

Basic Detail Report

Title Interview with Jay Williams

Date 2023 February 27

Medium born digital audio file

Description (a) Audio file of interview with Jay Williams. He was interviewed by

Samariya Smith and Felicia Pilewski on February 27, 2023 over Zoom. (b)

Photograph of Jay Williams taken at his interview. (c) Video file of interview with

Jay Williams. He was interviewed as part of the Connecticut Historical Society's

Community History Project discussing his experience during the COVID-19

Pandemic. Jay Williams is the President and CEO of the Hartford Foundation for

Public Giving. Jay Williams spoke about the suddenness of the onset of the

pandemic - how quickly Covid went from something on the news to something

they should plan for to everyone is staying home and not coming into the office

and they will just have to figure out how things will work. He discusses the

challenges of running an organization at a time when information was shifting,

and no one was certain how long it would last. He discusses the importance of

being transparent with staff, with donors, and with other organizations. He

addresses how the organization changed and ultimately became stronger

because they had to do so. As a Black man, he has thought part of the Hartford

Foundation for Public Giving' s job is to address inequity and systemic racism.

Williams described Covid as one pandemic and systemic racism as another, and

that the Black Lives Matter protests demonstrated how the two were

intertwined. The election of 2020 and the U.S. Capitol Insurrection of January 6,

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2021 led the Foundation to hold conversations, internally and externally, about democracy and civil society and the foundation's place in a way that was not partisan but involved an awareness of how they connected to issues of inequity.

Williams ultimately took away from the pandemic an appreciation for his colleagues, and how important it has been to trust and rely on them and caused him to focus on improving his own mental and physical health. And that in the future, he may be forgotten, but the organization will have helped to play a role in building a more just and more equitable society.

Dimensions Duration: 45 Minutes