

## Shanel Alexander Interview Transcription

April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### **DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Good morning. This is Sylviane Greensword. I am here interviewing Shanel Alexander. Today is April the 30th. The year is 2021 and this interview is part of the Oral History Project for the Race and Reconciliation Initiative. Shanel, thank you for joining us this morning and for taking part in the oral history project.

### **SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Thank you, I'm glad to be here.

### **DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Alright, so let's get right to it. Can you tell us about your childhood? Tell us about where you're from, how you grew up, and all that nice stuff.

### **SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

For sure, so I born and raised LA Los Angeles, CA. My dad is Jamaican my mom American. So, first generation-ish American. But yeah, I grew up pretty, pretty good. No real crazy things until I got a little bit older. But I grew up in like a kind of not-so-great area until I was about five years old and then we moved into a home in Baldwin Hills area. And then that's kind of where I grew up for, until college. But yeah, pretty good childhood went to school, everything like that. Things did change in high school, and my dad went to prison. So, my mom became a single parent and that's kind of what it was. And that was very difficult, of course, going through high school's, like, very important years to not have your dad around, but I mean, got through it. But yeah, other than that, there wasn't really anything else really super interesting. Pretty basic, you know, played sports, things like that, danced, all of that. But yeah, that was my childhood.

### **DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, tell me, as you grew up in California, where you surrounded by other African American children or did you grow up in a multiracial environment? Can you tell us about that?

### **SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah. So, when I first started school, I was more local to my area, so I was mostly around Black kids, a couple of Hispanics, not a ton, but, you know, basically people of color. When I went to middle school, I went to a school, Paul Revere, in Brentwood, CA, which is a predominantly affluent white area. So that's when I kind of got exposed to a lot of different people. I'm pretty sure the schools were predominantly white. Like it was like separated and sectioned off. Of course, at the time you don't really look at things like that. It was very clique-ish and the Black people hung out with the Black people. The white kids hung out with the white kids, and that's

kind of how it was. Of course, I mean you interact with them. But for the most part, when you look around during nutrition and lunch, you see people in their own groups. And then in high school, I went to a school that was pretty balanced in terms of race. So, I believe it was like 30% Black, and 30% Hispanic, 30% white, and then you know the 1% minority, oh well that doesn't make sense, 10% minority, so Native American things like that. But it was, it was pretty mixed. But even though I did again interact with people, they literally used to call parts of campus, so Disneyland was where, like the white kids hung.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Oh, Disneyland?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah, Six Flags was where the black kids hung out. I forget where the Hispanic turn out when they say Knott's Berry Farm. And then there was like, in the cafeteria, just kind of mixed up, but mostly just like Hispanics, for the most part. But it was it was pretty separated again and I remember my senior year, 11th grade year of high school, I had a friend. She was white. She formed a group, Cultural Integration Club, so that we can kind of bridge that gap and be one, where basically we would sit and we would have lunch together and it would be white kids, Black kids, anyone who wanted to come, and we would just kind of talk and share our experiences and things like that, which I think was very helpful. And it did kind of take away from the fact that we were so divided, I guess, without even noticing it, but yeah. That's kind of where I got my exposure to people who didn't look like me and kind of just had to go with it and accept it.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Now you mentioned your father being in prison. Was there any stigma in the term of, I assume your father was Black 'cause you told me he is Jamaican. So, was there any stigma in terms of "oh, you know, black men going to prison" and you being, you know, part of a single parent household?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah. So, I mean honestly, I carried a lot of shame with that just because, you know, I grew up with my dad and then like it was the end of my ninth-grade year when he went. I carried a lot of shame. So, I didn't talk about it a lot, but when it did come up, I mean, it wasn't surprising to a lot of people. It was just kind of like, isn't that normal type of thing, which for me it really wasn't. It really took a toll on me. Yeah, people didn't make a big deal about it, especially people that I was around like it wasn't like, "Oh my gosh, you okay?" It was just kind of like these things happen type of thing, which is unfortunate because I mean, of course, we know that single families exist, but I think it's completely wrong to say that that's the majority, and that's the norm, because it really does affect people and a lot of people don't grow up that way. So, it was just interesting to kind of go through that and see that people didn't really, you know, make a big deal out of it.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah, 'cause, you know that thinking might still exists. Not long ago, a TCU professor talked about being a single parent, and several of her students, I don't know if you heard about it, but similar, her students reacted, and they were surprised, saying, "oh, I'm surprised that you are you a single mom 'cause, you're not Black." So that stigma is still very, very prevalent and the stereotypes still persist to this day. So, before we even get into those trends at TCU, I'd like to know whenever you were in high school, did you already have any idea that you would want to be part of any kind of social justice movement?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I didn't, actually things change for me when I went- I mean, okay, I did, but I didn't. So being a part of the Culture Integration Club and BSU and things like that, you just kind of start to recognize, like, that these things exist. Issues are, you know, issues with things are a thing. I did, let me talk about, yeah, we had a walk out in high school that I was a part of. I spoke at, it didn't have to do with race, it really had to do with like the arts because I went to a school that had a music Academy that I was a part of and they're trying to shut it down. So, you know, we walked out of school and all of that. So that was kind of my first, I guess, protest experience. And I realized then that, especially because I was learning more about my history and I realized it problems existed. I guess I did kind of think about social justice, but I didn't really know my role. And I guess I was a little afraid 'cause, you know, getting arrested. It's not like a small thing. It's not something that you should kind of mess around with unless you're ready for that. Especially when it comes with the movement. So, I think in my head I kind of knew that that was something that I wanted to do. Especially because I thought I was gonna go into law school and things like that, and civil rights attorney. So, it's always been something that's been on my mind. But it wasn't until I was actually going into TCU 'cause I did transfer from my old college, Cal State University, East Bay. I got an internship with a community organizing nonprofit, and that's when things kind of changed for me, even though we didn't really focus – we did because I worked with the Black Jewish Justice Alliance, which kind of bridged the gap between rabbis and Black clergy members. And I mean it had ties for like the Civil Rights movement when, you know, rabbis would come out to assist Dr. King.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Correct.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

And be a part of the movement. So, it was kind of like reinforcing that. And I worked with them and we did protests. But a lot of it was for wages. A lot of Hispanic people in, I mean around the nation, but in Los Angeles, are subject to working on long hours, not getting paid because you know they're afraid, they're undocumented. They're not sure what's gonna happen. They don't know their rights. So that was what I spent my summer doing, fighting on their behalf, making sure that the people that believe they don't have anything have somebody to stand up for them. So that's kind of what put my foot in the door when it came to social justice, with me kind of stepping out of my shell and realizing "okay, I can do this." And then I came to TCU and had an experience and said, "okay, so we're doing this again." So yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So how did you end up at TCU?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Okay, so when my brother actually went to Southern Methodist University, my big brother and my twin brother went there. So, it was a school, I had seen TCU when I was in high school and I was like, okay, I'm not a fan of SMU because I mean, at least at TCU, you walk around and you see People of Color. Well, if you're here long enough, you don't just get off the back. If you're there long enough, you'll see People of Color. I actually, I didn't see that. I saw my brother. I saw a couple of his friends, but like his roommates, everything white. So, I was like, yeah, this isn't the school for me because I need a little bit of diversity. When I went to TCU, I saw that because I was here for a few hours and you know, like that's what they show you. They don't want you to think that it's just, you know, white, but you don't even realize that a lot of times the people that you see are athletes just kind of in their element and you don't even see the actual people who are here because they're busy. Honestly. Or, you know, they're working and things like that because that's what I did at TCU. But yeah, I was transferring. I got into a few schools. I got into NYU. Schools like that, but TCU is only school that offered me scholarship money. So, I was like, well, I guess I'll just go there. And I figured it'll be close to my brothers which, it's not that close because I didn't have a car. But yeah, that's when I just kind of made the decision to go to TCU and...

