a little bit about the roles and responsibilities kind of associated with those jobs?

S Scott Andree Bowen 17:10
Sure. So I'll, I'll take the Urban Food Policy Council first. Urban Food Policy Council was I believe the brainchild of now Mayor pro tem, D.D. Adams, and, and also a combination with some other local food, kind of food and equality advocates. They really pushed for this to be a thing; there are other communities who have food councils in the area. So as a, as a, as, both with a combination of community leaders and, and her support, kind of a calling went out for people who work, who had a passion for working to fight food insecurity. I saw it come across a friend of mine who his, his main calling is food insecurity, guy named Marcus Hill. He like, shared on Facebook and so I thought "wow, that looks, that looks great. I might give that a shot." Applied, I got in it, and we've been working on, our, our main task is, again, just looking at ways to fight food insecurity in the city. We, our, our main task are looking at policy of the city and how it is either hurting or helping food insecurity. So one of the things we've looked at and worked hard on is urban farming. Urban farmers are people who take lots of land, whether they've been abandoned or they're their own property and, and we'll plot down a, a farm there. Small, little, just a few, a few, few small things as a, as this very, very small farm. And this is usually kind of in the inner core of the city. Mostly, most of urban farmers I know, kind of live on the, the east side, and east side of the northeast side of Winston-Salem. So we are, we've been looking at how, ways of how to help these urban farmers grow products, grow their products, and also how to sell their product. So one of the things that we've, we've been looking at is the best way for them to sell. So there are what's called pop-up vendors that you have to get a license for and if we're trying to better someone's economy, why make it more difficult for for someone to make money? So we, we're looking at ways to, to make it, these application processes, so if you want to have like a little stand up at your house or on the side of the road somewhere, having an easy way to access that so you could sell the product and make money but also feed your family. Um, looking at the local farmers markets here in town. We, we, we looked at the, if you're, if you ever drive down Highway 52, the Liberty Street markets right over there. For a long time, it kind of sat vacant, didn't really have any kind of, any kind of market going on at all. So actually, starting last week, (last Friday?), last Friday, we, we got, we got a grant so we are, we're opening up that markets to local urban farmers to come and sell. So that's something that we, we are

working on with a, with a collaboration of the local urban farmers; we didn't want to do anything that they did not want to do so we actually, (there's a gentleman named Michael Banner who, he is a local urban farmer and very vocal, very passionate about this cause), and so, because we had his guidance and leadership, we didn't want to do anything that was kind of against what they wanted. A lot, a lot of times, people will, in organizations will come in and do what they think is right, which may not be right for the community. So we have buy, we try to have buy-in from the local people so that, that is kind of a major thing that we, we did with urban farmers. But other things that we did was if you've been to the, the fairgrounds Farmers Market recently, they've done a lot of revamping how it looks, both the exterior but also the interior and that is something that we did. We, we, we went there, we toured, we saw, we talked to a lot of vendors and we basically wrote a proposal requests to city council and, and made recommendations and they accepted it. And so all the changes that you see basically came from these proposals that we wrote. I, this is my second, this is my third year, yeah, this is my third year being on the council and I think my second year as the Vice Chair; it's on, basically if the, if the President's not there, I, I call the minutes. There's no glory to it. And then as for the Breakfast in Classroom thing, that is kind of an offshoot of the Urban Food Policy Council. So Mayor Joines, the mayor of Winston-Salem, Allen Joines, 2018, yeah, wanted to really focus on childhood hunger and I attended some workshops and in the past for childhood hunger, and as a No, No Kid Hungry NC is, is, is a workshop that I went to, and they are big advocates in what's called Breakfast in Classroom. And so I started to research it, understand what it was, the benefits of it, pros and cons and when the mayor put the, the Think Orange campaign together in 2018, I was asked to kind of head up this Breakfast in Classroom initiative. So what I did with the, the team was went to local elementary schools, there were a handful of schools that utilize Breakfast in Classroom, (and what Breakfast in Classroom is is, so a lot of kids go to, who live in poverty and, come from food insecure homes. A lot of times the only food that they might eat is at school. So at these local schools that are like, that's your your Title One schools, your high poverty schools, we wanted to move breakfast from the cafeteria and put it into the, the classroom. So make it like, a part of the homeroom class, the very first part, thing of the day, because a lot of kids were not taking advantage of these free breakfasts. And breakfast is important for a growing mind and a growing body and if you're hungry, and you're not able to concentrate because of that hunger, which I, I have seen, as I was a former teacher, food and breakfast is important for that. So having that energy, having that, that, some kind of health nutrition in there. So we wanted to take it away from the cafeteria and put it into a classroom.), so there were a handful of schools that did that and we wrote a policy recommendation to the school board, Winston-Salem/Forsyth County school board, and presented it to them in May of 2019 to expand Breakfast in Classroom. The school board liked it, but their main focus at the time, that, they had just lost the school superintendent, so their main focus at the time was to find a new superintendent. Once they did that, I went, kind of give a quick, had a quick

