

Interview Transcript: Natalia Caird and Michael Klindt

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Michael00:00:00

All right. This is the Springfield History Museum Illumination Project. Today, I'm here with Natalia Caird. Michael K Media will be your host. How you doin'?

Natalia 00:00:13

I'm good.

Michael00:00:14

All right, so in this project, we've been illuminating the different, essentially Black experiences in Springfield, Oregon. And I think that you have a very valuable perspective because you are a youth. And a lot of times we think history, we think old people. But you... Were you born and raised in Springfield?

Natalia 00:00:40

Yea I was.

Michael00:00:42

So, you have a very potent perspective because you're born and raised Springfield in the 21st century. So how did your family come to Springfield?

Natalia 00:00:53

So, October 5th, 2006, my mom decided that she was done with California. She live in a really bad part of it. So, she decided she to go to Oregon. It's cheaper, nicer place to live in. My father did not come with. He stayed in California, but we moved on to Springfield. Well, I lived in Springfield my whole life... (laughs) So we lived in a few little apartments and then eventually came to my house now. And we lived there for... Like, maybe, 11 years in that house.

Michael00:01:29

So. And how old are you?

Natalia 00:01:31

I'm 16.

00:01:32

Speaker 1

16. What are some of your most impactful memories in Springfield, Oregon?

Natalia 00:01:40

My most powerful memories. Like what do my first memories like of actually being out and experiencing Oregon was went hiking and I don't know what trail it was, I was really... I was probably six. And I remember there was two, like, trails that led to the same place, which where my car was parked in. And I remember my stepdad racing me and taking the taller hill that both led to the same place. And he beat me (laughs) And I don't know, I just.. it was just my first memory of being out and like having fun and hiking in Oregon. So yeah, it's probably the most impactful memory. I was so mad.

Michael00:02:20

Yeah. Seems to be one of the common themes of the value of this area is just that access to nature.

00:02:30-00:02:31

Natalia

Yes

Michael00:02:32

That's that's special and unique. And with that said, what do you see as being some of the biggest opportunities and some of the greatest challenges living in Springfield, Oregon?

Natalia 00:02:41

Okay. So, some of the biggest opportunities, I think is, you know, you never really get bored of being out. There's so many new trails. You can go up the coast. Springfield is really close to a lot of different places in Oregon. So, you're like an hour out from those places that are different. So, yeah. And also, I think that the community in Springfield is... They're really giving, they're really welcoming. And that might be crazy to some people because, 'cause you know, Oregon's a bit, you know... (laughs) The history is kind of crazy, but people have really grown from it and I haven't really had bad experiences with people living here. Some of the disadvantages though is that it is not as diverse as I'd like it to be. It's really hard to connect with other Black folk. My age, mostly are older. I see a lot of Black elders here, but not a lot of Black kids. But I'm hopeful because the freshmen are coming in this year. I know there's a lot more Black and BIPOC students coming in and I'm really excited for the opportunity to meet them. But yea, the disadvantage is that we're not really diverse here. So...

Michael00:03:51

What do you... Like, why is that important to you or what do you think the impact is of not having access to being around more young Black people? Why do you think it's important to be have the opportunity to be around more young Black people?

Natalia 00:04:12

I think everyone should have a chance to really engage with their culture. And for me, I moved down here with my white mom, my white family. So, I grew up not really being able to experience my culture. When my mom tried to get me in that kind of stuff, it was really hard because I had no one else there with me that was a Black person that I could relate to with these problems that I was having. And it just it really gives you identity crisis when you just you're around so many white people and you finally me a Black person and it's not how you expect it to be because the only Black people I experienced was in the media. And, you know, it's sometimes exaggerated. And the way I talk, the way or act, I just felt like when I when I would be around a Black person, I just wouldn't fit in because I never had that experience growing up. So, I feel like being around people that are like you and look like you and have the culture is what you identify with is so important when you're growing up. And I just I didn't get that here, so that's why... That's why I think it's important.

Michael00:05:13

You also mentioned that Springfield has a I think you described it as difficult history or challenging history or something. Can you speak to what you understand or what you've heard about that history? And then maybe how that relates to why there aren't more Black people in Springfield?