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

What kind of scholarship did you get?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I got the transfer scholarship because my GPA coming out of East Bay was really high and they like 3.7 something.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay, very good. So, you got recruited for your academic talents, not necessarily for your athletic abilities. Let's say that for the record.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Right (laughs).

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

And what did you know about TCU? So, you know, beside the fact that there was a bit of diversity, did you know about TCU's reputation? Did you know anything about TCU's history, especially its history in regard to race?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

No idea. I didn't actually start knowing about that until on campus and started to look and dig for information. The only thing that I knew was that SMU and TCU were rivals and I would love to go to a school that was against my brother. I feel like and I figured that being in Texas, it probably did have a history, but I just was like, "we'll just see how things figure out." You know, like what my fit is here and everything. And yeah, when I got to the campus a lot just changed like I didn't have those same feelings when I got on campus.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah, reality sets in. What about your peers at East Bay? How did they react when they found out you were transferring to TCU?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

So, I actually had a guy who basically he's grown up with my family. I had recently met him when I went to East Bay and he went there as well. I'm not gonna lie, I wasn't thinking about transferring until the very last minute. I was just gonna do a student exchange program. And I was gonna go into an HBCU, but for political science, the head of the department had told me that if I wanted to go to law school and if I wanted to be taken seriously, I would need to go to a school with prestige. Which now I realized that was horrible advice and it just put me in a lot of debt, honestly. But a lot of them were just kind of like, "why are you leaving? Like, I don't understand. Like you're going to the South and the South is not, like... big?" There was just a lot of questions, a lot of things floating around, people trying to figure out why, and I really couldn't give them a definitive answer other than the fact that I was tired of East Bay and, you know, my brothers were close by. But I mean, I never actually considered the *why*. Why should I pick a school like this and everything like that. So, a lot of them asked those questions for me and I really didn't have a definitive answer.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

What about your mother, did she encourage you to attend?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah. So, my mom, really because my brothers went to SMU, and they didn't really talk about their experience there and their experiences with race until later on. But you know my mom was happier to know that we were all in Texas and she did like the school. So, she was just like, "yeah, go for it, your brothers are there. You'll be good, all of that." And my brother, my twin brother, ended up leaving when I came! He was already, he had decided, he thought that wasn't the school for him. So, it didn't really matter, but yeah, she was happy that we were close.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Are your parents educated?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Both of them, some college.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Some college?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Mhm.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, they have experienced the college life to some degree?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Mhm.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay, alright. So, what did you decide to major in, was your major decided when you were at East Bay? Or did you change afterwards? How did you even decide what you wanted to major in?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yes, so, growing up, the first time I said I wanted to be a lawyer it was like Halloween and I was, you know, we didn't really celebrate Halloween like that growing up. So, I think I had dressed up in a suit. People were like, "what are you?", and I'm like, "oh I'm a lawyer," And we had an Easter play at church, and I was a prosecutor. And I was like, "oh yeah, this is what I wanna do, this is what I wanna be." But when I first went into school, my major was communications. And I think I had chosen that just because it seemed, like I actually didn't know what I wanted to major in. And I just felt like communications, I could figure it out with that. But I literally changed my major after like a couple of weeks to political science because I realized that I was really into politics. I wanted to know more about it, and I was contemplating law school. So, I was like, "yeah, I feel like that's probably the best thing for me." So, a couple weeks after, I just decided on political science because it wasn't too direct with anything, and I didn't think I wanted to be in the criminal justice system. So, I was like, "yeah, political science. And then we'll figure it out from there."

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay. So, tell us about the year 2016. What happened?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah. So, I got to TCU that year. Honestly, the beginning of the year, I don't even remember. I just remember working out quickly working to transfer. And then in the summer I did community organizing and I was fired up when I came to campus. My first experience on campus – because you move in before school starts – was looking. I remember my roommate, she was like, "Yeah, I think I'm gonna join a sorority because, you know, I wanna have friends," because there's a big sorority and fraternity, I guess presence on campus. Not NPHC, which is

the predominantly Black fraternities and sororities. It was Panhellenic, which is the predominantly white ones. So, my first experience in my room and they were talking about something happening in the Commons and my room overlooked the commons. So, I'm just kind of watching it, watching everything unfold. And there's just like, it's called Bid Day, which in my opinion has racial undertones, because basically it's just these people have decided to pick you and you're running to meet them. And there's, like, a sense of excitement. But in my opinion, it just, it was chaotic and it looks crazy to me, but that was my first experience on campus. Just seeing all these white kids just, "oh right! College, yay! All these friends I get to have because I'm in a sorority now," running through the Commons and hugging each other. And it was honestly very odd to me, but that was my first, first, first, first experience on campus, and I was like, "if that's the culture here, I don't know how I'm gonna fit, but I'll figure it out." So that was my first experience seeing bid day.

And then the first day of school came around and I was – I went to my classes and I was right off campus on University and Berry, I believe about to go somewhere and get food. And I was standing there waiting for the light. I think I was on the phone with my dad or something telling him about my first day and there was a car like a pickup truck. It was like maybe like a Ford F-150 and it was full, like white guys with fraternity stuff on, ironically. So of course, they went to school at the TCU and I was on the phone waiting for the light and I hear, "Yo, yo!" and I'm, like, not paying it any attention because, I mean, growing up in California, especially in LA, you get hit on all the time, you're walking down the street. So, when people are yelling at me from the car, I never pay attention to it, because even if it's a family member, you can call me by my name. And I'm not "yo", so don't if you're referring to me is that you don't know me, so they're calling or trying to get my attention right here, "Alright black bitch! Black nigger bitch!" And they just pull off. And I was like, "okay so that's how we're doing things around here," and literally that's literally how I reacted like, "okay. That's how things are, okay." And it was crazy. That was my first day of school, and I was thinking like, "okay, there's a little bit of diversity coming into this school," that's what I thought, but when I got here, I didn't see that. So, I was like, "okay, so I don't know if I made the right decision because this is what was happening to me my first day of school." I saw a bid day with all these white kids running through the Commons being happy and "oh my gosh, I have friends now because I paid all this money for a sorority." And there was just a lot of things that are happening that I was just kind of like, "I don't know if I picked the right school." But hearing that I was just kind of like, "well, seeing that this is happened to me my first day of school, I'm just gonna kind of watch and observe and see how things are on campus and figure out if there is something to be done and if there is something to be done, I wanna see how I can change it." So yeah, that was my first day, and then I just kind of went through this semester, the first semester and I joined-

