

C2C - Ep.21

[00:00:31] Welcome to Coast to Coast. My name is Lily Weinberg, and I'm here joined by my colleague Alberto Ibarguen, Knight Foundation president and CEO. Hi, Alberto. Hello, how are you?

[00:00:46] I'm doing well. How are you? Very well. Thank you for today's conversation.

[00:00:52] Me too. I'm looking forward to it. And thanks so much for joining us on the final conversation of the year for Coast-to-coast Episode twenty one.

[00:01:02] It's really hard to believe that that we've done this twenty one times and as you know very well, because you encouraged us to do this and to start this conversation when the pandemic began to talk about communities. And really the purpose of these conversations were twofold. One was to look at the future of cities, especially for building engaged communities in a time of rapid change, and then to have practical, practical, tangible insights and takeaways for our communities. And you've really, really pushed that piece that the practical piece to as you know, we've looked at that all types of topics from how to leverage public spaces and technology during the pandemic, as you remember. Well, we talked about transformation of streets for businesses and restaurants. And then in every episode, we've really tried to elevate exclusivity and equity as a core component of these conversations. I think it's really appropriate that we are ending our last episode, talking to mayors around what they're doing in communities, how they are leading. And I'm really excited about today. So, Alberto, can you tell us a bit about what we're going to talk about and who we're talking with?

[00:02:29] Great. I wonder if we could have our three illustrious guest knows nose and show themselves on the video. We've got Jim Kenney from Philadelphia. We've got Viles from Charlotte and we've got Lorraine Cover from Miami. Do.

[00:02:48] What they have in common is that they are the the the principal political leader and each of their night communities. I know you don't necessarily think of Philadelphia first as a term, but we think of Philadelphia as a big community. Charlotte is a nice community and so is my home. And not only that, but these are three supremely and I know this from personal experience, these are three supremely practical people who actually get the job done. Well, a lot of other people are giving speeches and doing the talking.

[00:03:25] And so in light of in light of the disconnect that we seem to have between national arguments and in terms of the vision, we thought we'd look at the city level, the local level, frankly, these are not small places. None of the three of them, Miami-Dade County, Philadelphia, Charlotte or major cities of the United States, that they are led at a level of people that are led to a level of connection to people and the problems. And so hearing from the folks who are doing it and doing it best, I think this is a great way to win this series.

[00:04:11] I'd like to ask maybe to have each of you give just a real quick, real quick overview of how you're seeing the key challenges in your city. And please, we don't have that much time. But I do want to give you a little bit of time for scene settings. So contact settings so that folks understand these are not is not meant to be one type of city, is not meant to be one type of solution.

[00:04:44] But what are you looking at, Vyvyan and in Charlotte.

[00:04:49] And then we'll move to Jim and then our newest member, Danniella, who was just recently elected.

[00:04:56] And and we'll kick it off, but we'll kick it off with you if we can.

[00:05:01] Thank you so much, Alberto, and thank you to the Knight Foundation for giving all of us this opportunity to talk about living in this time and importance of cities as we're moving forward. So I'm going to be brief and also tell you answer your question. When two years ago our city talked about our values and the values for diversity, inclusion and welcoming, I think that what we will add to that is equity this time. Our city, just like many other cities, have had to react to the reality of systemic racism, the reality of economic disparities and the reality that those problems have to be addressed and solved at every level of government. So for me, my major initiatives are pretty basic and simple. When I talk about Charlotte and my goals for Charlotte, which have been adopted in so many ways by this community, is that I want everyone to have a place to live that they can afford. I want people to have a decent job. And then what the city's obligation is to make it possible for them to move between those two places, work and home, no matter however they spend their leisure time, that we give them the time to flourish and not just in the ways that we talk about in terms of successful incomes and successful job opportunities, but success in building community and neighborhoods and a civic fabric. I just believe that the simplest way to talk about it is a place to live, a place to work, and the ability to build your own community in a way that's safe and communal and build back our city. I believe that the racial disparities of a southern city and a southern state are many, but they're solvable if we acknowledge our history and look at it that way. So thank you for the opportunity to talk a little bit about Charlotte, the fastest growing city in the country right now, 15th largest city in the country right now. And if you would ask me that question 20 years ago, I probably would have said that's not us, but it is us. And we are adjusting as we grow and prosper.