Natalia 00:05:34

Well, I know that Oregon had the only exclusion law in the United States, which is... Black people could not live here. So, it drove them out. Basically, it was like, oh you can't have slaves 'cause there's no Black people here. And they didn't get rid of those laws for years and years after, I think, decades. So Black people did not feel welcome here because they weren't in the Constitution, they were not welcome here. So, why would they be here? Like, I can't blame them. You don't have to sneak into a state that doesn't want you there. And then with a lot of exclusion laws and things like that, groups like the KKK, you know, forming here and just it wasn't safe at all. So that's why there's not that many Black people here (laughs).

Michael00:06:25

Do you believe that being Black in Springfield, Oregon, has shaped your experience?

Natalia 00:06:33

I think so, yeah. You know, I didn't really, like, see myself as Black in until later in life. But, like, I definitely knew that I was because, you know, since there aren't many Black people in Oregon, people tend to point it out in small ways, that... You know? Oh, I love your hair. Is it naturally that curly? Oh, where are you from? Are you from Oregon? Where's your family from? You could definitely tell they're trying to insinuate things, but, you know, I've never I don't... I don't know. People don't try to be racist to me. But there's definitely a lot of micro-aggressions here just because there's not many Black people here to tell you that you're being micro aggressive (laughs). So, yeah, I really grew up like, feeling like I had to answer really weird questions about

my race. And that really shaped me to feel like I had to like... I don't... What's the word? It's ahh... I had to defend who I was kind of even though they weren't, like, antagonizing me purposefully, you know? So I think... Yeah.

Michael00:07:42

Because yeah, you said that you didn't you feel like people treated you well, like people weren't necessarily even like you didn't feel targeted as a Black person.

00:07:48 Natalia

Yea.

Michael00:07:49

But so, so would you describe that it just you were made to feel like other.

Natalia 00:07:55

Yeah, I was made to feel other. Well people were nice to me, but they still were really, you know, weird to me. But I don't think they meant to be weird. So I still like a positive interaction for them because they're trying to learn and they don't really know the... The things you're supposed to say to people (laughs). But yeah, so it was I took it as positive, but I know that a lot of people wouldn't take those interactions as positive, so...

Michael00:08:21

What do you think needs to happen in the community here? Maybe even as a... As a Springfield High School student, What are what are some of the things that you think can could happen to address that? To bring more awareness to people in terms of like micro-aggressions and understanding how while maybe they're not hateful or they're not being mean like that, they are affecting people's sense of identity.

Natalia 00:08:54

Yeah, I think that maybe we need to... Ourselves as a Black people going to Springfield or being in Springfield, we need to kind of like show them how it like how weird the questions are because they're not going to get it. So we're just like, that's a weird question because they don't know why. I think something that really helps is giving them a question that is also weird.

Natalia 00:09:18

You know, like, did your family come from Europe? Like, is your grandfather born in Germany? Like, why are you white, and why am I Black? You know, it's a weird question. You know... We don't like being prodded about our identity. If we prod you about your identity, you know, you'll understand how it feels. You know? Yeah.

00:09:40 Speaker 1

So offering up like a mirror.

Natalia 00:09:42

Yeah, offering a mirror. And I think at Springfield, we have a little, like, advisory periods, I think, of hearing about micro-aggressions and how they're harmful would be a nice thing to add on to it. Yeah (laughs).

Michael00:09:58

Would you say that there's much of a Black community in Springfield, or do you have experience with there being a Black community in Springfield?

Natalia 00:10:09

I'm sure there probably are. Probably mostly older people, but I haven't like had any experience with a Black community. I know there's a BSU at my school. It's very slim. So yeah, but I'm sure outside of Springfield High there's some Black communities that I have not experienced yet. I'm hopeful to experience them, but when one I have experienced? No.

Michael00:10:37

What would you like to see develop in that in that regard of of feeling like there was a growing Black community in Springfield.

Natalia 00:10:48

Wait a sec. Can you repeat the question?

Michael00:10:50

Yeah. So what, what, what would you like to see happen in terms of like developing a Black community in Springfield or to see the Black community in Springfield grow?