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

What classes did you take when you first attended? Do you remember?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I don't remember when I took my first semester. I mean, I'm sure it was like some political science classes, things like that. Nothing that was too important in terms of what I wanted to do at TCU, that didn't happen until my second semester.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Tell us about that.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

So, my second semester I took the Civil Rights bus tour class and the reason why I took it was because I had joined Equality and I had joined, there was another org I had joined, and they were kind of discussing it, but I had only joined orgs where I felt like I could meet people of color and Equality is when I met a few people who had started telling me about the course. And I was like, "okay, I definitely wanna take that class." So, I took that, the first day of class. Dr Krochmal, Dr Ferris are like, you know, "introduce yourself: your name, like what you hope to accomplish and you're, you know, major," things like that. You know, the, the normal stuff. And I remember I stood up in class, and I was like, "hi my name's Shanel, I'm a junior," I forget what I had said. And you know, "I wanna get arrested," and the reason why I had said that was because coming out of organizing, and because I worked directly with the director of the community organizing nonprofit that I worked for. The director was a rabbi and he had gotten arrested several times, but a lot of people in the Black-Jewish Justice Alliance had gotten arrested and they didn't let interns get arrested because they don't want you to jeopardize anything. And you know, if you have pending things against you and you're in school, they don't want that to affect you. So, we weren't allowed to. But I had seen a lot of people get arrested and I had seen the reasons why, and I knew that if you're fighting for change and you really wanna make a difference, sometimes that big step is that.

So, because I had been on campus and because I had seen things that I didn't like, I was like, "I want to shake things up. And if it comes down to it, I will get arrested like, for the cause, for change on campus." So that's why I had stood up and said that. And I went through the class and I was just like, "I wanna soak up everything that I can about the Civil Rights movement" because, I mean, I had done my own research and I had known a lot. But there were still things that I didn't know, and I did learn a lot from that class. I did learn a lot from going to Mississippi and Arkansas, and all of those places, and speaking with other students and things like that. I did learn a lot more about organizing, and that was me, Emily, and Dionna, who all in that class, decided we need to change some things on campus. So, all taking that class led to us deciding we were gonna do something and we literally did something. We started our process that summer because I was gonna be on campus. Dionna was local and Emily, she wasn't around, but FaceTime – thank God for FaceTime! That's when we were literally meeting a few times a week and... we see things that are wrong, we see things that need to be changed. Let's write a list into demands and at the time a lot of college campuses were doing that. And a lot of, like Ole Miss, for example, is kind of where we got the idea to do something, because we were talking to the Black students at the NAACP at Ole Miss, and they were able to get the state flag taken down, which has the Confederate flag in it because, you know, it's just a lot of traumatic histories for



People of Color associated with the Confederate flag. So, they were able to get that removed. And seeing that they could do that in a state like Mississippi, we're like, I mean, Texas! If they can do that in Mississippi, which is like light years behind Texas, we can do that here. So that's kind of what sparked it in us, and that's why we started, and what we did, and what we worked towards.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So just for the record, what was the name of the class that you were enrolled in?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I believe it was the Civil Rights Bus Tour.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

And it was taught by?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Dr. Max Krochmal and Dr. Emily Ferris.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Thank you. So, summer of 2016, you get together on FaceTime with Emily and Dionna. And y'all just start a list, just like that?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yes, so okay. So actually, so at the end of the class, at the end of the semester, we had a project where we had to, I forget exactly what the project was about. But I remember I was working with Dionna and this other girl; I don't remember her name. But I was working with Dionna and we had to do, I wanna say it was like doing some sort of research on something I don't remember, but I remember that the research kind of sparked us wanting to do something. And because, you know, I didn't know Dionna before that class, and I didn't know Emily before that class. And as we were working on things is when we started to get together and just kind of talk about our experiences on campus. Well, me and Dionna more so than Emily, cause Emily had a different experience because she's white. We were talking about our experiences on campus. We were talking about how we could change and we were super moved by the students at Ole Miss, and we were like, "we can do something. Let's do something," and I don't remember what our project was, but I think some of it had to do with us thinking about demands. I just remember that project kind of sparked us making change. And I was working on campus that summer. So, we're like, "yeah, we wanna do this next year, like, this is what we wanna do. We're gonna do this next year." So, we literally spent the whole summer researching demand set org, which had, like a bunch of other colleges in their demands. We looked through a lot of other schools' demands. We got to share the experiences. talk to people, kind of understood that we weren't the only ones that were feeling this way about TCU, and that we had kind of negative feelings because of the racist students, racist things that were going on, on campus, that we weren't the only ones. So that's kind of what made us decide, "let's write the list of demands, let's talk to staff." The

Chancellor is who we really wanted to speak to, because it's almost like people were just kind of sweeping things under the rug. Like something would happen and it would just be like, "okay, well, it's not happening right now, so whatever" or "it's not a big, big thing" or "people aren't talking about microaggressions, so, whatever, it doesn't happen." But honestly, when I started looking at deeper things and I saw the Harry Benson incident and how he apparently almost got kicked out but didn't, I just saw a lot of problems and I was just like, "yeah no, this is not okay. A lot of things need to change." And that's where we started to draft a list of demands. I don't remember exactly when we finished, but I know it wasn't right when school started, it was like a few weeks after is when we started having meetings and forming organizations and things like that, yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, let's talk a little bit about your methodology because some of the criticism that your demands have received is that there were baseless accusations, and you know, I read terms like "the demands were absurd," and things like that. This was just, I remember seeing that meme, saying "give us free stuff."

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, what was your research strategy for you to come up with those demands? How did you investigate and how did you document that those microaggressions were taking place, and that there was injustice going on? How did you come up with the 100 million funds? How did you come up with that number? How did you, what was your basis for writing those demands in terms of data?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yes. So, one thing that we did do was talk to other students just to compare experiences and things like that. And what we gathered from a lot of students is that sometimes it's not openly racist, right? So, a lot of people didn't have the experience that I had getting called the n-word. A lot of people didn't have that experience, but they have those experiences in classes where they're the only Black person, or if the Civil Rights Movement, or slavery, or something having to do with Black history comes up, people look to them in the class like, "share your thoughts on this," which are microaggressions. These are things that you know they offend people, but people don't even know how offensive these things can be. And you know, people assuming that they're athletes or, you know, people, you have student tours on campus all the time and people are looking at People of Color like they're for show. Like, "oh my God, wow!" because you're that one in 1000 people that they saw that day like, you're the only person they saw and they're just like, "wow, wow, this person is, wow, wow."

