

**Natalie Avery Interviewed by John Davis**  
**November 2, 2018**  
**Washington, D.C.**  
**0:00:00 to 1:22:57**

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Davis: Today is Friday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2018. My name is John Davis. I'm the Performing Arts Metadata Archivist at the University of Maryland, and I'm speaking with Natalie Avery, co-creator of *Brickthrower* fanzine around—1997 to '98?

Avery: Ninety-seven, ninety...yeah.

Davis: And today we're going to be talking about the fanzine and the process that you undertook to create five issues, I believe. So my first question for you is really how you got interested in punk in the first place.

Avery: So I first got into punk I guess like in the early '80s. Sort of discovered—there was one particular summer—the summer of '83 I think was like when I really was just like, “Oh my god!”

Davis: [laugh]

Avery: [laugh] And started—well, I have one memory of being at NPC [Neighborhood Planning Council]—you probably have heard of NPC? A little...

Davis: Yes.

Avery: And I was applying for a job, when I—like a summer youth employment job.

Davis: Right.

Avery: And all of a sudden this car full of guys came up, and they were wearing black t-shirts and sort of tapered jeans, little bands around their wrists. You know, the sweatbands or whatever that was. And I was like, “Oh my god. [laugh] I must be in something where I can be involved with those guys.” [laugh] I think one of them was Eddie [Janney], [laugh] who I eventually married.

Davis: Yes.

Avery: But anyway, that makes it sound like it was all a boy-crazy thing. It wasn't. I mean, it was like...

Davis: Right.

Avery: I grew up in Northwest D.C. I went to this tiny little private school. I was in this sort of very homogenous community. Then I went to BCC [Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School]. You know, it was just a really suburban, shallow, homogenous community. I mean, that's how I sort of interpreted it. So going to my first punk show, which I think was at Georgetown University, at that—god, I forgot what it's called—where The Cramps played? But I did not...

Davis: Hall of Nations?

Avery: Yes, Hall of Nations. And just being like, "Oh. My god." These are kids my age, and maybe a little older, making this—just creating this energy and making this incredible music." And you know, I did love that music—I mean, the local bands and stuff—but I think it also introduced me to like The Cramps and Wire and sort of post-punk stuff. So then it just sort of became part of my thing at school, and having a group of friends. And actually, have you ever heard of the *EPU* fanzine?

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Davis: I don't think so.

Avery: It was called *Electric People Unite*.

Davis: No.

Avery: And it was in BCC, and it was—so Colin Sears, who was in Dag Nasty, and his group of friends, put that together. And it was this year that they also—he and his friends ran a platform to be like the student government president, vice president, and stuff. And they all themed it on Big Brother. It was hilarious, and so subversive, and the fanzine was really hilarious and awesome. Oh, and so my identity in high school for a little while was I really liked The Jam, so I was like, "I'm a mod." [laugh]

Davis: [laugh]

Avery: Which I subsequently was so embarrassed about. But anyway, I think—so in the *EPU* fanzine, Colin Sears wrote—and it was just a sheet of paper that was like passed around at school. And he wrote something really mean about mods, and I wrote this indignant letter back! [laugh] And then he wrote me a letter back *in the*

*fanzine*, and then we became like best friends in high school. He was like my best friend. Like my husband always jokes, because one of the things [laugh]—we'd do things like go on walks in creepy places, and one of the things that we once did was we took a candelabra [laugh] to [laugh]—to like one of those country club golf courses where there was a little bridge, and we had like a little boom box and played The Cure. [laugh]

Davis: [laugh]

Avery: [laugh] It was just that like really pretentious—you know. So anyway, that's when I—that whole spirit of like the music piece, but just the—I guess it was that kids my age and a little older creating this thing themselves was really amazing to me. So I wanted—I had a lot of like failed fanzine attempts, when I was in high school and beyond. I just never really—I never actually put something together, maybe because I didn't have a partner in crime to do it. Anyway. But I was always interested in that aspect, and I loved like *Truly Needy*, and I liked—I mean, I loved getting *Maximum Rocknroll*, but that sort of seemed on another level. But I liked—and I feel like I'm losing like...

Davis: Colin also did that zine with Sharon Cheslow—*If This Goes On*.

Avery: Oh, yeah.

Davis: Was that something you read?

Avery: That was kind of before *EPU* fanzine—like Colin and Sharon doing that thing. Yeah. So then—so anyway. So yeah, that. And then really for me, also when—I did find the whole punk scene in D.C. pretty—you know, like a lot of dudes in the front—it didn't feel safe physically to be standing and watching shows, just because it was so...

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Davis: Right.

Avery: ...you know, whatever. And I found—and I liked the music, but it really wasn't that—some of it was just too like rah-rah-rah-rah-rah. It wasn't that interesting. And the music I loved—and it was a lot hanging out with Colin and Sharon, and then I started working at Yesterday & Today, getting really into just like interesting music. That was the thing that really pulled me. It wasn't just going to those shows. I liked a lot of the music, but it was the way that it sort of exposed me to going to record stores and exploring all these

different genres and stuff. And I really wanted to play. Actually, Sharon Cheslow and I played together when I was in high school.

Davis: Oh!

Avery: So I had all these like failed band attempts, and failed—I guess I shouldn't call them failed. I mean, you know. [laugh] Like never went anywhere. [laugh]

Davis: Right, sure.

Avery: But like wanting to create. And I think about it—even the act of like thinking about interviews or starting to lay out what a zine would look like or playing music with Sharon, even though we never played anywhere, was sort of the beginning of like, “Oh my god, you can just—you can create something.” And that was really—that was what it was really all about to me. But then I always wanted to be in a band, so then I met—I had already gone to school with Kate Samworth, but then I met Amy [Pickering]—oh—I guess I’m going to go back. So when I really got into D.C. punk was Rites of Spring. I mean, the first time I saw Rites of Spring, I was like, “Oh. OK.”

Davis: Yeah.

Avery: And that was the first time I was like—and those shows and sort of what was happening in terms of like the reshaping or rethinking about music and it not just being like rah-rah-rah but it being a little more melodic and interesting and dynamic was when I started enjoying those sort of local shows in a new way, and felt like I could really participate and be in mix. So to me, that was really incredible. And then sort of being part of that whole thing but also yearning to do something myself.

Davis: Right.

Avery: And then that’s when Fire Party started.

Davis: So did you meet Amy through working at NPC? Isn’t that sort of the spot where like the Revolution Summer fliers were made and all that?

Avery: I met her before that. Yeah. I had worked at NPC about a couple years before that. So that summer that Amy worked at NPC—we hadn’t started the band yet, but we were friends. We sort of became friends in a weird way, an unusual—like she was going out with Guy [Picciotto]; I was really good friends with Guy.

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There was a little like jealousy kind of thing going, and so it was like, “Well, we might as well be friends.” Like it actually is really punk to me, [laugh] because it’s just like—we were just like, “OK, instead of having it be this big drama, let’s just like work this out.” And then we became like best friends and traveled around Europe together. Actually, that was the year before Fire Party started. And then Fire Party started, and when Fire Party started, we were like, “Are we...?” We never even really imagined playing a show.

Davis:                   Hmm.