Natalia 00:11:00

So I would like to see... I don't know, like... I think I want to see more Black people reaching out to these groups because I've heard of them, but I've never... Maybe it's just because I'm not like popular with the older generations and I know they have like these events. I missed one like a few weeks ago, but I got the invite really close to the event. So, you know, I couldn't schedule, I couldn't schedule my time there. I wish that there like something like maybe a page I could follow on Facebook. If I don't know about it, there might be one. That I can like see these Black events and I could go to it and I could invite my friends. My slim, very... My slim Black friends, and my BSU to these events and you encourage them to go. Because if people from different places see Black unity in Oregon, I feel like they'll, you know, feel more inclined to come join it to move here. Because I know a big part of other people not wanting to move to Oregon is probably because of bad history. They don't think there's any Black people here because we don't show ourselves... We're hidden basically.

Michael00:12:15

So it sounds like there needs to be a lot more outreach.

Natalia 00:12:18

Yeah. Right more outreach...

Michael00:12:19

And if there's stuff going on, like making sure everybody's in the loop and in the know.

Natalia 00:12:25

Yeah.

Michael 00:12:26

Being the youngest person that we've interviewed in this project, what do you think the difference between maybe a little bit older generations and, and your perspective is? So for example, you know, I'm 44 and I've been around this area for a while, and because I work in the high school, I'm around a lot of young people. And even though I'm spending five days a week with young people, I'm still surprised by how different their point of view, their perspective of the world that we're living in is. What do you anticipate maybe some of the differences being between the way that your generation sees... Sees the world and our community as opposed to the older generation?

Natalia 00:13:28

I think the older generation is more kind of accepting of things like micro-aggressions and things like that. And it's not because they want to be, but it's because when they grew up those were positive interactions for everyone. Because back then racism was pretty racist. So they grew up not feeling accepted. And when people are, you know, less racist to them, it's... It's a nice positive experience for them. And I back up my claim by the media. You know, I see a lot of people, young people speaking out about that like their parents or grandparents don't see racism as they see it today because we are much more aware of how people are talking to us. The younger generation, because the older generation are just happy people talk to them like they're humans of some sort. So we definitely see like racism, micro-aggressions in different ways. Older being, more accepting of them. Younger being like, why are you talking to me like that (laughs)? And I feel like the young generation is a little more... They feel a little more, like - not opportunistic, but something like that... About changing things. The old generation is really, you know, go with the flow. They don't really see a need to change people's ideals or behaviors because, you know, they've tried for a long time to change them and doesn't like change. But the younger generation is really fighting to change that. And I really saw that when we were talking about the harmony thing. 'Cause I saw the people from Churchill... My minds kind of running... The people from Churchill and North Eugene that I never knew before because I did not know there were more Black people than the people in Springfield. (Laughs) Anyway... They were just like so... Like, strong in their stances of wanting to change things even before I went to Tulsa, like talking to them to group chats, that had done a lot more than we'd done in Springfield. And I was like, wow. Like I thought we were the people wanting to change. And I saw I Springfield and Churchill students who were the same age as me wanting to change more. So... But within the older generations I don't see a lot of them talking about wanting to change things here because, you know, it's been fine for them, but we want to be great for us, you know, stuff like that.

OMichael0:16:05

So... So kind of the... The older generation tends to be more well, I mean, things are the way the way that it is.

Natalia 00:16:15

Yes.

Michael00:16:16

You know, and, especially if it's not like explicitly, like hatred, like if I'm not expressing hatred or discrimination towards you then.

Natalia 00:16:30

Yeah...

Michael00:16:32

Whereas the younger folks are like, right. So. All right. I think I think that's what I've got for now. Is there any, any other message that you would like to... To share with people, especially as a history project. As people are viewing this in ten years and 20 years to where this is a historical moment? Like, what would you like to leave those folks with?

Natalia 00:17:07

Let me think... Don't be afraid to... I'm sorry I'm trying to think of the word...(unintelligible) Don't be afraid to, you know, delve into your own history and don't be afraid to call people out on micro-aggressions. Don't be afraid. Because I was for a long time and it just it made me kind of miserable, you know, just having to let people talk to me the way they did because they didn't know what they were saying was being hurtful. But if you're uncomfortable with something, someone saying call them out on it and they'll stop. They should at least. So, yeah.

Michael00:17:45

All right. So you heard it call people on their stuff and it's Michael K multimedia, Springfield History Museum Illumination Project. Illuminating the stories, the diverse stories of the Black experience in Springfield, Oregon. Till next time, signing off.