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah, you would be expert on all things Black.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Exactly. And this is a lot of people experiences, for people assuming that the only reason that you're in campus is because you're either Community Scholar or you're an athlete. Those are the only two reasons that you could possibly be at TCU, right? So, these were a lot of people's experiences a lot of people shared the same thing over and over and over and over and over again, that they had to be the spokesperson for their race. They were assumed to be athletes. They were assumed to be Community Scholars. And there was a stigma with Community Scholars as well, that people thought that they didn't get here on merit, like it was just kind of like an affirmative action type of thing. That they weren't top of their class in high school and they didn't make it to TCU because they were actually smart. It was just the wildest things that were happening. So, a lot of our data came from that, just talking to people, documenting stuff, meeting with people and getting experiences.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Do you have an approximate number of the students that you interviewed or that you talked to?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I don't have a number, but if I'm thinking about the amount of students of color on campus that I knew, that Dionna knew, at least eighty to a hundred people that we spoke to, had those experiences. Honestly, I think it could've been more, but just because I don't exactly know, I'll kind of stick with that number. But yeah, a lot of our data came from that and then we started meeting with faculty members. So, like Dr. Max Krochmal, Dr. Lynn Hampton. Faculty who kind of knew what was going on and could kind of help us formulate these demands. And also with demands, you kinda wanna start big, like you don't wanna just, "I demand change or I demand that you give us pencils." Like, say, say some kindergartners are making demands for their teachers and they're just like, "I demand pencils." Like you don't wanna have, like, kinda demands that aren't gonna get you anything. So, you really wanna be thoughtful in how you demand things and you wanna shoot high. So, if the reason why, like, the \$100 million endowment thing. So, we didn't wanna say give us \$1,000,000 because we knew that TCU could probably give us \$1,000,000 because as much money that's pumping through alumni and football games and things like that, that we don't see, you know, students of color, we don't see programs, things like that. We know that \$1,000,000 is easy. So, if we ask for \$100 million maybe they'll give us five. So that was the logic behind like that demand and the logic behind you know, asking the flag at half-mast when Black people are killed around the nation, you know, we don't know these faculty members that are dying, like as harsh as that sounds. We don't know these people. We have no idea who these people are. These people have been retired for years. We don't know what they taught. We don't know anything. But we got an email about it every single time an old faculty member dies. We get emailed the flag is half-mast and we don't know who these people are. So, we're walking by this flag at half mass. Meanwhile, we're hurting because Trayvon Martin or Philando Castile or Alton Sterling and people that we're hearing about are getting killed, and we're becoming desensitized, even though this is upsetting to us. Like, I can't tell you how many classes I've missed because I was mourning the loss of a Black person around

this nation because I mean, you think it hardens you, but it really it affects you every time. So, these are things that are happening and these are things that are affecting students, and you can't just keep telling us to go see the go to the mental health or go to the Health Center and talk to someone, like it's not the end all be all. Like if we feel actually support from my school, you know, like, then things could be a little bit better. So that's pretty much what we're asking for, support. Like we want to know that we are supported. We want to know that if something happens, we can actually seek out people who care and not just, "oh, go to the Health Center. Oh, you're feeling bad. I'm sorry." And then that's just kind of what it is or you know, like we just wanna know and feel that support that isn't just focused on sports and things that don't really matter, like superficial things that don't matter. Like for example, when we did our first protest at the football game, I believe it was Homecoming, and we sat down for the national anthem. We were told that if we did that, alumni would be so upset. And you know that that would affect funding and things like that, which is why we're like, "let's do it!" Like, who cares about their money when it's not going to us? So, it doesn't matter. Like you guys are giving the money and you guys are doing other things with it that are irrelevant. And meanwhile we're not supported. So, we're like, "cool, let's do it." We got a lot of slack for it because of that, and I think that's what kind of brought the attention to what was happening, and what we were doing, and why we actually got meetings and were able to sit down with people, because they realized that it wasn't a joke. And publicity, especially for a school like TCU, is really important. So, if the news is reporting, "oh, now TCU had a great game, but there were students that protested at this game," that it was bad publicity. So, let's talk to them, but yeah. I don't even know where I was going with that, but yeah, it was the methodology behind it.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Well, speaking of methodology, did you interview or poll any white students or any Brown students?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

We did, we did talk to Brown students, absolutely. 'Cause we did kinda wanted to get their experience, even though we did kinda wanted to make it exclusive too, because I feel like students of color are so broad, it's just a very broad term. And I feel like if you're not focused on a specific group, then groups get lost in the sauce. For example, now Asian Americans are getting a lot of hate, right? And laws are being passed and all that, for their safety and for the wellness of them, but then we forget about Black people and we forget about Hispanic people and what they're going through, all of that. So, if you're not focused on one particular group then it's just so easy to say, "students of color, students of color" and not Black students, Hispanic students, and all of that.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Right.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

We really wanted to focus on Black students, but we did speak to Brown students as well to get their experience. We did have Brown students that were like, “yo, what about us?” And we’re like, “don’t worry. Listen, it will benefit everyone in the long run,” which is why some of the demands we did say, “students of color” because that was important as well. But yeah, we did talk to white students, not a lot. We had white students reaching out to us, like ally people who were just kinda, “we’re here for you, we support you, if you need anything let us know.” Because we knew that we were gonna get a lot of slack from people who didn’t have the same views as us. Like when the demands got closer to being put out because the Chancellor was getting phone calls from students, like white students who didn't agree with us. They were trying to get information and things like that. But in terms of talking to them beforehand, we knew what their experience was. So, we felt it wasn't really necessary to speak to them.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay. When you're talking about lowering the flag, and we will talk about each demand later on, but a demand like lowering the flag when a young Black person is killed by white police. How would you know that this incident is an injustice, how can you know that it's a Black person that is killed outside of the police officers' duty because until there's an investigation, can we really say that the person is a victim of police violence?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah. So that that's 100% right. Of course, you don't wanna go into a situation and assume that there's just racism behind it, right? But usually when these videos come out or when you hear about it or you see the video, 'cause a lot of times there's videos attached to them and you hear what's going on in the video. And I mean, even if, I mean, it's not directly pointed to race. We know that some sort of injustice was done.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Because numbers don't lie, I mean, you know, it is clear there's such a discrepancy. We know that, you know, it is definitely a factor. Race, it has to be a factor.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah. So, I mean like... So, for example, if in the video they're like, things come out and they're like, “oh, I thought he was reaching for a gun,” but you see his hands on the steering wheel and you know that it was done at the hands of a white person, police specifically who, you know, honestly as much as I try to preach like, “we don't hate people” and things like that. I mean, a lot of people of color are afraid of the police. So, if you see that this thing is being done at the hands of a police officer who's also white it just kind of sparks something in you: fear, anger. It just... it arouses a lot of emotion. So, because it does that, and because it was in at the hands of a white person, it’s just... to me – I'm not gonna speak for everyone, 'cause I was gonna say to us – but to me it’s an injustice. Period. So, if it affects me the way it does, or even seeing the video on Facebook and seeing the comments and what people have to say, and comments and things like that, you know that there's racial undertones behind it. So, it just, to feel that support from school

like you got, that's just kind of something that you want because to me, it's a lynching. There's no other way around it, that's my opinion.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Modern day lynching. Okay, can you tell us a little bit about the faculty that helped you or the supported you with those demands? I know you mentioned Max Krochmal. What was the role of Dr. Lynn Hampton, for example?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah. So, we met with her several times, a little bit to get her experience on campus.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