Avery:                   We were like, “Maybe we’ll play like at a party.” But it was really the act of just being together. And we did a lot of—like we would drive to the beach in the middle of the night and like do wacky things. Like it was all of that, kind of. I think I’m doing—that’s way—I mean, it’s way before *Brickthrower*.

Davis:                   Sort of like that gang aspect of when it feels good to be in a band is when you sort of feel like you’re—yeah, a crew of friends.

Avery:                   Yeah.

Davis:                   It’s not just sort of like we show up at practice and we see each other and go.

Avery:                   Yeah.

Davis:                   Sounds like that’s what this was.

Avery:                   And something that doesn’t really get captured, I think, in some of the books and the movies or whatever about that time—also because—especially like *Rites of Spring* and *Embrace* and all of those bands seem so like [dramatic crying sound]—you know? [laugh] Like everything was so sad and so dramatic. But I mean just the level of humor and like—like the comedy—you could have—like we had—I can just remember this one specific night that Mike Hampton was like “Guy, you stole my joke.” And then because he made some—this is going to sound terrible on this—sorry, any scholar that’s interested in early D.C. punk—but anyway, it was this thing like Guy—Mike was like, “That was *my* joke.” And Guy was like, “That’s not your joke.” And then they ended up having like a trial...

Davis:                   [laugh]

Avery: [laugh] With everybody playing different parts. And it was so fucking hilarious! And I was just watching, laughing my ass off. So it did feel like a lot of times in that dynamic, the girls were watching the bands, and the girls were laughing at the hilarious boys. Cause they were fuckin' hilarious. So that was part of like our thing, of like going on these like wacky road trips just girls, because it was like we could be hilarious and the center of attention. And do you know Kate Samworth?

Davis: We've met, yes, a couple times.

Avery: Oh yeah! You met—we met on—I think we met together.

Davis: In Takoma Park, and also...

Avery: In Takoma Park, yeah.

Davis: ...Parkway Deli. And it turns out that we live pretty much almost on the same street.

Avery: I mean, she's like a comic genius.

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So anyway, there was all this like funny and like...

Davis: A lot of conceptual humor at that time too. Because I've heard of the—the Brief Weeds press conference at WDC...

Avery: Oh, yeah yeah yeah.

Davis: ...and things like that. It just seemed like it was—the fanzine that they did when they were Insurrection, which was this sort of pseudo teen—like sort of teen fanzine that was obviously an attempt at expressing humor. That just seemed like a big part of what they did. And then you're right; they're totally known for this ultra-earnest heart on sleeve music, really. Rites of Spring, Embrace, and then Fugazi, the same thing—accused of not having a sense of humor. But yeah, that did sort of get—overlooked, I suppose.

Avery: Yeah. Well, because it's hard—like just telling that story, I'm not conveying how hilarious...

Davis: Of course.

Avery: The best way is if you actually—like that's where like a narrative film would be better than like a documentary.

Davis: [laugh] Yes, right.

Avery: Because you—but anyway, yeah.

Davis: So during that period—so you were playing in the band Fire Party. And you didn't really do any fanzines until...

Avery: No.

Davis: ...*Brickthrower*, as far as I know.

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: Were you reading—you mentioned *Truly Needy*. Were there other zines as you got more into D.C. punk that stood out to you at all?

Avery: It's the one that is not—I can't remember the name. I'm sure you know it. It's...

Davis: *Greed*?

Avery: Yes. Thank you.

Davis: *Greed* is a good one. *WDC Period* was also in that era as well.

Avery: Yeah. You know, I was kind of into those. I just don't—but then I didn't—I wasn't really thinking about zines. So then we can—so all that background, so that was in the '80s, right?

Davis: Yeah.

Avery: So then I'll just sort of flash through...

Davis: [laugh] Sure.

Avery: ...like the rest. I mean, part of it for me—so Fire Party ended. I moved to England for a while.

Davis: Huh.

Avery: And so then I was in my 20s. It's so funny to think—I can remember being like 24 at a Fugazi show and being like, “God, I'm so old.” [laugh]

Davis: Oh yeah. Totally.

Avery: [laugh]

Davis: I did that when I was 21, so... [laugh]

Avery: [laugh] And like, “I missed the boat. And now all this...” I mean, it was—you know, whatever. So I felt like, “OK, I’ve got to figure out my life.” And part of what I think punk and being involved in punk does is make you have a different radar for things. You’re not—you just have a better bullshit detector. And I wanted to be sort of part of changing the world or getting into doing work that had an impact on—so I actually worked—so I’m always embarrassed to say this, because I feel like he has partly ruined our world, is Ralph Nader. So I worked for Ralph Nader before it sort of—now I’m sort of embarrassed [laugh] that I worked for Ralph Nader. But I did some really interesting projects and work, sort of thinking about the Global South, and trade, and sort of rapacious capitalism and how it was impacting workers and the environment.

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I mean, that was a lot of what I was doing. And I started going to graduate school. I was like, “I can’t—I’m not going to be able to move up in this wonky non-profit world.” And I would still go to shows, and I still had friends that were—but I was kind of out of it. Because I was like, you know, “That was my youth. Now I’m growing up.”

But then I just was like—it was like, “I want to play music again.” I had just this feeling of wanting to play music again and this feeling of just wanting to be part of what was happening. And a lot of that was moving back—so then I moved back to Mt. Pleasant, lived in a group house, so there was like a lot of people playing music. So it was sort of more—and that sort of desire to play and find people to play with got bigger.

And so that’s when I started playing—and I lived with Cristina Calle, who did some of the artwork for the *Brickthrower*. So she and I decided to play music together, and then I think she introduced me to Amanda.

Davis: Oh!

Avery: So Amanda Huron and Cristina and I started the Stigmatics. And I think—so a lot of what was happening—I was in graduate school, and I was doing work on urban social movements. I was taking a class on urban social movements, and a lot of what I was learning and thinking about was just so manifested in Mount Pleasant. And I started to feel—it was also during a period of time where a lot of the music and the bands—it was like very highly stylized, that period of time—like the makeup and Delta 72 and some of those.



And I just sort of felt like—and a lot of the fashion stuff, I mean, it was really alluring to me, but it was also a little alienating, because it just was so like—it was so stylized. It was so—and it seemed a little bit out of—for me, it seemed a little out of touch with the strife that was happening in the neighborhood and in the lives of the people in the neighborhood where we all had our cheap group houses with practice spaces.

And that was kind of what I was reading and thinking about, that sort of disconnect, where we were like, “Oh, we’re these sort of like revolutionary punk rock rebels” but we just lived in these little—we just sort of went from outpost to outpost and didn’t think about what was happening in our neighborhood.

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I’m not saying everybody was like that, but it just—there was a feeling of—that was something I was very aware of. And Amanda grew up in Mount Pleasant, grew up going to Community of Christ, which is this lay-led congregation. Do you know about that?

Davis: No.