conversation with the new superintendent, but then, by that time, COVID-19 happened. Like, it kind of like, all kind of snowballed where it hasn't really had the impact it could be, could have, but with the, the way we've been working and working with the school board and, and the school nutrition department, other schools have taken on this, this, this Breakfast in Classroom program and it's been successful. A lot of schools have, you know, seen progress in their school, and behavior, and, and, and, and behavior and tardiness, (tardiness is a big thing in school with a lot of poverty). So they've seen an increase, or decrease in tardiness, an increase in, in positive behavior and then, and grades have slowly begun to improve. So yeah, very proud of that.



Ian Davis-Huie 26:37

As well you should be. So it sounds like you've got your hand in a lot of local food policy and I'm, I'm curious: is food policy changing at all to react to the COVID-19 pandemic?



Scott Andree Bowen 26:51

Whew. Yes, so um, (that's a great question, too), um, hmm, I can speak on, I can't speak for the city because they, they, (well, that's not true, I can) they, so the city has done, does a really good job of, within the rec centers, the parks and rec centers, they will, they will help provide food for people who, who are, who are hungry, if they are food insecure. And then the school, the school district, they don't, they also did a really good job of putting together meals at the local schools. They have a food truck that will go out. So both the city and the school board have done a good job of, of making sure food was available. When it comes to policy, not so much, they haven't really done anything. Then they haven't really, and they also haven't really focused on like, changing anything, but, but we're always, we're always going to continue to work towards that. Their...



Ian Davis-Huie 27:55

Uh.



Scott Andree Bowen 27:55

...their, their main concern, their, their main concern is the, the immediate need not the looking-in-the-future need.



Ian Davis-Huie 28:03

What do you think about the looking-in-the-future need? Do you have any thoughts as to

changes you'd like to see that you would think would be good progress?

S

Scott Andree Bowen 28:12

Oh, man, that's a, that's a big question. So I will, I, okay, so, um, I don't know if you've ever seen this but, (three years ago? Yeah.), this guy from Harvard, (I don't remember his name off the top my head), but was, is an economics professor and he did a study on economic mobility in, across the nation. He looked at all the, all the counties, all the parishes, all the reservations, any kind of, kind of entity that uh, municipal entity, and they, they ranked it on the economic mobility of its citizens. Forsyth County ranked third from the bottom in the nation in economic mobility for its residents, alright? That's embarrassing. We should all be ashamed of ourselves. We have all these great things. Wake Forest, you're a part of, Salem College, Baptist Hospital, Novant Health, all these amazing organizations and corporations and we are still lagging behind in economic mobility for our citizens. So that, that is a major issue for our county and our region. Some things, some things that I like that, that the local governments that are, are doing: so last year or early this year, the Winston-Salem/Forsyth County schools and Winston-Salem partnered together and any student who lives in a home with poverty, they would get free education at Forsyth Tech. That's a great start. If, if someone feels like they want to go to college, that's a great step for them at a, at a free cost. A second thing they did was any student who, and again, another partnership with the, with the school board and the city, anybody who was in school, in high school and wanted to have a paid internship of a job, like, let's say they may not feel like going to college, and they want to have a, a, a career in some kind of, of other trade, they would get paid to work on an internship so they're making money but also learning a skill on a possible job career. So those are some two really good things that the city and and the county have done. There are, there are plenty of things that I think that we can do. We need to improve the, the, the, the transportation issues. We need to look at health care and that's unfortunately that's not a thing that we can all, we can't really do here as a local level but a more of a national level. We need to look at the the environmental impact of, of the things going on like NPR released a poll or a thing last, early this year where in North Carolina, Winston-Salem is one of the worst in the state, we have like, the second worst air quality in the state. So we are, we are providing bad health for our citizens. We, we talked about food insecurity. There's a term that's thrown out a lot in food insecure places called "food deserts." A "food desert," by definition by the USDA, is any area with, with 500 residents who don't have access to food, to healthy food within half a mile of their home. Winston-Salem has way too many areas that are, that are deemed as "food deserts." Now, I mentioned a guy named Michael Banner earlier and I always like to give him credit for teaching this word. Winston-Salem does not have a "food desert" problem, Winston-Salem has a "food apartheid" problem and there's a major difference. And he, as he so beautifully explains it, a desert is a natural thing. A