What is her experience?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Well, she is a Black woman on campus, so sometimes she felt as if she was being discriminated against by other faculty, and, you know, by the powers that be. And we, we also kind of wanted to pick her brain and kind of see if she felt that we were valid and what we were doing and in how we were feeling because she went to a PWI and she had those experiences as well. So, she knew that it wasn't just a fluke and she knew that it was very much possible that we were experiencing these things because she had an experience as a faculty member, and she knew that, of course, we were gonna have those same experiences as students, because she knew she had it in her classroom sometimes. And she knew. But the questions that she would get from students and people, you know, looking at her and thinking that she doesn't have certain merit because she is a Black woman. So, she had those experiences, and she knew that we were experiencing that as well. So it was more for that support that we were meeting with her, because she looked like us and she was one of the few people that looked like us and could understand what we were going through.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Anyone else?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I mean Dr. Krochmal because he was, I mean, I believe he is in the history department, but because that's his thing. Like he's big on social justice. We knew that he was a good person to talk to. We had formed an organization, Students of Color Coalition. And Dr. Brad Lucas was one of our advisors as well, and he was just a good person to speak to you, that didn't carry a lot of bias and could really tell us what it is and like, get our words together and things like that because he was in the English department. So, we really were just like, super well rounded in who we spoke to. And we also, Darrel Wyatt, who worked in, what department... I forget, it was in the BLUU, but I don't remember exactly department that he was in. It was like on the second floor over there on the left-hand side. I think it was called Inclusion. I forget what he worked for, but he was one of our advisors as well. And he was another support system. Like our reasoning

for reaching out to faculty was of course, to pick their brain, but also just to have that support of someone on a level that was like, you know... faculty is important. And then of course staff members. Like we, we just needed that support from someone who wasn't a student because we knew that we would have someone to back us up on that level.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Can you tell us about, I think it's Kathy Cavins-Tull?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Oh yeah, yeah. We met with her. We first met with her with the Chancellor. No, we met the Chancellor. Okay, so we first met with the Chancellor, which is me, Emily and Dionna and we had a one on one with him. And we didn't come out of it too happy because we felt like there was kind of a lot going on there, that was done because we were coming. Like there was an *Essence* magazine on the table with Barack Obama and his wife and their family, which really I thought was kind of odd because we've never heard the Chancellor mention anything about that. So, we thought it was kind of placed there strategically. So, we talked to him first about the demands and then he was going to have a meeting with all these other people, the Kathy Cavins-Tull, and the Head of the Athletic Department, and all these heads of stuff. Then I think it was kind of like an intimidation tactic but didn't really get to us. But then after we had that meeting with all of those people, we met with Kathy Cavins-Tull separately and she was basically saying, "we can't do this demand. We're not gonna do this. We can't do this. We're not gonna do this." So, as we thought that she would be, like, open to things based on how things went. And the second meeting, like, "oh, we support you. We're here for you." When we met with her separately, it was a lot more of "psych, we can't do that. We're not gonna do that. Maybe if you change this up, we could think about this," but we basically felt like we had to do something else in order to feel heard because the meetings didn't go anywhere. Like we were just kind of like, well, we thought you were on our side, but now it's questionable. So yeah, that was our experience or my experience rather with Kathy, Dr. Kathy Cavins-Tull. Which I mean, she was a very nice person. Very nice lady. When every time I would see her and she'd always, "how are you and hope you're doing well," and things like that, which you know that support is nice. But when it came to the demands, I felt like we weren't being heard.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

I see. What about the meeting with Chancellor, how did that go?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

The initial meeting, I felt he was just trying to kind of understand where we were coming from. And this was before we went public with the demands, we had sent him an email. We were letting him know like, "these demands exist. If we don't hear from you, it will become a public thing. We will make sure that everyone knows about it," which is kind of a topic that a lot of people use when it comes to demands. But our first meeting with him, I felt was just kind of him going like, "Oh, we hear you. Let's meet with these other people. We hear you. Let's meet with these other people. These other people should know about this. We hear you," whatever. And

then I remember getting a call just before it was released to the public via *TCU 360*. The Chancellor called me on my cell phone. And he was like, I have a student who wants these demands and wants to talk to you. And she was, her name was Annabelle, she was with a conservative newspaper, who couldn't wait to speak negatively about it, because that's what she ended up publishing. But she reeked these demands, and her angle was, "oh, like, oh, I really wanna talk to you and everything." But it ended up backfiring. It was very negative, but I just feel like the Chancellor also wasn't supporting us and the reason why he wanted to have this meeting is, in my opinion, I felt like it was for intimidation because, you know, if you're meeting with all of these Dr. Darron Turner, Dr Kathy Cavins-Tull, Provost Donovan, the Head of the Athletics Department and all these different people who have such high rankings at TCU that somehow – and especially if they don't agree, 'cause a lot of them didn't - they're kind of like, microaggressions? Like "what are you talking about?" Things, you know, I just felt like there was no support, and then we didn't hear from him and it was just straight to Kathy Cavins-Tull. So, it was just like, I wasn't happy with the meetings that we had with him. I just I didn't feel like it went anywhere, and I just feel like he just passed this off to someone else. Like "I get it, you're busy, but this is your school and this is happening and this your job to deal with it," but I guess that wasn't the case.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

What about Dr. Darron Turner? Was he supportive as a Black man, maybe?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

He was supportive. Yeah, he was supportive.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

But did the whole administration, you know, pass it on to someone else or...

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah, well, they did that with him as well. We had asked for there to be a, I forget what we called it, I think Chief Diversity Officer, Inclusion, something like that, yeah, Officer and we wanted ideally, we wanted someone who was not on campus because Dr. Turner had his role on campus. He was with the Title IX guy, and that's what he worked on. And Community Scholars, he supported them a lot of the time and ideally, when you ask for something, you want it to be, you really, you want it to be implemented the way that you want it to be implemented. And I felt like it was a cop out for them to ask him to take over that role because, you know, he had his own role that he was working on. And I felt like it would have been better if someone without TCU bias to come in and effectively run that role. So, I felt like they were also using him as a way to just kind of get us to be quiet, which I didn't appreciate. When I found out that he was going to take over that role, it was like a bittersweet moment because it was like, well, they're taking us seriously and they're getting someone for that role, however I didn't want it to be Dr. Turner. I didn't want it to be that easy. Like I didn't want it to be that simple. I wanted them to do the work, meet with people, interviewing people, and find the right person for that role. That's what I wanted.