Avery: So it’s this lay-led congregation of people who mostly lived in Mount Pleasant, who didn’t want to be part of the typical Christian church, and so they bought a building and they started their own Christian community that had—so it was like a DIY church, basically, at La Casa. And that’s where we—actually the Stigmatics practiced. So La Casa is in Mount Pleasant—3166 Mount Pleasant Street—and they had services every week for their lay-led community, and they also rented out the building to interesting like non-profits that needed space. And they used—they let the community rent out their space for like ANC [Advisory Neighborhood Commission] meetings or community meetings or, you know, just different projects.

And so that’s—so meeting her was like this total revelation, and just walking around with her, and I just saw the neighborhood in a completely new way. I’ll just tell you sort of the story, because I do think it’s kind of the through line to starting *Brickthrower*, but also like Radio CPR and a lot of the other stuff that we did. I’ve never told any of this in this way before, so that’s why I feel like I’m rambling a little bit.

Davis: You’re not rambling. It’s good. You’re good.

Avery: OK. [laugh] So anyway, one night—so she, at that point, was working for *Soundprint*, which was a radio show that was on NPR. And it did like radio documentaries, but that were very lush, sound-wise. I mean, there was a lot of just really creative use of like music and sound and story. And so we were like, “Let’s make a radio show about Mount Pleasant.”

So we went out one night and we were walking around and interviewing people, like “What do you think about the neighborhood? What’s the worst thing that’s happened to you here? What are your hopes and dreams here?” And I can remember we interviewed this guy, and he was like, “I think the neighborhood’s...” He was like, “I wish the neighborhood was cleaner.” I mean, just sort of like typical things you’d hear. And then we were like, “Well, where did you come from? What’s your story?”

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He had come from El Salvador when he was a teenager, and he was working and supporting his mother, and he basically worked all the time. Then we met this other guy who was homeless, but had grown up in the neighborhood and had lost—and his parents had died, and he had lost his home.

Then we met this group of teenagers, and we asked them what the worst thing that had ever happened, and they started talking about police abuse, and this kid talked about how he had been arrested. And he wasn’t doing anything; they just stopped him and they made him pull his pants down like in the middle of the street, and it was—like just to humiliate him.

So it was hearing all these—I mean, nothing—except for that one, the stories—there wasn’t really anything so dramatic and intense, but it was sort of the accumulation of “Wow, there’s people that are struggling and suffering here.” We also started doing some other interviews with—we interviewed these two kids and heard their border crossing story, which was incredibly traumatic. And we just started—we just sort of gathered all this audio.

Then we decided one morning that we would go—there was a neighborhood cleanup, so we were like, “Oh, we’ll go interview those people.” And so up til that time, when I thought about people living in Mount Pleasant—because I lived in a group house there—when I thought about the people, they were probably like—you know, like now like what I am—like a parent who owns a house and whose kids go to DCPS [D.C. Public Schools]. I thought there

was going to be like midwives and labor activists and you know, like, really progressive people.

So then we started doing these interviews, and people were like, “Well, my biggest wish is that we wouldn't have these street vendors.” You know, “What I'd like to see is a market with like crafts, but not like all that shit that the people that are sitting and selling pupusas and mangos with salt are selling. I want to see like...” And then people were like, “I would like to see just something done about public behavior. I mean, there's just too much public drunkenness.” Which, you know, I can understand. There was.

But it was the talking to these people and just how incredibly dehumanizing the way they were talking about their neighbors were. I was just like, “Whoa.” I was really taken aback by it. Then we saw this flyer for a neighborhood forum, and it was Stand For Our Neighbors, and they were like, “Let's talk about how immigration reform is impacting our neighbors.”

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And I was like, “Oh, this is gonna be some like Socialist Workers Party thing, and they're going to try to recruit us, and they're going to tell us what we should think.” Because I had lived in London, where there was a really—the whole SWP thing. Even though I agreed with a lot of the politics, I was just like, “Please don't wag your finger at me, and tell me what I gotta say.” Because there was a lot of, “You gotta say...”—blah blah blah. So I was fully expecting this to be one of those.

But instead, it was just like this really cool event where people were telling their story about how the—and this was during the immigration and welfare reform that was introduced by the Clinton administration—and how it was having a direct impact on people in our neighborhood either being afraid of INS raids or people losing their food stamps or losing other benefits. It was an assault on people that were our neighbors. So Amanda and I went, and it was a bunch of people telling their story. And then, we—well, one of the people—do you know Athena Viscusi?

Davis: No.

Avery: All right, so Athena was—she was the one that started—she lives on Lamont Street, and she was the—she was kind of like emceeding the event. And so she was having another—they invited people in the room to come to another Stand For Our Neighbors event, and it

was going to be at her house. And it was a meeting, like, “What can we do?” And the whole idea of it was like, “We’re the white neighbors with privilege. What can we do with our privilege to support our neighbors and to support the immigrant-led organizations in our community that are doing this on-the-ground work and legal work and social work? How can we just use our privilege to support that work?” Raise awareness and et cetera.

So I went to her house, we had the meeting, and then I went into this back room and I saw these Sex Pistols posters that I had seen in a book when the Sex Pistols played in Paris. You might have seen them. They’re these like silkscreen pink and green like really wild looking but awesome looking posters. And I go, “Oh my god! You have these posters? These are awesome!” And I go, “Where’d you get these?” And she goes, “I made them.” [laugh] And I was like, “What?!” [laugh] So anyway, Athena was like, “Oh, gee.” [laugh] And she’s a social worker. And so anyway, we—I mean, I was like, “Wow, this pretty incredible.”

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And so we just became really good friends. But when we were talking Stand For Our Neighbors and raising awareness among our neighbors, we were like, “People aren’t going to come to meetings. Some people will, but the people who are coming to meetings are going to be people that are already sort of converted. So we need to think of another way to do this. We need to figure out other ways to engage people.”

And then the Stigmatics were playing. We were doing stuff, like playing at regular old shows. But then we were like, “How can we—what can we do that’s different?” And so one of the first things Stand For Our Neighbors did is take over the family stage at the Mount Pleasant Festival. And it was bringing—and a lot of—and some of the people that are even featured in the—I’ll get to the *Brickthrower*, I promise, but this is all what it is. This is like how and why. But it was like, you know, teenage rappers and poets and the karate school. Just getting all these local kids and local—and oh, remember Faith? Not Faith the band, but Faith the mayoral candidate?

Davis: No.

Avery: And she was like 75 and then she had this like 30-year-old boyfriend that played the guitar, and she played a horn? You don’t remember?

Davis: No!

Avery: [laugh] Anyway, so we had her. We had Blelvis perform.

Davis: Uh-huh. Wow.

Avery: Like for the family stage. And we passed around balloons that said “No human being is illegal” in English and Spanish, so all the kids were walking around Mount Pleasant with those balloons. And it was just a really very energetic awesome day. And so then we were like, “We need to do more stuff like this, because this is how...” And then we did, when we were passing out the balloons, a lot of, “Did you know this is happening in our neighborhood?” and plugging them in to support the neighborhood groups and the community organizations that were helping immigrants or helping people with...

Davis: Yeah.

Avery: So then we decided to start having some events, and so this is where—so one day, we went up to Haydee’s, which is a Mount Pleasant restaurant that had just opened. It was the same owner as Trolley’s, which was down the street where Marx Café is now. And it was famous for having mariachis and sort of neighborhood hootenannies and stuff like that. So we were like, “This would be a great venue to have a show and to do something like this.” And we went, and she said, “Oh, I can’t, because I’m not allowed to have any live music, because I signed this agreement in order to get my liquor license, to not have any music.”