desert just happens. Our food, our food problem does, is not a desert. It was something that was brought on by policy and by the local government and the people. If, if you know the history and the geography well, the city, they have, there's a beautiful, beautiful highway that cuts the city in half up Highway 52. If you're not familiar with the term "redlining", "redlining" is a, is basically drawing up an area where you want the, the minorities to be and you put them there and you just kind of separate them. That's exactly what the Highway 52 did. Before highway 52 was, was here, there was a thriving community of our, of our Black citizens. And once they were cut off from downtown, it just kind of started going downhill after that. So that, that idea of a "food apartheid" is a real thing. When there's more kind of Dollar Generals and Dollar Trees in your neighborhood than food resources, that's a problem. So we need to focus on, invest in these communities. So I've lived in, I've lived in Winston-Salem since 2003, started coming around in, around 2000, and I remember what downtown used to look like. Downtown Winston-Salem when I first moved here was a bunch of old shelves, buildings of, of factories and there was nothing really; it's not somewhere you went, it was not a destination you went to. But local businesses, local government, invested in downtown; millions and millions of dollars were invested in this downtown area. And look at it today. It's a beautiful place where people want to go. We need to invest in these communities that are suffering from poverty. The same way we would for downtown. Now, it's important to say that we should invest in these areas, but we also need to make sure that it's an investment that is what the people who live there want. It's not just me throwing money and saying "here's what you're going to do". It's me or us as a, as a population, working with them like "okay, what do you want as a community and how can we help you get it?" We need, we also need to make sure that we're not looking at and, and investing in these things, but also bringing gentrification in. So the people who are trying to support and lift up are eventually gonna have to move out because they can't afford it anymore. We can't allow that to happen. But so I kind of ran off for about 10 minutes there, but those are some ideas. Sorry.



Ian Davis-Huie 35:17

No. No, no, no, that was all fantastic. I, you kind of touched on the next thing I want to talk about. I want to ask, I know you've lived in quite a few different places...



Scott Andree Bowen 35:28

Right.



Ian Davis-Huie 35:29

...in your life: how is Winston-Salem different from those other places with regards to issues of race? I know we were kind of talking a little bit about 52 and that...

S

Scott Andree Bowen 35:40

Sure.

I

Ian Davis-Huie 35:41

...are there any other differences you've noticed in your own experience?

S

Scott Andree Bowen 35:43

Well, so I, I grew up in a military family up until I was seven we moved a bunch of different times. I grew up, I, I lived overseas, I actually lived in Saudi Arabia for three years so there's a difference but I grew up in the coast of North Carolina, and, heavily majority was white, small minority of African-American/Black. And there were, it was, I never say, (this sounds weird), but the, the only time I really saw anybody who wasn't white was when I went to high school or when I went to high school or middle school. There was a handful, but they, kind of in their own neighborhoods and their our regions. That might, I think that might be a little bit different now from where I used to live, but just growing up, I remember it was kind of a very rural area and just very heavily white-influenced area. I know that we've, the Confederate statues have been on the forefront of the news recently and I think earlier this week, the, where I grew up, my hometown, the county commissioners had to vote to, whether they should or should not remove one of the Confederate statues. They voted against it so it stays, so, but, so that's, that's kind of a, it's hard for me to, to answer that because it's such a difference. That we have a large population of Hispanics here, a larger population of Blacks here, from where I grew up, so it's, it's, it's a hard, it's a hard question for me to really answer well, but yeah.

I

Ian Davis-Huie 37:29

Yeah. Well, I get what you were talking about, 100%. It seems like all the work you've talked about, from the Think Orange stuff, your work at the church, and then the Urban Food Policy Council, all sort of revolves around fighting poverty and fighting, you know, food inequities and things...

S

Scott Andree Bowen 37:37

Right.



Ian Davis-Huie 37:42

...of that nature. Do you think, are issues of racial injustice visible in your work and kind of relatable to the kind of work that you do? Or...