[00:07:28] Alberto.

[00:07:32] Can you hear me? I unmuted, I muted myself. I had a phone call just to prove that this is like this. But and I didn't want to hear the phone.

[00:07:44] But one of the things that's always been amazing to me about Charlotte is that it is a southern city of Southern history and tradition. But the tectonic plates of that and the new Charlotte, the new financial center of the United States is really quite remarkable. I love the focus on community because I think that's where you begin rebuilding trust that we need so much during what's going on in Philadelphia.

[00:08:12] Well, let me give you a little a little bit of background about me. I mean, no, I'm 62 years old. I was born in nineteen fifty eight. I'm a lifelong Philadelphian. I grew up in a south Philadelphia ethnic enclave of Irish Catholicism and and a city of neighborhoods. And because of my parents efforts in educating me, getting me through a pretty, pretty good prep school at St. Joe's Prep in Jesuit educated and then and then college and all and learned that what City of Philadelphia went through in the nineteen sixties and seventies and began to come out of in the 80s and 90s is still the issue of of of race and systemic racism. And I view myself as mayor is trying to bring us all together with the experience of the old and growing up and understanding what the new Philadelphia should be. And that is a city that is attractive to immigrants. Most of our businesses are started

now by people were born in other countries, and to bring together the white the way white people and and people of color so that we can move together as a city. And I honestly believe that because we have such a poor population, that the only real way out of that poverty is education. And we have been investing everything that we can and our education process. We have obviously had a glitch during the course of the pandemic and the loss of revenue. And we're trying to rebuild our rebuild our economy. We're going to need some help from the federal government in order to do that. We can't do that on our own, but we really want to continue to reinvest in education. I think that is the most important thing we can do. We start we passed a beverage tax in Philadelphia, which was not a lot of fun or easy thing to do, I can assure you. But it's but it's stood the test of time and stood the test of multiple lawsuits and that money going in to pay for a quality pre-K education for as many children as we can get in. We believe that that pre-K experience bodes well for them as they move to kindergarten, first grade and beyond and sets them up for success going forward. We also need to deal with investing. State of Pennsylvania is supposed to be the prime funder of our educational process, but they don't fund it the way they should fund it, despite Governor Wolf's valiant efforts to do so. So we had to pick up the slack and invest that. We invested a billion dollars in new money in our school system over the first four years or so of our administration. Again, we've hit a little bit of roadblocks financially. We're going to build our way back. We have set up scholarship programs of our community college, the Octavius Catto Scholarship, which is represents an individual who was a civil rights leader icon back in the 60s and 70s. We resurrected his is that is about education and racial equity in voting rights and the like. So we're we're moving forward all the all of our folks together. But understanding that we have to look at everything through a racial equity lens, it's the most important thing. As you see, academic people who are affected the most for people are brown and black people, has affected them more than anyone else. As we work our way back with the vaccine, we have to make sure that vaccine is distributed in an equitable, equitable manner and that everyone is treated fairly. We won't get out of this that we're going through right now with the pandemic and the soon to be thankfully post Trump era and move forward together, interlocked, arms interlocked and move forward to make our city the best it can be.

[00:11:37] Thank you so much for that introduction. I know from having heard you speak extemporaneously on this more and more than once, I don't know anybody who was more eloquent is is understanding and support for the contribution of immigrants in this country as the as the son of an immigrant, the husband of an immigrant, I've always been particularly appreciative of your of your service on that score. And you and I know that you also use that tax money for reimagining public spaces. And I would like to come back to that a little bit, if I could. Later on in the program. Let's move to my Mayor Danniella, living color and welcome to. It's really quite wonderful to see you on this program. I hope you're feeling better. I know you were quite under the weather.