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Then that was when I also was just like, “Oh my god, this neighborhood is so fucked up.” Like how is that possible that a small group of neighbors could stop a place from being able to be a venue for music? It wasn’t like a law; it was this agreement negotiated between like private citizens and the business. But the business really had their back to the wall, because in order to get their liquor license, they had to sign this agreement. So it was sort of the government. It was the government allowing this thing to happen, but being able to say, “Oh, we let the community work it out.”

So it was another thing where I was like, “Geez! This neighborhood...” And then I started—then that’s what sort of got me reading and looking at the neighborhood forums. There was this thing called the Mount Pleasant Forum, where there was even more—like just this incredibly dehumanizing...

Davis: So these are just online...?

Avery: Online, yeah. This was an email thing.

Davis: Right, OK.

Avery: Like an email newsletter.

Davis: Sure.

Avery: And I was just like, “Jesus!” So then it became like, OK, so what we’re doing here isn’t just about countering—educating people about what’s happening in our community as a result of these federal policies. It’s also like—there’s some real ethnocentrism, racism, dehumanizing shit that’s happening in our neighborhood, in sort of the way that public space and the use of the public realm and the use of restaurants and bars and public places is being negotiated. And that there is a small group of people that have really taken and used their power and used a lot of very dehumanizing language about the Latino community to put forth policies and approaches that sort of crushed culture, and just harassed people, and called for more police and called for—just bad things.

So it became—and it was really through that that I just—we just started just thinking—it was just very eye-opening. And it was very much like, “Oh my god.” We’ve been just walking around thinking we’re such rebels [laugh] in our little group houses, and meanwhile, there’s just this really ugly stuff that’s going on, and these people that had sort of taken power in our neighborhood to make decisions about spaces that should really belong and voice that should belong to all of us.

Davis: So how would a zine be an outreach tool within that neighborhood? On one hand, it seemed like you were trying to reach the neighborhood.

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Avery: Yeah.

Davis: On the other hand, you’re trying to reach the punk community to—what—to sort of enlist their help in...?

Avery: Yes. And to be like, “This is what’s going on.” I’m sorry it has taken me so long to get to this.

Davis: No.

Avery: This is where—so this is where *Brickthrower* starts. So when we were playing shows—and I think the first one, this one, which is—oh, it says number two.

Davis: This is the first one. I believe.

Avery: Oh yeah. So we played—yeah. Yeah, you're right. OK, so this is when we played with Fugazi, and it was Fugazi's 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary show.

Davis: Right.

Avery: So this was just such a huge opportunity to be able to talk about some of this stuff. But not just this stuff; I mean, it was just sort of like having a different—sort of bringing some of the stuff we were thinking and talking about to our community. And I don't know, just trying to—it was like a different—I'm just looking at it because I haven't seen it in so long.

Davis: Say at that show—that was at what had been in Wilson Center...

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: ...and then had gone through various different titles. But what sort of response do you remembering getting, even at that show, to trying to talk about these issues?

Avery: Well, it was because—well, people really loved the zine. And Stand For Our Neighbors had a little table. And this is also the time—like I'm just looking at this—because it says *Brickthrower* Radio—we definitely were starting to talk about radio, and thinking about all of these outlets, so like from the neighborhood forums to sort of like radio and media, that was just so commodified and dominated by sort of like corporate voices. There wasn't like this DIY space. And trying to sort of take the DIY space that was those shows and that energy into...

Davis: So Radio CPR was created at this same moment as...?

Avery: I think it's—even looking at some of the stuff we were writing about—I mean, in some ways, Radio CPR was an outgrowth of this. And sort of some of the community that we were building with—I mean, so there's a bunch of other stuff that was happening, like Amanda was working at—I think she was working at LAYC—the Latin American Youth Center—at this point. I was working at the Council of Latino Agencies. So we started from this getting involved with Stand For Our Neighbors, then started working and/or getting involved in these other sort of non-profits

in our community that were doing sort of more focused work on like immigrant rights and stuff like that.

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So there was a whole network of people that came out of that Stand For Our Neighbors thing. And that's how—so we were trying to get that message in our zines, and our zines were always attached to a show. So yeah. So we always—so we wanted to—so we didn't—like our songs weren't political and we didn't talk politically from stage. And we weren't trying to—I mean, I guess it was also sort of trying to do something a little different from—we partnered with—we also put shows on.

Davis: At La Casa, or...?

Avery: At Wilson Center and La Casa. And we partnered with—is one of them—the one that's—yeah, I don't know if this—I think the first—yes, so here's something about one of the shows that we put on.

Davis: This is in issue four.

Avery: At Centro—in issue four—at Centro de Arte, which is the upstairs of Wilson Center. And it was—like it was all—so we tried to do these shows that were sort of mash-ups of all the local community people, like poets from Bell Multicultural High School. And there was this like rap band from Bell, and then this old soul singer that Athena knew who was awesome. We just did all this kind of—Lucy Murphy, who was kind of a famous Washington sort of activist musician.

So we just tried to—we just wanted to do these sort of mash-up shows that were a combination of—and so sometimes *Brickthrower* connected with those. But in a lot of ways, they were just show manifestations of some of the stuff that we were trying to do with the zine. And the zine was where we wrote about a lot of this—the work that we were doing with young people in our neighborhood, and just stuff that we were thinking about.

Davis: So the title of the zine—my understanding was that it's a reference to something you saw on the show *Cops*?

Avery: Oh yeah. Is it written about in here?

Davis: It's mentioned somewhat. I don't know if you want—if you could explain more of that story.



Avery: All right. So I was watching *Cops* and—yeah, cause actually there's a Stigmatics song called "Brickthrower."

0:39:02

But I don't think it's anywhere. I think it's just like on its little vinyl 7-inch. I don't think [laugh] it's online anywhere. And it was just some—there was a guy that was like throwing bricks at a Burger King and got arrested. That was the show. I think I might write about it somewhere in more detail. But it was just that sort of—well, the words of the—so the song was thinking about—the first line of the song was "They said I am a man" because I was thinking about, you know, civil rights protestors, and I was thinking about just people having to fight for their—just to be recognized even as human.

And then how profoundly dehumanizing it was seeing this guy—this guy is just trying—like whatever was going on with him—and that the only outlet he felt he had was to throw a brick [laugh] at a Burger King. I don't know, there was just something about that. And it was sort of about that there's futility but also sort of that desire everybody has to be like, "I am human. I'm here." And I think Amanda didn't really like the name honestly. [laugh] I mean, we didn't—when we started this, we weren't like, "Let's start a zine." We were like, "Let's make a zine for this show."

Davis: Oh.

Avery: Like the first one—yeah. I mean, it doesn't even have number one on it or anything. You know?

Davis: It sort of looks like a program, almost, for that performance.

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: And that's sort of interesting that these zines were kind of like that, almost. Like you were saying, specific to a performance. One of the issues, it looks like you did for a tour.