**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, what did he do concretely? What specific step did he take?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Nothing that I can remember. I don't remember anything being done. I just remember him having that title. And then that was it.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Wow, okay.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah, I honestly felt with those demands that they did a lot to kind of just keep us quiet. Like they just didn't want us to continue to push the issue. So, they just kind of gave us a little bit and said, "okay, we did something." That's how I felt.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So what do you make of the statement that the Chancellor issued afterwards? I mean, he did, you know, send a letter, although you had some media that criticized the demands and called them "absurd" and "ridiculous" and "outrageous." And, you know, these are the words that they actually used. But then, despite that criticism, Chancellor Boschini said, "well, this is not that unreasonable," and he issued for the letter. What do you make of that letter?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Well, see, as nothing came from it, I wasn't particularly happy with it. I felt like it was kind of the saving face thing and nothing was done. I literally felt that everything that happened as a result of us having those meetings, and *TCU 360* getting their hands on the demands, well we gave it to them, we said, "here take it." But I felt like a lot of what they were doing was like purely political. Like you wanna look like you're for your students because you don't wanna seem as though you're not supporting your students. Because I think at the time, what school was it? Michigan, I think, the guy, the Chancellor or President had stepped down or whatever. I don't remember exactly what school, but a lot of things were happening on college campuses. And I feel like it was like what he was supposed to do, was write that letter and send it out to the students. But I don't feel like there was anything behind it, I just felt like, you know, it kinda was just *that*.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, let's go through the demands. Oh, but before we do that, did you stick around? When did you graduate? When did you leave TCU? And I'm asking that because that will affect your perspective on what was done about the demands, and how impactful those actions may or may not have been.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah. So, I graduated in 2018. So, we worked that whole year until Dionna and Emily graduated in 2017. And honestly, when I went back into school, the following year, I was so burned out and I was so tired and I literally, racial battle fatigue is what I had because I was exhausted and I couldn't, I was just... It was a lot. It was a lot because I got a lot of hate and it was just a lot happening. So, it was very, very difficult. And I know people tried to help and get things done that year, and I was little bit trying to help them but it was difficult. But yeah, I graduated 2018, Spring.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay, great. So, first you wanted the Code of Conduct to be revised.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Do you feel like this has been done? Have you had any interaction with the new Code of Conduct or the most recent Code of Conduct?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I haven't. I haven't looked at it honestly. I mean, now that you mention it, I'm going to go look at it. But yeah, I have no idea.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Well, we do as a new faculty at TCU, I just want to tell you that I did have to complete training on, you know, racial and minority sensitivity. So, we do have to do this as faculty, we do have training on diversity and inclusion. That being said, you know it's a training. I mean, you watch the video, you take a quiz and that's the part of the training. So, it's like taking a course, but it's not necessarily an assessment on how it's going to be applied. But I just want to let you know that the training has been implemented and it is mandatory, because I had to go through it. You asked for an increase in faculty of color. Have you seen any change in the year and a half that followed the 2016 demands?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yes, so I remember, I wanna say there was a change in this and I do wanna say that they did increase the faculty of color. I know that that did happen. I don't think it was exactly how we wanted it to be, but I know that there was an increase. Yes, I know that did happen. And I also know too that there was some faculty that left as well. But I know that-

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yes, you did address that retention was a problem.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

We do have some faculty members who left TCU. And several of them because of allegations of racism.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yes.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, retention has been a problem.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yes. I know they're on the same page.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Mhm. You also asked for training against anti-Semitic intolerance, microaggressions. Like I said, you know this has been addressed, at least to some extent. But we did complete the training on microaggressions and ways to counter it, ways to avoid it, and, you know, conflict, de-escalation, and all of that. Are you aware of any annual reports that reflects TCU's progress when it comes to increasing diversity?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

No.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Well, I remember seeing something. But I don't... like I remember thinking "this is inaccurate," because what data shows and what you see are two different things.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yes, yes.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Two very, very different things. Like, it could say, "yeah, we have 5% now of students of color," but like it, still feels like negative 1%, like it still feels that way. Yeah, I wanna say I saw something like a report. I don't remember.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Yeah. And it would be interesting to kind of see those reports, if you take out the athletic or the student athlete population and take the same statistics in the non-athletic student population. I'm sure the numbers would change drastically.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Oh yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay, so you're asking for a spark of meaningful dialogue. See an increase in cultural awareness. What have you seen in the year and a half that followed the demands in terms of culture awareness programs?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I mean, I honestly didn't see any change when I was on campus. There was still the, you know, the things that happen regularly, like every year. I know that they did, like Native American students, there's an event for that. There's still like, the events that, you know, just kind of happened regularly, but I didn't see anything other than that. And I mean, I know they like to say like that the Lead On stuff. And I remember I did a video where I was like "I am Black" or whatever and it was supposed to be this big campaign but to me, it was just like the same thing. And there was nothing that was, other than that video, I felt like that's all that it was. I didn't see any change when I was on campus in terms of that.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

What about the endowment for scholarships?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah no, I don't think... I wanna say that they were increasing the numbers of Community Scholars or something like that. But I remember when we had that meeting, we had said, "expand Community Scholars, don't just leave it for the area, expand, maybe we do all of Texas and, do it that way and increase spots, and things like that." And I do wanna say I think that that did happen, well not like expanding Community Scholars, but I think there are a few more spots or something like that, but there still isn't being actual scholarship that is for students of color, other than Community Scholars and things like that. Yeah, no, not a lot else on campus.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Were there any talks of a multicultural center when you were still there?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah. So, when we had the meeting with Kathy Cavins-Tull, so that was like... I feel like that was kind of what we talked about the most because she had a plan, I guess to – in the BLUU, to make like a Multicultural Center type of thing instead of it being the Office of Inclusion where like the Community Scholar hub is. Like she wanted to put it in the BLUU and do like all this, like big thing. But I honestly felt like she was pulling my leg. I didn't believe that that was gonna

happen. I had no faith in that, and I don't think it's happened yet. I don't think there's any, as much construction that's been going on in TCU. I haven't seen any construction that's been done with that. So, I felt like she was pulling my leg. I feel like she's kind of saying, "yeah, it's planned," but I mean.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Well, I wanted to let you know that it has been approved.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Perfect, yeah. I'm happy to hear that.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, I'm going down to demands and I'm seeing that you were asking for a Department of Diverse Studies. I know you have a lot say about the creation of CRES for example. Did that fulfill what you wanted to see done with that particular demand?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I believe we put that demand in specifically for CRES because I believe at the time it was still like in the process, we really wanted to push that forward. So yes. The only thing that I think we did kind of wanna do too as well, because I mean at Cal State East Bay, I was a, I had an African American Studies minor and CRES is ethnic studies right? I think it's... No, sorry. I think critical race ethnic studies-

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Comparative race, sorry, Comparative Race and Ethnic Studies. And that's great. And I remember I sat in on a class and they were talking about like race, which is great, and it's something to talk about. But I think we also wanted to do like a Native American minor like something like that, like American Indian type of deal where you can actually focus on different races that exist within America and have it be a minor. Because there's a lot of information to know about different things, and I think it's very possible, and I think we also wanted that as well. But CRES is a great start and CRES is making strides. So yes, yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, you wanted CRES to be a department or just in general you wanted it to be a minor or concentration. What stature did you want CRES to have?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Major. I wanted it to be, yes, I wanted it to be a major. And for people to... and then I also, I don't know if it was in that demand but also to have something in the core that focused on ethnic

studies as well. So that it was a required class for people who are coming in to have to take something regarding race or regarding ethnic studies. So, I wanted that in the core curriculum as well.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Was that implemented?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

No, and the justification was the cultural awareness pillar of core, because that does exist... but it doesn't. The scope of classes that you can take within that are just so broad, and I don't think that has anything to do with that. But that was a justification for that, I remember.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

I see, so CRES is now more of a program than an actual department. Do you know what happened with that? When did the status change and why did it change?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

So, I don't remember. I remember like seeing a bunch of stuff with it, but I don't remember, honestly.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

That's alright. (Laughs) it was a while ago. So, I'm looking at Greek life stuff. Cultural sensitivity training for Greek life. Why?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Because of Bid Day and because I remember speaking with a student who was in Panhellenic. She was a Black student. She still is Black, (laughs) but she was a Black student on campus. But she was saying about how they have like a slave auction thing within one of the sororities.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