Scott Andree Bowen 38:04

Yeah, so we, we serve, in, I'll speak food pantry-wise, the food pantry, um, I would say the majority of the people who come to the food pantry are a mix of Hispanic/Latinx and our Black community. We have a couple of other people from other countries and whatnot, like the Eastern European but most, majority of the people are, are Black or Latinx people. So, because my, the, the church I belong to, the denomination I belong to has a long history of working towards equality in, in race relations. There are, but because we are the church's main role is to, is to look at the spiritual life, (I, I, I'm speaking for my church only), there, there's a, there are a few people who, who are, who are involved with local race relation things. But the, our biggest role is, is that, is kind of the food pantry. And that's, and because of my work in the food pantry, that is what led me to working in the Think Orange and the Urban Food Policy Council because I think, I think food pantries are needed but food pantries are just a small BAND-AID on a larger problem. Like, we're, we're just giving away food, we need to look at systemic change instead of just giving people things. I'm all for giving people things. It's needed, these programs are definitely needed, but I guess looking at, also looking at it politically, I think that our government typically looks at handout programs instead of looking at things of how to change programs. I support both, I support, I think we definitely need to have those welfare programs, but we also need to look at, "okay, how can we change things?" And we don't want to change those things, we want to keep them as they are, because we want to keep people at, where they are. That's my opinion, at least. But back to your question: so the work that I do at the pantry led me to working more with these, these race relations things because I saw the problem of poverty, I saw the problem of the poverty in the African-American community and the, in the, in the Hispanic community. And so that's what really led me to work outside the church, because policy and local government is important for those things. Federal Government, president, it's gonna get all the attention. Whoever the president's gonna be in the office, they're always going to be the ones who are, who are the superstars and given the attention, but it's the local government that has the biggest impact on, on your life, in my opinion. We, we, we, you know, we fix the potholes; we, we look at the local fire, fire departments; we look at the police; we look at what the transportation is going to look like; we look at what laws are out there that are impacting the people who are most impacted by it. So, so I went from a faith-based organization to working in local government because of that. So the, the, the work in the church inspired me to get more involved with the local poverty and race relations.

- I Ian Davis-Huie 41:59
That's, that's really interesting. Uh, we've talked obviously a lot about the COVID-19 pandemic. We've talked a lot about race issues, and I kind of want to talk about the intersection of those two now.
- S Scott Andree Bowen 42:16
Sure.
- I Ian Davis-Huie 42:17
Obviously, the Black Lives Matter movement, there's been a huge surge in the past few months, kind of directly following the murders of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor and many others, and you've attended a few of those protests in Winston-Salem, right?
- S Scott Andree Bowen 42:37
I have, yes.
- I Ian Davis-Huie 42:39
Fantastic. How do you reconcile the public health concerns that we're facing right now with the validity and urgency that protest kind of requires? It's sort of necessary to be together but also...
- S Scott Andree Bowen 42:59
Sure.
- I Ian Davis-Huie 42:59
...necessary to not be together.
- S Scott Andree Bowen 43:02
Right.
- I Ian Davis-Huie 43:02

How do you think about that?

S Scott Andree Bowen 43:03

So let me see if I got, um, make sure I get this right: so, so, even though we're in the middle of a pandemic, why is it necessary to, to, to protest? Is that kind of what you're talking...

I Ian Davis-Huie 43:16

Sort of saying, like, "where do you find the balance between the two?"

S Scott Andree Bowen 43:20

Okay, well, it's a good question. So the balance of the two is, alright, so a lot of people, a lot of people I interact with, have an issue with the saying Black Lives Matters. And I always, I always like to say, to try to explain to them, like, "just add the word 'too' at the end, that might help you a little bit." And they still don't get it, they still get angry, that, that's on them. But I've been a supporter of this, this movement for, (this, this year was not my first Black Lives Matters protests), and it's important to have everyone speak with one voice and the, it's important even now to do it because, even though they're not Black, but our Hispanic population in Winston-Salem/Forsyth County has actually been one of the hardest hit people or groups in the COVID-19 pandemic. And that's because their voices are not heard, because they don't have working rights, they, they, they are ignored at work because they work in places that are probably not working in the most upright way of working. So it's important to, to speak out and let the, the, the problems be seen, problems be heard, because lack of health care, lack of food, (a lot of times, people, people who are dying or people who, people who are younger and dying and getting the most sick or people who are not already in the best of health, and one of the problems of food inequality is poor health because you're eating garbage, you're eating processed food, you're eating high sugar foods, and lack of, lack of fresh vegetables. So there's a problem there and the lack of, a lack of resources there.), so because it's, it's easier for, it's, it's, it's not hitting this population as hard because it's hitting like, (oh, sorry, I'm sorry), because it's hitting the population of Hispanics harder, we, we need to, we need to speak up louder. The, the, I went to, I think I've been to three or four of the, of the protests since it all began and every time they went, like, "we, we feel that it's our, our, our right and our need to do this, but we want to do it safely." So like, everyone has to wear masks, if you're going to be here, we're going to wear a mask because we can't be sociable, socially separated, because we're all there, we're all yelling. So wear a mask, be responsible. They have, they always have people there who are kind of acting as medics, handing out water, being respectful to people. Um, one thing I liked, I liked, I actually loved about how the