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: And that's a question I have is were you able to engage people on tour, when so much of what's discussed is—it's sort of hyper local, but also these are issues that affect areas everywhere. Were you finding when you were going out into the Midwest on tour that there was much...?

Avery: No.

Davis: No?

Avery: [laugh] When I think about this, it was so much about the process. And I think that the reason why—it was actually like the first time—one—that I had a collaborator in Amanda, who is just like—has such an incredible work ethic. [laugh] And had a deadline.

0:42:00

Because we would do them around shows, so we had a deadline. It couldn't just be like, "We should do this thing" and have it just go on and on and on and never get done. So we really—that I think was—oh, and I guess I was going to say—I don't know, I don't even know real...we didn't get that much feedback. We really didn't.

Davis: Hmm!

Avery: We would just hand them—because we weren't selling them. That's another thing. And the reason we weren't selling them—this is a big important thing—is because we had an incredible Kinko's contact. So there was this guy—and we also had—I don't know if you've seen any of the flyers and posters we have from some of the shows we did? They were incredible, and they were all—like now, you can just print them out here, right at my office, like in a nice printer. But then, printing beautiful color flyers was expensive.

Davis: Which Kinko's would you go to?

Avery: It was the one—I don't think it's there anymore. I feel like it was near Van Ness. And so this guy Monday—he also lived in Mount Pleasant and he was sort of part of this whole crew of people who were putting these shows on and sort of just part of that little—there was just—I think what happened with the Stand For Our Neighbors and some of the shows that we did—people would be like, "This is really cool."

People still loved the bands that they were into, but it was really cool to come to a show to see a band that you knew, and then to see a go-go band, or to see a girl rapper or a girl Hip-Hop artist. I think it made people feel connected to their neighborhood in a new way.

So it's hard to talk about *Brickthrower*, the zine, as separate from all that, because I feel like it was just all part of this kind of new fabric that we were trying to create, in our neighborhood but also

in our own music community or whatever. And people were incredibly supportive of the shows.

And I remember Ian was saying something to me like about how one—talking about how the—he was saying that those shows, how raw they were—and these were the ones that were just kind of these crazy mash-ups—reminded him of when he first got involved in punk in D.C. Because they were just so like raw and weird.

0:45:01

And that he loved how when he walked through the neighborhood, he would suddenly recognize these people that normally you wouldn't recognize, because they had been at the show together, or he had seen them perform, or made those sort of connections. That's so much what it was about.

And then like I said, this was just this forum to be able to write and express. But it wasn't—it was just like—it was an outlet. And it was so fun to do. I mean, just cutting it all together and—that was really Amanda. I mean, Amanda—I think Amanda had done some zines when she was in college. And actually then, I started printing them out when I worked at the Council of Latino Agencies, and I would go in on the weekends.

Davis: [laugh]

Avery: I don't think they liked it, but I did that. [laugh]

Davis: For the graphics and the visual look of it, where would you get these graphics from? How did you put them together?

Avery: Yeah, they weren't even on the computer. We would just cut stuff out from magazines and newspapers. It's funny; I don't really—yeah, that's what it was. It was just like finding little things to cut out to just have—just to break up all the text, [laugh] because there's so much. [laugh] These are very texty. And they're sort of—well, there's this interview with El Vez, but we don't—we didn't really have like reviews or interviews. It was mostly...

Davis: Yeah, that stands out. That El Vez interview stands out just for...

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: ...being maybe the only one like that, where you're interviewing a band. Or a performer, I should say—a musician. Because you do have interviews with people—people from the neighborhood. There's plenty of that. But yeah. So why El Vez?

Avery: That was Amanda.

Davis: OK.

Avery: And I—she just loved—I don't remember. You have to ask her.

Davis: I know his connection to punk. He comes from the L.A. punk scene.

Avery: Yeah. I don't remember how we got this.

Davis: And there are subversive aspects to his thing. But I was just wondering...

Avery: He's also on—he also did a Radio CPR interview. You know the Radio CPR compilation?

Davis: Mmhmm.

Avery: He's on that.

Davis: Oh!

Avery: Not doing a song, but saying like, "This is El Vez." But I just remembered—OK, so one of the pieces that I wrote—it says, "Washington City Paper Fiddles While Rome Burns." [laugh] And I wrote this thing about—let me see. There was all this stuff going on that was just terrible in D.C., and—what did I say? Oh, so here's the line. So, should I just read it?

Davis: Go for it.

0:47:56

Avery: OK. "So probably a lot of people here were unfortunate enough to read or at least see the *City Paper*'s recent feature story on why D.C. sucks compared to New York. This article made me think about one thing that really does blow about this city compared to New York—that we have such a lame excuse for an alternative weekly paper. For instance, while New York gets a *Village Voice* issue last week devoted to the recent beating of a Haitian immigrant and the underside of Giuliani's zero-tolerance crime policy, what does Washington get in the week D.C. gets stripped of home rule and we find out that schools won't open on time? A feature story on penile implants." [laugh]

Davis: [laugh]

- Avery: And then the last paragraph is, “So while the *City Paper* is busy jacking off, stroking its flaccid politics [laugh], the *Brickthrower* suggests to those readers who crave a real alternative to Washington print media—keep fighting for and trying to create actual alternatives to what’s on offer in the mainstream, and write letters to the *City Paper* demanding it serve the role it claims to serve.”
- Davis: The *City Paper* had a weird tone for such a long time, almost like adversarial against the city, like through the ‘90s and into the 2000s, that was puzzling...
- Avery: Yeah.
- Davis: ...for so long. And I never got—there was plenty of good stuff in there too, and lots of great people that worked there, but that was a recurring theme, I felt like. I remember playing in bands—just even from a musical perspective, it felt very unsupportive, and yeah, almost adversarial.
- Avery: Yeah.
- Davis: So I can certainly appreciate what you're saying.
- Avery: OK, so we're just passing these out at shows. This was the one that was passed out at the Fugazi show. The editor of the *City Paper* wrote me.
- Davis: David Carr?
- Avery: It must have been Jack Shafer. I don't think it was David Carr. I mean, we'd have to look at who it was at that time.
- Davis: When I worked at the *City Paper* in '99, which was brief, he was the editor then. So this is about two years...
- Avery: So when was that?
- Davis: This is '97, I think, is your article. So maybe David Carr was...
- Avery: I want to find out. Because all I remember is that I was like...
- Davis: “Whoa.”
- Avery: “Oh my god!” Like, I Xeroxed something [laugh] and then...
- Davis: Well, there would have been a ton of *City Paper* people at that Fugazi show, I'm sure.

Avery: Yeah, that's true. That's true.

Davis: I don't know if it was Bradford McKee or whoever. But anyway.

Avery: Well, yeah. I forgot what it was. I should have saved it!

Davis: Oh, you didn't save it?

Avery: I didn't save it! No. I mean, I probably like halfheartedly tried to save it, and then some move, it got lost. But anyway. So then the other thing—oh, and see, in the middle paragraph, I do write about something really good that the *City Paper* had written about. So I give them...

Davis: [laugh] It's balanced.

Avery: But then, I was somewhere—Holly Bass came up to me. Do you know Holly Bass?

Davis: Not personally, but I know the byline.