They still do?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I don't know if they still do, but they did when she was and that was her freshman year. She graduated in 2018, so it was probably, well... no, I think she transferred. So maybe like 2015, 2016 is when there were still doing it, I don't remember which sorority it was. But yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Would you care to share her name?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Tamara, I don't remember her last name. Her name's Tamara. I have her information. So, if you wanna talk to her I can give that to you.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Please, I need to interview that person. Yes.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yes, I think she's in Fort Worth, so it's great. But yeah, perfect. But yeah, she was telling me about that. She was telling me about her experience within Greek life, the Panhellenic Council, and honestly, I saw no Black people when they were doing Bid Day. I saw none of that. I saw no speckle of color. I saw none of that. And I felt like that was a problem because a lot of what they do, even when they have their parties and things like that, like usually the only students of color that I can go are athletes. But they will turn you away the door. They will literally say, "Oh no, you can't. Oh, it's full," things like that. So, they need it more than anyone because a lot of that, that's like the culture at TCU, or those sororities and fraternities. And if they don't care or if they don't have any, like if they're ignoring people of color, then there's never gonna be a change in culture on campus. Like there's never gonna be that because they *are* the culture for the most part. They hold so much of the power on campus when it comes to students. So, if they lack that, it's gonna be a fight for a long, long time.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

You wanted the establishment of Asian American studies major, Native American studies major. Have you seen any progress made toward that?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

No, not at all. I mean, sometimes I feel like it's so easy to use their justification of "well, we did CRES" or "well, this." And I mean, if something has changed, please let me know. But when I was on campus, I didn't see anything so, yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Speaker series, university-funded speaker series. Have you seen any speaker, any conference, anything, any program?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Not by the university. I know CRES was doing speakers and things like that. See, that's the thing. I feel like CRES takes up a lot of, they pick up a lot of-

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

It's all CRES.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah. Everything is CRES or the Office of Inclusion. Like they do that, but it's not like "Chancellor presents Cornell West." It's not like that, and that's what we want. That's what we wanted. But yeah, it shouldn't just be on CRES, and it shouldn't just be on the Office of Inclusion, it shouldn't just be on them, you know.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, at with the Race and Reconciliation Initiative, one of the programs that we have is the series of virtual town hall meetings. We've had over 18 town hall meetings since the RRI began, which was, you know pretty much in September, October and we do address things like that. We have talked about for example, race neutral policies on campus, or being Black in the academia, what it means to be a Black graduate student, you know, higher ed and race. We even have conversation about the lynching of Fred Rouse, which is the last recorded lynching in the Fort Worth area, 1921. We go as far back as slavery day, where we had a talk about the first recorded Black staff member at TCU, back in the 19th century. So, do you think that that somewhat satisfies that demand?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I mean, it's great that is happening and I like that this initiative is a thing.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Is that what you had in mind, is that the type of programs that you had in mind?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I still would want it to be like "Chancellor presents this" like, even though that seems to be kind of like political again, but I don't know, I just want it to come directly from the top and have their name attached to it. And have them be very much a part of it instead of it being like, "okay, let's create this initiative and you do this," you know, like, I don't know.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Are you saying you would like for the board of trustees and the Chancellor to directly organize these things?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah, that's what we wanted.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

And, well, first of all, they're very busy people. Probably could imagine. So, the fact that, for example, the Race and Reconciliation Initiative is a task force originally appointed by the Board of Trustees and the Chancellor, it's still not, to your interpretation, it's still not coming from the top?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**



I mean, it's just. It is but I want them to have more to say about it. Like I want them actively involved. Yeah, that's what I would have wanted that, them active. So, it's like “you're appointing people but you are also a part of it” type of thing. Yeah, that type ideally. Yeah. I mean, I also understand people are busy, I get it. But you know this is important, so, yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Thank you for your honesty. I'm looking at, you know, “Chief Officer of Diversity and Inclusion, overseeing curriculum and projects.” So, I know that this was at least partially addressed. What do you think of what was done with the Chief Officer of Diversity and Inclusion? Are you satisfied?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

No, and the reason why is because I felt like it was very limiting. So, they put Dr. Turner in this role, right? And I felt like initially they wanted like a lot of research to be done, which is fine. But what we were asking for, to oversee programs and things like that, never actually happened because it was still the same people overseeing things, and the same people putting on events, and things like that. So, I felt that's why I really feel like it was a cop out for them to get Dr. Turner. I mean, listen, they could have gotten anybody else on campus, like who could devote all of their time to this, or hire someone who could devote all of their time for this, and have an office and it grows from there, because that's what should have happened. It should have been like, okay, start with this one person. This person needs help. Okay, this person needs help. This person needs help; and then it becomes like a whole working machine. But that's not what happened. So, I just felt like it was a cop out. I felt like it was just... and the way it was done, the way the announcement happened as well, it was just like... I remember seeing it and being like, “so?” Like I was not happy about it, like it just wasn't it. Yeah, it wasn't at all.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Do you remember Emily and Dionna's reactions?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

It was the same like I remember I saw it and we were like, we have a group message and we're like, “yo, what is this? Like, what? Like, this is not what we were asking for. This is not what we're asking.” I remember Dionna, I wanna say she was kind of upset as well and she was just like, “nah, that's not good.” And then of course, other students color like, “oh, did you see?” And we were just like. “Yeah. And this is not what we wanted,” but I guess – and I feel like they were using now, like, “oh, we got Dr. Turner in, Dr. Turner, Dr. Turner,” and they kept bringing it up. And it's like, so what? Like, and then what happened? Like, they are just... Yeah, it wasn't ideal at all. It wasn't what we wanted.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Are you aware of his recent retirement?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

What do you make of it?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I mean, I knew it was gonna happen, but now that he's gone, it's like who's gonna step in and really get everything done, you know.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay, when you say you knew this was going to happen, can you care to elaborate?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Well, yeah. I mean, like Dr, Turner, he's not a young guy. So, I mean, eventually, you know, he was gonna retire. And I know that he, you know, sometimes you just get to that point where you're just like, "I'm over it" type of thing. And I don't think he really got there, but I just felt like, you know, it was just time for him to retire. I honestly believe that he was, I thought he was gonna retire in like 2018.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay. So, you do not see any issue with the timing of his retirement, you think it was just a logical chronology of things?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

I see that look (laughs).

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I mean (laughs).

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Only if you're comfortable. I did tell you I wasn't going to make you uncomfortable in this interview.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Honestly, I feel like there's so many things that are calculated. So, I feel like it was calculated. But I also knew he would eventually retire, but a lot of things are calculated.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Well, don't we all (laughs).