beginning of the protests began here was they encourage people to act respectful to the community. Like, especially where we were with the main parts of the protests were, were in the black community. We're like, "so why, why hurt the black community more when we're trying to help anyway?" (Let me just get back to your question) So I think it is important to speak up because if we just let it go by, if we just said, "okay, we're gonna wait for the pandemics to stop, to, to speak up," the energy will be lost. And things I think, I've been, I've seen this a long time; I'm 42. I remember, I, the first time I remember what racism was was in 1992 or '91, when Rodney King, who was a guy who was beaten by a bunch of, bunch of cops in LA, riots happened and that was my first time understanding what racism is. So I remember I have a long history of seeing racism and where I grew up had some racism and it seems a little bit different now. I feel like that because of the, of the necessity of having to get it done now, and so many voices coming out against it, I feel like there's a, there's, there's hope that there's going to be a change. And I think because of, of the virus going around and the impact it has in the community, I feel like it makes it even more powerful.



Ian Davis-Huie 48:26

So what, what do you think the legacy of this movement is going to be? I mean, it's being compared to the Civil Rights movement, you know. Like, what, what change or what progress do you want to see locally or nationally? What do you want the legacy to be?



Scott Andree Bowen 48:45

So the legacy I will say is too early to say. You can't, you can never truly understand what a legacy is until you come out of it, few years away. I think that we are, I think the legacy is getting ready to change, unfortunately. I try not to get, I'm going to try not to get too political on this one, but...



Ian Davis-Huie 49:09

If you need to get political, that's, that's completely fine actually.



Scott Andree Bowen 49:13

Okay. Well, with the idea of the president willing to send in troops into areas and of people who were protesting and speaking up and being vocal, I have a feeling this is gonna be a different story now. And the legacy might be a little bit different from when it started. But the main legacy that I guess I can see now is I know a lot of people who have never spoken up about it. I know a lot of people who have never seen racism or try to, to,

I've known who've never tried to see racism, they tried to ignore it. Not once have they spoken up about it, not once have they thought about it. People two months ago had no idea what an antiracist was and I, and it could be, if, if, if we weren't in the middle of a pandemic and the word "unprecedented" wasn't thrown about all over, "antiracist" could be the word of the year, at the end of the year because it's been thrown out so many times. Also, if you haven't read the book *How to Be an Antiracist*, I highly recommend it. It's a great, great book. But a lot of people are paying attention now. That's, that's the legacy that I see now is people who never pay attention are now paying attention and trying to change. People who, who are looking at themselves and seeing what kind of implicit bias they have, and how they can change. People are having that real conversation who've never had that conversation before and that is the legacy that I see now. What we see as legacy moving forward, we'll see.



Ian Davis-Huie 51:03

Well, like you said, you've been going to these rallies for years now; does it frustrate you that it's taken this long for people to, you know, open their eyes and, and try to see the racism?



Scott Andree Bowen 51:20

Yeah. Yeah. I think that with anything that is, has long history like the racism in our country, it's, there's still a power that wants to keep it that way. And there's a lot of miseducation that is keeping it that way. So it's going to take a long time, even if, even if, after all this is said and done things change, there's still going to be a problem. And we're still going to have protests because it's, there's going to be change, but it's not going to be 100% change. As a, as a person of faith, I think of, there's a passage, there's, that I always talk about, run, (I can't remember off the top of my head), but run the race. That, so, you, it's a, "it's a marathon, not a race" kind of thing. We need to look at it; if we're going to have systemic change, change in policy, change in the way people think, it's going to take a long time. And if you think about it, John Lewis, who passed away last Sunday, I mean, it was, he was 80 years old, is that right? I think. And he was 23 when he marched on Washington and spoke at Washington. That was not that long ago in the realm of, in the, in the, in the way the world works. It was not that long ago. We have a living example of a person who was beat trying to rescue people to vote. And there are still people who were part of the beating, who led the beating, who are still alive who are still at influence. And I think that it's going to take a long time and I think the more people so, at, (that's why I think that this, this moment in time provides a little bit of hope), because so many people are opening their eyes. Um, moving forward, hopefully, it'll be a little bit better. And then, unfortunately, next time, it'll be a little bit better after that. So it's going to take a while.



Ian Davis-Huie 53:45

Well, keeping hope, I think, is a great message and I think it's a good message to end on today. I want to thank you, sir, for all that you do in the community, obviously. I can't thank you enough and also I want to thank you for talking to me here today.



Scott Andree Bowen 54:03

Yes, sir.



Ian Davis-Huie 54:04

Yeah, very much appreciate this, so thank you.



Scott Andree Bowen 54:06

It's my pleasure.