Avery: Yeah. She worked at the *City Paper*, and now she's doing all this amazing art. She's like an amazing artist. But she came up to me and was like, "Are you Natalie Avery from the—did you—is this—did you write the *Brickthrower*? Do you do the *Brickthrower*?" And she was like, "I loved your article!" [laugh]

0:51:01

And so I think that there were some people probably even within *City Paper* that were like...

Davis: Sure.

Avery: You know. But that was funny. That's the only—like that's the biggest response I—and people would say, "Oh, I like this," but it wasn't really like—I mean, it was a lot of work. It was a lot of work, and it was really fun, and the gratifying thing about it was just being like, "I made this. We made this."

Davis: Yeah.

Avery: And I can remember this one night that we were like finishing it. It was like 11:00, and it just—we laid it out, and it looked really good. And Amanda was like, "We are so cool, Natalie Avery!"

Davis: [laugh]

Avery: I was like, “Yeah we are!” And then we went to Kinko’s and like—[laugh]. You know, it was like those moments of like—it’s not like people were like, “Oh, Natalie and Amanda are so cool!” [laugh] It was like, you know—like our band was—people were OK—we were never like stars. We were not stars, in a time where there were a lot of stars.

So it was just a way to have just sort of a voice and a presence that was really just—it really felt like we—when I read that, I’m like, “Oh my god! I used to show up as my true self!” I don’t write like this anymore. So it was a way of totally writing and showing up as your true self that like writing a term paper or the kind of writing I have to—you know, one has to do work—it was just like, “Oh, this is really freeing and awesome.”

Davis: Do you feel more proud, I suppose, of the zine, or the music, or the shows that you were doing? Of all those sort of different spokes on the wheel at that time, is there one thing that you're most proud of?

Avery: I guess I would say as my own creative output—I guess I would say some of this writing. Which has not—doesn't see the light of day. We didn’t put it online. I think we put it online for a while, but then...

Davis: Right.

Avery: ...stopped the URL. But it hasn’t really seen the light of day. But there’s some of the things that I feel like are the best things I’ve ever written, and it’s just—you know, [laugh] in this little folder. I don’t even know where it is in my house. I mean, it’s gotta be somewhere, like up in a box that’s like “Natalie’s punk stuff.” [laugh] But yeah. But I think what I feel the most—I guess you could say proud; I don’t know—just thinking about that time, and all this sort of energy that was created, that you—even things that you didn’t try to start yourself—like you weren’t like, “OK, lets...”

0:54:00

Let me back up. I mean, I guess that little anecdote I just told about Ian encountering this guy Roberto on the street and then knowing each other—what I’m happy about is all these encounters and mash-ups that actually became real true relationships and sort of different and new ways of thinking about things, that then kind of really manifested in Radio CPR, which is a part of—and we write about in a *Brickthrower*—is we wanted to start a micro radio station. We wanted it to get a license. We did a lot of work to try to get a license. And I think we might have some zines that are like—

at first, it was called the Mount Pleasant Broadcasting Club. I should look to see, because there—if they would be sort of connected with—and we do. There’s definitely something out there that’s kind of like, “This is what we’re trying to do.” It’s not called the *Brickthrower* but it’s kind of like expressing like, “This is...”

And it was just that same—we wanted to have a radio station that not only had like music we liked, but music other people liked, and different subcultures, different languages, different stories, different voices. And that was incredible. But it’s sort of like Radio CPR is similar to *Brickthrower*; I don’t even know how many people read it. I don’t know how many people listened to Radio CPR. It’s not like—I have no idea.

So even the times when I had a show and I was out there, maybe there was like one person listening. Maybe there was like zero people listening. But it’s just that act of using your voice in a context that you and your friends have created, and in kind of a subversive way—just it feels really energizing and awesome. Even though it wasn’t famous or it didn’t get much feedback [laugh] or—you know. But it feels like wow, what a revolutionary thing, to create a radio station that lasted like 20 years.

Davis: Yeah.

Avery: And it’s not that, that it really in and of itself—like the shows or the voices in that, or people remember—I don’t know if people remember listening to it, or if people—because it was hard; it was such a small range. But just the fact that a community that was that diverse, that wasn’t held together by anything other than like they had an outlet. It wasn’t held together by some of the usual things that hold little subcultures together, like how people look, or the community that’s created in a physical space.

0:57:02

Because it wasn’t. It was a community that was much more virtual, because people—we would share the radio station. People would go to do their show and not necessarily interact that often with everybody else. We would have some Radio CPR gatherings, and we had meetings, but that definitely didn’t include everybody. But there was still this sort of thread that sort of hung the whole thing together. But I guess I would say, yeah—I mean, I wish I still did something like this, because it feels—even just reading that last *City Paper* thing, [laugh] I was like—it just felt so good to write like that! You know?



Davis: Yeah. So why did you stop doing the zine? There were five issues is what I've seen. I don't know if there were more.

Avery: The zine really coincided with the band. I think the band ended when Amanda went to graduate school, so just kind of like life taking you in different paths. Because like I said, it was never like, "Let's start a zine." It was so much about a friendship and a community and doing—everything was just doing all these kind of different things.

Davis: How do you feel that this work that you did then is reflected in what you do now and who you are now?

Avery: I don't know. That's a funny question. Because right now, I'm like the main breadwinner for my family [laugh] so I'm working like—you know, I'm working a regular job that's not necessarily aligned with this kind of creativity or this kind of politics. I feel like I'm still trying to be subversive [laugh] and get things done. I run what's called the DC BID Council, which is the association of business improvement districts, which are sort of these place-based organizations that are funded by property owners within a certain area. So downtown has one, Georgetown has one. And it's to provide extra services, like extra cleaning services, putting on events, hanging up banners, just things that are—but there's definitely a critique that they aren't—they're actually kind of the opposite of this, because they're not DIY at all. They're like—you know. So sometimes I—so...

Davis: You're working within the system.

Avery: I'm working within the system. Yes. [laugh] It's not—but I'm learning a lot, and there's areas where I feel like I can have an impact. And it's funny, because when I think about things like this, I think—I don't know if anybody would even be able to—if you handed somebody something like this, would they even read it now? Because the velocity of humor and information and takes, like on Twitter—I don't know if I would read something like this.

1:00:19

And this is something I would—when I look back to this and I think about how much I read and talking to people and all that, and like now, so much of my media is delivered to me on my bus ride to and from work on Twitter. And some of it's hilarious. I mean, there's really hilarious awesome takes. But the velocity of it makes it so you just don't really absorb it. And you know how everything—like things that are DIY—there's nothing that looks

DIY. Even something that's really DIY can look exactly like *The New York Times* when it's on—I guess that's the whole thing about actual fake news. But when I look at stuff like this, just thinking about how tangible...

Davis: Yeah.

Avery: That sort of sense of DIY and alternative—and I don't know, I can't even find the language.

Davis: I do think people would still accept this as a source of information.

Avery: [laugh]

Davis: It kind of depends on the setting in which you'd be handing the things out to people. Because nearly everyone is used to now absorbing information—or not even absorbing; just letting it sort of cascade over them...

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: And then like, “Whoops, something got in!” You know? Like once a while, you'll catch something. But everyone almost takes for granted now that you will truly be bombarded with information every day.