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah, (laughs) exactly.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, we addressed demand #13 already, which was, you know, the flag to be lowered when people of color are murdered, and you do carefully use the term murder not just killed but murder. And the reason why I ask you about this is because whenever you're using the term murder, that means that it has to have been established following an investigation, "we determined this was murder." But thank you for addressing that. And then of course, eventually you are asking that no negative repercussion may be suffered by the people who created or implemented those demands. Have you suffered any retaliation of any kind?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Not the hands of faculty or staff, or administration, or anything like that. Students and people on the outside, I got a lot of hate, I got a lot of negative comments, I got some emails that were negative. I got a lot of things that were less than ideal, but luckily a lot of people didn't know who exactly I was. 'Cause I remember when the demands came out, I was in urban politics with Dr. Ferris, or urban policy, whichever it was called. When she discussed it and nobody knew that I was one of the people who had wrote it. So, I'm just like, kind of listening to everyone and then eventually I was like, "listen, I wrote this because X, Y and Z" and I was very emotional because people were saying very upsetting things. And then it was just a lot going on. But yeah, I got a lot of backlash, personally, I got a lot of backlash.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Can you get more specific or give examples as to what kind of backlash you got. I mean, none of you mentioned emails, but what was the content of those emails, for example?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Like, "you don't know what you're talking about" and "just wait and see what happens to you," and like kind of threatening things in a way. Comments on Facebook like when *TCU 360* posted things people were messaging me directly on Facebook staying very hurtful and hateful things. Like "why don't you just go pick another school" or "you don't belong there." And things like that, which basically are the exact reasons why we wrote these demands. Because obviously if people have the guts to say things like that and they're associated with TCU, you're a part of the problem. So that's kind of how I started to look at things like you're part of the problem and you're the reason why we're doing this, so keep writing me. And then you know the people that probably have no association with TCU, who were like that meme that said, "oh, we want free money" and things like that. That was like a whole negative article. Like there was several of those, but yeah, a lot of things came on Facebook, a lot. I got a lot of Facebook messages, especially after I had spoken on the news. I got a lot more of that. Some people were very nice. A lot of people were trying to meet with me, like I had a lot of free lunches, which was nice (laughs).

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So you got *some* free stuff, didn't you? (Laughs)

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Right (laughs), a lot of lot of people wanted to meet for lunch and just kind of pick my brain and talk to me. So that was cool to just have dialogue with students who maybe didn't really know what was going on. Like, though they knew what was going on, maybe disagreed, things like that. It was just, I mean, I got a lot on both sides, but I did get a lot of negative messages as well.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Would people hide behind some kind of username, or like did anybody address you with those threats with their name? Because you say that it's people, but you have actual names of people? Not that I'm asking you to share them but-

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah. On Facebook, people like literally alumni, people with kids on campus, and would literally say "I have a freshman, or I have a sophomore, and I don't appreciate," blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Or "I went to this school in this year and you don't have to go here." "You don't need to associate yourself with this." "You're wrong." Like all of that stuff, but a lot of people were just telling me to pick another school and if you're not happy here, go somewhere else and things like that. Which, okay. See again the covering up of things that are happening because you're pretending it doesn't exist, but an experience someone has is an experience nonetheless, so you can't say, "Oh no, it didn't happen" when it happened. So yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay, so we're reaching the end of this interview here, but I do have a couple more questions. One of them: you might be aware of this, we extended the invitation for the interview to the three of you. Emily accepted. You accepted, Dionna did not. Were you aware that she refused to participate in the Oral History?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

No, but I mean I can definitely understand why.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

She explained that you know that there were some risks associated with participating in what we're doing right now.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

What is your perspective on the risk that you're taking? And since you have accepted to participate in that Oral History Project, what are you expecting to face, following today's interview?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I mean, if people see this, I'm sure they won't be completely happy, which is fine, but I've gotten to a point in my life where I don't really care who I upset because if it's my truth, it's my truth. So, I don't really care. You can be upset and you can be upset over there and you can tell me you're upset. But it's not really gonna affect me and I mean, I got my degree. So, what are you gonna do, take it away? Like I don't believe that there's really any risk to me because number one, I'm not in the area, and number two, I am not really... I mean, other than the fact that I graduated from TCU, I'm not... like there really isn't anything that can actually affect me at this point. It's not gonna affect my work. It's not gonna affect anything like that, so. Other than that, if people see it and they're upset, be upset. But I don't, it's fine. Like, yeah, it doesn't matter to me.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Okay. One thing that we haven't really addressed that much is once you graduated in in 2018, what have you done since then?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah. So, I have a...

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

You have a, a growing family, we know that (laughs).

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yeah, (laughs). Just had a baby, just had a newborn. He'll be two months in a few days. But yeah, I mean, other than working, and just like, honestly just trying to make sure that I'm still feeding my brain and doing a lot of research and things like that. I mean, I did think about going into organizing, but I live in LA and it is very difficult to survive when you're not making that much money. So, I've been really focusing on just trying to make a better future for me and my children.. and my child, not children, not yet at least, but my child. And then, definitely wanna get back into organizing and definitely wanna get back into a place where I'm making real change. I did go to school to get my paralegal certificate, but then I started looking at things like, "you know what? I'm not about to do..." No disrespect to anyone in that field, but they do a lot of work and don't get the pay for it, and I'd rather be in attorney if I'm just gonna do that. But you know, I'm in a lot of debt from schools, so see what happens.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, what do you do, are you working? What do you do?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Yes, I'm actually, I work for a tech company and I am in customer support, which honestly is a way to make change. So, and that's how I look at it. I did do retail for a while, but I honestly think I found my niche in customer support and working directly with people because the day-to-day interaction that you have with people can, you know, it can make or break someone's day, so that's how I look at it. And even though I'm not doing organizing and I'm not in that type of change, I'm still in a changing type of environment where I get to impact people. So, and that's really what I'm passionate about. So, that's what I'm doing now, for the time being, until I move on to do something else (laughs). Find what else I like to do. But yeah, that's what I'm doing now.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, what do people think when they know, you got a degree from TCU?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

I mean, really, it's just like, "wow, you have a degree." I'm a first-generation college graduate. So, a lot of people are just like, "wow. Like, that's great that you have a degree." That's great that you, you know, graduated 'cause a lot of people will know how difficult college is. And not just like that academic side, but like everything mental, everything.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Correct.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

But people know that it's from TCU. They're just like, "wow, you're from California went to the South and did that. Congratulations." I just, a lot of people are just really happy for me and really proud so, yeah.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

So, what would be your advice for the next generation when it comes to issues of race and just dealing with student life at TCU?

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

Don't be complacent at all because you can't be in a changing environment and you can't effect change if you're just acting like things don't happen or just, you know, eating stuff when things happen to you. So definitely don't be complacent. If you wanna do something, do it. As much as people say like, "oh, your scholarship may be brought into question" or things like that, like it's not. It's not. You literally have to do some crazy ish for them to take, like, your scholarship away. So, don't live in fear that things are gonna happen to you, just if you feel like something needs to happen. If you feel like change needs to happen, do it, go for it, and if you need someone to lean on, talk to people, make sure you have support. Make sure you have people that are gonna have your back and that are gonna really be there for you if shit hits the fan, for lack of a better phrase. And that are really gonna support you if people are spewing hate at you and

you're not used to it, or people are just being mean and just all of that, just go for it, have support, and don't be complacent.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Alright, well Shanel Alexander, thank you so much for sharing your experience at TCU with us. The Race and Reconciliation Initiative appreciates your contributions and we'll spread the word.

**SHANEL ALEXANDER:**

For sure. Thank you.

**DR. SYLVIANE GREENSWORD:**

Thank you.

**END**