[00:12:38] Yes, I get to have experienced covid firsthand and emerge the other side gratefully. Thank you very much, Alberto. And you. Well, this is really an honor for me to be online with two other wonderful mayors. And, of course, Lillian Alberto from the fabulous Knight Foundation you. I've arrived. I've actually been mayor of Miami-Dade County for one month and I was a county commissioner for six years prior to that. And so I'm the new kid on the block. Also, I'm a county mayor, not a city mayor. We have thirty four municipalities in Miami-Dade County, including the city of Miami, the largest municipality, but Hialeah, Coral Gables, Miami Gardens, Miami Beach, they're all part of our county. And as county mayor, we've got two point seven or eight million residents. We've got a nine billion dollar budget. And we are a majority minority community and have been for some time, so we believe that we are what the future of America looks like. And

not only that, but we are paradise. So no offense to the wonderful city colleagues on the line here. But, hey, you know, it's pretty beautiful right here in Miami today. My son and daughter in law live in Philadelphia. So thank you, Mayor, for taking good care of them. Look, we live in this incredibly dynamic place, international, truly a global city. Dynamic, energetic, entrepreneurial, and also with people struggling to get by, we have one of the highest costs of living relative to the salaries. We have low prevailing wages. We're dominant hospitality tourism industry, which, of course, has been particularly hard hit by the pandemic. Also, foreign investment is a key part of our formula. Fortunately, we're doing better than a lot of the places that like to invest here. So that continues. And we're also a great alternative to the cold northeast and north central. So we are benefiting from an exodus from some of those places. And what we're working really hard to encourage that. So sorry to to you and Philadelphia and other northern climes, but your misfortune is our fortune. So apart from all of that, we are number one in assets at risk from sea level rise in the world, I guess because we keep building on the coast. Go figure. Because of the high cost of living and the low salaries, housing affordability is an even bigger problem for us than I think. Look, we could argue as the bigger problem, but for sure, we have a huge, huge issue with the highest percentage of people extremely housing burdened over 50 percent of their income spent on housing related costs. We do have a traffic nightmare which was alleviated somewhat during the pandemic and has not come back in full force. But we have a very substandard public transit system and working really hard to to bring us into the 21st century. As far as that goes, we are a small business economy. 80 percent of our businesses are 10 or fewer, and they're on life support if they haven't disappeared already. And so our challenges as we emerge from the pandemic, apart from our health, our lives and our livelihoods, is to build back that kind of entrepreneurial, hospitality based small business economy, as well as to attract anyone we can from the Northeast and build infrastructure projects which are a win-win. So that's a little nutshell of what we're facing here.

[00:16:57] My one month report on the job, I can't it's impossible to overlook the importance of race and racial equity at this point in American life. And it's also foolish to pretend that we are simply because there's been an election that we're going to go on and on and on and walk forward together. Half the country, 70 million voted for somebody else than the winner.

[00:17:34] And so we are divided in any number of ways. I introduce you all from my personal knowledge of you and believe in you as extremely practical people. As a practical matter, how do we get folks to sit down and stop speechifying and start focusing on accepting what what what the racial inequity, actually, and then dealing with it first? The first step toward transformation is accepting the reality, then sharing the vision, then figuring out what to do about it. That first step seems to elude us whenever we talk about it, because you hear people giving grand speeches, your folks get stuff done. How are you approaching your central?

[00:18:28] Everyday you remind me of a saying that my mother used to say sometimes and she'd say, watch my feet, not my mouth. It's a pretty southern setting, I believe, but it means it has meaning. It really is about not just talking about something, but getting some things done. So let me give you a couple of examples of what we've done. First, setting the vision by acknowledging our racial disparity and our role in the in the issues that are beyond just the normal GI Bill and not allowing black men to be able to get a loan, to not be able to get the opportunity to go to college all the way up until where urban renewal took place and destroyed African-American neighborhoods in our city. So first, acknowledging and admitting that this history exists. We have just completed a legacy

commission where many streets and towns in the South have memorials and statues and streets named after the Confederacy Heritage and the Jim Crow laws that exist, honoring that and so owning that and beginning to change it. But more importantly, you have to change people's lives. And I believe some of the work that actually the Knight Foundation has helped us do in terms of building, rebuilding our traditional African-American are people of color corridors where they've had issues on housing and safety of the neighborhoods, schools that were failing all of these things. We have to have a core of people and communities that will believe. So we have to give them the opportunity to organize, make a plan and then implement that plan in cooperation with government. And when I say implement, I don't mean just window dressing. I'm talking about putting your money from the budget and recognizing that you have to do this work. I'm talking about doing municipal services at a level that makes up for the times of neglect, why our communities are failing because we didn't invest for so long, because they were not the places that new growth was happening.