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: I suppose if you unplug somewhat, there's less of that.

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: But I think in the zine that has information of the sort that you did, I do think in some environments, it would still be accepted and enjoyed and savored in a way that you almost would never savor anything that you view electronically, I think.

Avery: You just reminded me of something when I was a kid. Oh my god, it would be incredible if you found this. When I was a kid—I mean, this is in the late '70s—there was an—and it wasn't like a punk zine, but there was something akin to a zine that I remember getting, and loving. It was called *Getting There*...

Davis: Hmm!

Avery: ...and it was basically like this, and it was all local. It seemed like kids were writing it, but there were some adults involved. I don't even remember...

Davis: Wow.

Avery: ...what—and I don't have a copy. I don't have—I just have it in my head, of like—and I have this very vivid memory of sitting in Battery Kemble [Park in Washington, D.C.]—on the hill in Battery Kemble reading this, and being like totally blown away.

1:03:08

Not by the content, but just of the like, “Where did this come from?” And it felt like it was speaking to me.

Davis: Where would you find it?

Avery: I have no idea!

Davis: [laugh]

Avery: [laugh] I have absolutely no idea. Because you know, I was in like seventh grade.

Davis: Hmm! Wow.

Avery: And it was some Northwest Washington thing. I just think it must have been a really—I don't know. And I ask people. I'm the only one of anybody I know that remembers it. [laugh]

Davis: I'll have to look for it. Well, I'm trying to think if there are any other questions that I have. Is there anything you think that we should talk about that you haven't really covered in terms of creating the zine or how many copies you would get out there to people, or anything like that? I guess that's a question: Would you make that many of these?

Avery: Probably in the hundreds. There's more. We used to also have other—we made these little zines that weren't called the *Brickthrower* that we would pass out at shows. And I guess the only other thing I would—so at that time, I also—and I think it's even written about in one of these—I ran this youth organization called the Youth Action Research Group, that sort of grew out—it's another thing that grew out of Stand For Our Neighbors and us doing radio stuff. And the kids would make—part of it, the kids made some zines. And I think there's one we might have given you.

Davis: Movement, Empowerment, Solidarity...?

Avery: Yeah. Well, that was the show—the platform when we did shows. But it was called YARG—Youth Action Research Group—and we made a couple with that. But I think that was a kind of—it was like to be able to do this, but sort of transfer it to working with this group of teenagers from Bell that weren't exposed or had any reference points about the D.C. punk scene at all, but being able to write and express themselves and create this.

Davis: Did you feel more inspired by political writing that was kind of external to the punk scene when you were working on this? It doesn't seem like there were a lot of there zines that were that influential to you, or even really were that much on your radar.

Avery: Honestly, I didn't really read that many zines. I wasn't really a zine...

Davis: What were you reading?

Avery: I was reading a lot of like social movement theory and novels. [laugh] I was reading a lot of like Antonio Gramsci and people that—I mean, that's a lot that was incredibly influential to me, is Gramsci.

1:06:07

Davis: But your awareness of zines as a tool to sort of speak within this subculture was I suppose in place from...?

Avery: Well, OK. So yeah. I mean, and this—so have you studied Gramsci at all?

Davis: No.

Avery: All right. So maybe this will—OK. So Gramsci had this whole theory of how capitalism—how people sort of can consent to capitalism, even though they're oppressed by it. So the people on the bottom are actually—how is that happening? How is that held together? So he had this theory of hegemony. And what he talks about—what hegemony is is it's the fit between coercion and consent, where consent is the dominant of the two. And so it's how like culture and media all sort of shape how society or people in society see the world and see the power structures in the world as something that's like sort of natural and immutable.

He was a Marxist, so his whole thing was how you shake up that, and how you can have a revolution is not through like violence or coercion back. Oh, and the thing that was important is that there was—the coercion piece was there. The dominant was consent, or

is. But that consent piece—his whole thing was that consent piece wouldn't work if there wasn't like the threat of coercion as well built into the system. But instead of having like a violent revolution, he was like, if things are going to change and these power structures are going to change and become more just, you have to build a counter-hegemony.

And god, I mean, that sounds so grandiose, to be like, “And so I was like, ‘I’m going to build a counter-hegemony!’” But in some ways that was just thinking about that sort of framework of looking at things, being able to just create as many outlets for voices that are sort of countering this idea of, “This is how things should be. And things are like this because it’s right.” And being able to—so it was just interesting to me, the idea of those—not necessarily that—and I guess this other really important thing—I think we might write about it in here—is that the context is as important as the content, a lot of times.

1:09:02

The context of how you receive culture. So that if you're receiving—and this wasn't just Gramsci, but there was a lot of thinkers, especially that I was reading in graduate school—especially talking about like media and culture. That if you don't create a revolutionary context for people to receive information—you could have the most revolutionary material in the world, but if you're not sort of changing the context of how people receive things, then it doesn't matter.

So that was part of—all this stuff just felt like creating all these different new contexts, like a new context for getting people to read stuff like that, that was different from the usual fare people got at punk shows and in zines. And obviously radio stations. But even the radio station was like, “We're not just going to have a college rock punk radio station. We're going to—we want to have something that's this kind of mash-up.” So it was all the—I don't know if that helps.

Davis: Yeah, for sure.

Avery: It makes me sound really pretentious. [laugh]

Davis: No. These issues came out at a time where D.C. was just—it was at the cusp of this big change that was going to happen, that I think depending on your viewpoint is positive or negative changes that have happened in the city. Just reviewing these issues again in the last few days, it's also bittersweet for me, reading them, just

because of the—I don't know if I would feel as idealistic about change in the city as maybe like we did.

I mean, you're the one writing this, and you were the one making these zines, but I feel when they were coming out, I was really connecting with what you were saying. And I see them now as kind of like yeah, this is actually, A, still totally relevant, which is kind of amazing, and kind of heartening and also disappointing, that there's still so many of the same issues. But also just sort of like, "Damn." You know? When you think of the things that have happened to the city since 1997.

Avery: Yeah. And the world.

Davis: And certainly in the world, yeah.

Avery: Yeah. Could you ever have imagined? I thought we were on an upward trajectory.

Davis: Yeah.

Avery: [laugh]

Davis: I guess maybe this is the nature of the progress—that you've just sort of got to fight through the pushback against progress and keep moving. But you see it in DC just with how unrecognizable due to gentrification so much of the city is. And I don't know, I'm maybe more just sort of ruminating here, but it's interesting to go through these again, and there is an idealism in this.

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: That even though—it's a very practical idealism, I think, in reading these again.

1:12:02

There wasn't anything sort of starry-eyed about what I would read in the *Brickthrower*, but I guess, I don't know, if you have any reflections on, in 2018, thinking about what you wrote about the city 20 years ago—how you might feel about that?