[00:20:50] So we've got to go back and correct it. So in Charlotte, we've called it Operation Opportunity, Corridors of opportunity. And what we're doing is actually making access to capital for development, particularly in minority developers, to come in and redo the historical downtowns and corridors are centers of these communities.

[00:21:15] We're also investing money in making sure that our operational services, that we're keeping it clean, that we're actually managing it. And then finally, we're having to focus our areas for affordable housing, renovation and rehabilitation.

[00:21:31] We don't not want to experience the displacement of the 1970s. What we want to do is keep people in their neighborhoods and programs like tax abatement programs, which I'm not really allowed to say because that's not what we do. But it basically is the end of the day, allowing people to stay in their homes in an area where the values have increased so much that they can afford. We have to figure that out. And we've done it in a way that keeps people there, but also creates the opportunity for the next generation to also stay there. So the practical part of this, I say, is watch what people do, not what they say.

[00:22:11] Oh, it's terrific. It's a simple lesson or a deceptively simple lesson. And we're certainly very, very proud to work with you in the West and particularly our program director there. Charles, this is a big supporter of the kind of practical development of these corridors. You call them as close as you are. Jim, in Philadelphia, you've done an amazing job in using public spaces and such an amazing job that you actually stole our former program officer to work with you in car. But how are you?

[00:22:58] How is that? One of the ways in which you're touching neighborhoods is that is that what's driving Philadelphia is reimagining those public spaces.

[00:23:10] First of all, not apologetic for stealing your guy.

[00:23:16] All's fair in love in government.

[00:23:17] So, of course.

[00:23:19] Let me just expand a little bit on what their lives talked about. I think the most important one of the most important parts as a starting point. Racial equity and discussion of race is getting the story right. The history that I was taught in school wasn't accurate.

The history that generations before me were taught in school was also very inaccurate. It wasn't the full story of what really happened and when. And I love history and I love the context of history as we look forward and try to build a better society. We have to acknowledge the fact that African-Americans built this country period on their backs for no money in the state of slavery until emancipation. And then after that continued to build this country, fighting our wars, support work in our factories, do all the things that everyone else did and got no credit for anything that they did. I mean, one of the most poignant things I've seen is, is an African-American widow getting the Congressional Medal of Honor posthumously for her husband from the United States because they wouldn't give it to them back in World War Two when he accomplished a feat. Because these things have to be recognized. And I got thank God I had the parents that I had who would not allow that insipid racism to enter into our lives, into our home. So I was never raised with that with that hatred and with that that misinformation. We have to acknowledge what the true story is, get the real history right, and then acknowledge every war that history and thank people for what it is they've done for our country. I know what I see guys on a corner in neighborhoods throughout the city that are wearing their military hats, their baseball caps with their insignia and their division and company on it. Older African-American men, they went and fought for their country and came back to sit on the back of the bus. I can't imagine how you would stay patriotic as an American living in that kind of environment. So I think we have to acknowledge that, acknowledge our full acknowledge that the sin of our country and then try to make up for that sin, I think, to two areas. We can make up for it. We can never make up for slavery. It's not possible. It's the original sin of America. And we're going to live with it as long as we're as long as this country exists. But I think education, as I said earlier, is extremely important. People need to be educated. Our kids need to be educated. And not only just getting a college degree, but I mean, science, technology, math, the things where you can actually create careers and create people who can invent things and create things and be entrepreneurs. And that's the educational side. I think the real inequity and the real unfairness is in housing. I think that if you look at some of the struggling neighbors of our city that happen to be African-American is the housing that is really the problem. And we really have need a national investment and local investment in decent housing for people where they can have solid neighborhoods, raise children, take care of our grants, have them be in live and live in safety and live in the neighborhood that they grew up in. And I think that's really important. And we we we we look for development in our city, but we also have to temper that with displacement. We have to temper that with gentrification. We can't have great neighborhoods that are building and we're pushing everybody out. One of the biggest redevelopment projects in the city's history is back in the 60s called Society Hill and Society. Hill is a beautiful place. Those lovely homes, they're all kind of starkly significant. It's safe. It's beautiful. Black people got pushed out of neighborhood to build society here. And we have to recognize that.