Avery: Yeah. I feel that same sort of bittersweet and a little heartbreak. And especially I guess it's the sort of—I think the homogenization of space and culture—but I say that, and then I remember that there's still all these house shows going on. That people are finding those spaces. And so for me to sit here at like 51, to be like, "Oh, it's not the good old days"—I hate that shit. I hate it. I hate all the

like—I think we had a song called “Nostalgia Vending” and being like “Oh, it was so great back then.” I still feel like that it’s still really important to try to create these really real and authentic spaces, but it’s obviously harder to, when everything is being rented or sold at such a premium. Also, when I think back to when we were doing this, I lived in a group house in Mount Pleasant and my rent was \$260 a month!

Davis: [laugh]

Avery: So the kind of lifestyle you could have to be able to like read and think. And I was not young—I was in my early 30s when I was doing this. It wasn’t like I was—remember? I was already too old when I was 24.

Davis: Yeah, right. [laugh]

Avery: [laugh] So I guess my major reflection and wish is that at this time, some of the dynamics we were talking about, in terms of displacement and the sort of new development coming and what was happening to these communities that were already established and there and built these kind of rich subcultures were going to get displaced—that there was more—that instead of just decrying it, there was actually some mechanisms to help people be able to stay in the neighborhood.

Davis: Right.

Avery: But on the other hand, I also have a little pushback about the gentrification rhetoric, because there’s a lot of research that shows that children do better when they live in mixed-income neighborhoods, and that is poor children have much better chance of being able to move out of poverty and to have upward mobility if they live in neighborhoods that are a lot more—that are mixed-income.

1:15:18

So sometimes I feel like there’s all this hand-wringing about gentrification and neighborhood change, when what we should be doing is how can we focus on ending poverty or better outcomes for poor families and poor children? I think it gets—and a lot of times—and it’s something, if I was doing *Brickthrower* now, I would write about. I think that now, a lot of the rhetoric and the talk about gentrification is just super lazy and objectifying of people.

Yeah, so that's something I would—however, I wish that there were—I wish people had bought like an apartment building. Like punk rockers had gotten together and bought an apartment building, you know? At a time when the land was a little bit cheaper, if there were people that were like, “OK, to preserve this, we have to buy some stuff.”

Davis: But even look at Dante [Ferrando] owning the Black Cat space...

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: ...and even he feels pressure to still convert that into something that is accessible to this new dynamic that has come into the city.

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: I just—I wonder.

Avery: Yeah. Yeah, so who knows? I don't know. I don't know if those were—those reflections were...

Davis: [laugh]

Avery: I mean, I have a lot more to say about all that gentrification stuff. Because I mean, that was definitely—that was a whole—my whole youth program and a lot of this was about like how do we reckon with the fact that these neighborhoods are getting better and getting all these new services and getting all this new attention, and they're going to have new amenities, but people feel like—the poor people who are living here feel like it's not for them.

And so when we're looking at other neighborhoods that are in the midst of change, how do you make sure that they're able to benefit from the changes that are coming in, instead of just stopping the changes? Because I feel like it makes it better for poor people to live near a Metro stop, or to have a nice park with nice furniture. To have a sit-down restaurant. All of those things—those are nice things. It shouldn't be like the choice between having nice things and having things stay exactly the same.

Davis: Right. You want improvement, is what you want...

1:18:02

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: ...but not to then—not exclusion that comes from that improvement.



Avery: Exactly.

Davis: And it's also this almost like hyper-improvement...

Avery: Right.

Davis: ...where it's just sort of like, "Whoa." All this stuff jammed into this space that all looks like all these other parts of town now. Just...

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: You know all this.

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: Anyway, thinking of all that and all of the changes that have happened, it was interesting rereading these again and appreciating what you were saying in those and how, yeah, they are still relevant today.

Avery: Oh, that's so—you're going to make me get tears in my eyes, because—yeah, this is a time in my life I was more true to myself.

Davis: What do you think about digitizing things like this and having them be out there again?

Avery: Well, right now I want to go and photocopy this.

Davis: Yeah.

Avery: [laugh] Just a couple.

Davis: Of course.

Avery: Because I just haven't—because I don't even know where I put it. No, I love it. I'd love this stuff to be...

Davis: OK, good.

Avery: Yeah. Well, one of the things I'm doing—and this actually could be part of this—is—so there's a—so Antonia Tricarico—you know, Joe Lally's wife...

Davis: Yes.

Avery: ...is putting this book out, and I wrote a little thing about it for—about La Casa, which kind of touches on some of the stuff that we've talked about. It's really short, though. And the Folk Life

Festival this year, one of the focuses is going to be on D.C. music, but looking at like all the different subcultures and movements of music. And I proposed—she asked me if I wanted to—the book is going to come out at the same time, so there’s going to be some linkages. And so I proposed doing a tour of Mount Pleasant, like an off-the-mall tour of Mount Pleasant, that would—so it would be digital, but it would also be something that you could go to Mount Pleasant and you could have on your phone sort of some multimedia stuff on the phone...

Davis: Yeah, that’s great.

Avery: Be like at the Wilson Center, or be standing in front of La Casa. So it could be that kind of experience. But then also having something—some like panel discussion or something—I don’t know; panel discussion—I mean, when I think about how much I’ve rambled today, I’m like, “What do you do to get it so somebody is going to walk away with something that was interesting?” I don’t know.

Davis: From a panel discussion?

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: I think that the combination of people that are a part of that panel—and you hope that there’s a chemistry, and I suppose that plays a part in that.

Avery: Yeah. So I’m trying to figure out what to—but sort of getting—even looking at these, it’s like, “Wow.” Like [laugh] how could that be—yeah, because I kind of had forgotten some of the ways that I was thinking about the world then.

1:21:05

Davis: That reminds me of—a friend was saying—who’s my age and who is involved in punk—and he was just saying in our 20s, it was so much—it was just sort of this energy that—this sort of anti-authority energy, and that then as we got a little older, started—almost felt like—like we’d sort of chuckle about, and like, “Oh, we just didn’t really know what was going on then.” And now...

Avery: We're in a fascist dictatorship.

Davis: ...at 40, it’s sort...

Avery: [laugh]

Davis: Well, I was—you know when I was completely right, was like 20 years ago, when I thought I was an idiot.

Avery: Yeah. [laugh] No, no, I know exactly...!

Davis: And I thought that I was immature, or that I was—it's like, no, I need to tap back into...

Avery: Yeah.

Davis: ...to *that*.

Avery: No, I totally agree with you.

Davis: That made an impact on me, thinking about that. And it's right. It needs to be remembered.

Avery: Yeah. That's what I meant. It's not that I feel like I'm not being true to myself now, but I feel like—and I'm trying to like tap back in—because I mean, I was just tapped into myself during that whole period in a different way, in a way that's hard to get to. And it's also like, you know, raising kids and having to...

Davis: Yeah.

Avery: ...you know, [laugh] like pay a mortgage and deal with all that stuff. It's...

Davis: It's a new dynamic you have to...

Avery: [laugh]

Davis: ...that you have to keep in mind for sure.

Avery: But now, I—like my daughter said to me, she's like, "I'm only going to be here for four more years." And I was like, "Well, not if you go to Georgetown. Or one of the local schools. You could just live here." And she was like, "Uh, no." [laugh]

Davis: That's good. We want them to get out there.

Avery: [laugh] I do like that, but still, it was like—but I was just like, "Shit!" I mean, four years—four years ago seems like nothing.

[End of recording]