[00:26:42] And we have to look at in the future that we, as we move forward to expand and develop, that we don't do the same thing that we did to black people in society, Hill and in other neighbors. But our city and I think with with some federal help from from HUD and others, we could do those things.

[00:26:57] I remember when Society Hill was getting bailed out, I was in law school at the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia. And that there was there was a big push going on back then. That was and that was in the 70s. I think that was when I was in high school.

[00:27:15] Yes. And I'm not sure. Jim, thank you. That's a really clear exposition.

[00:27:23] And yes, I'm still sorry that you got that, Morgan, but we were able then to get Alan Wagner to join us and represent those really wonderfully well in Philadelphia and then in Miami, you've you've got sea level rise that you've already talked about. You've got a place where three quarters of the people who were here were born someplace else in a foreign country. What what what practical steps do you take to bring us together to find common ground so we can go forward?

[00:28:01] Well, thanks, Alberto.

[00:28:03] You know, I am the first Anglo to be mayor for for over two decades, first woman ever to serve in this role and actually first Jewish person. So and I am definitely in the minority in Miami. So I like to say I am the bridge builder because. I didn't get here by by my demographic, right? So we have about 70 percent, primarily Spanish speakers in Miami Dade County and it was started Cuban Exodus. But now all the Latin countries that everyone with troubles there, they're here and the African-American community has become a smaller and smaller percentage of the population, despite also having built the bohemia that came and the original settlers. So it is really a place where there's a lot of pain on this issue of of of disparities. And this was a large part of my campaign focus saying that we would address head on the disinvestment in certain communities that have been left behind. And in fact, my main opponent in the runoff said that he wasn't aware of systemic racism. So hard to address it if you don't see it. I've spent a career dealing with issues of disparities and racism and and addressing them. And if I can't fix it as mayor, then good am I. So we bring a very, very race conscious lens to the work, not leaving behind all the others who are struggling and trying to make a better, a better life.

[00:29:59] But with that said, I am creating an Office of Equity and Inclusion to make sure that it is visible, that we do talk about it, that we do act on it. And a very practical. Thank you for that, Alberto. Yes, a common sense candidate. And by the way, I'm a nonpartisan mayor, not party affiliate. So that is very, very important because I am a registered Democrat, a lifelong Democrat, and most even though we're a Democratic majority, of course, no party affiliation is the biggest party. But even though we have quite a few more Democrats than Republicans, we have so many that have fled totalitarian regimes that really bought into the narrative that Democrats are leftists. And so many, many other Democrats on a partizan ticket lost this election. And my election was considered an anomaly as as a Democrat and a Democratic majority.

[00:31:02] Yeah, I mean, really, that's because they don't know you. I didn't that this lady's going to win.

[00:31:10] That's right. That's why I said, well, I doubt me because I am a true collaborator, because I really do see the value across all the divides and so on. But just like McKinney said, you have to call it, you have to if you don't see it, if you don't call it, you can't do anything about it.

[00:31:29] And there's been a huge tension about the lack of acknowledgment of the racial disparity for a few decades. And so we have to be very, very deliberate procurement, infinitesimal what the black community has achieved compared to others hiring, promotions, segregation. And I'll add something to the gentrification front. We have climate gentrification because, again, when you look at our sea level rise, most of our lower income housing was in areas that now turn out to be the more desirable because their higher elevation. So we have massive.

[00:32:11] Kind of internecine efforts to buy up properties which will turn out to be the more the more valuable properties without really conscious policies, anti gentrification. As commissioner, I brought legislation for community redevelopment agencies which are targeted reinvestment in and disadvantaged neighborhoods to say that if you're building, you must also build for income inclusion. And if you're displacing, you must replace. And so we have to have that conversation. It is a very critical conversation that I would say in many ways is just truly beginning in our wonderful insight.

[00:32:52] And I know that our program director here in Miami, Romo, is looking forward to working with folks in your administration. We have just a few minutes before we open it up for questions from the audience. But there are two things that I'd like to raise and sort of I don't want to be all over the lot, but there are two important issues we have. And I take it as a matter of almost dogma, that the arts are a key factor in the building of community and arts and Charlotte Arts and Philadelphia Arts and Miami, Miami-Dade are certainly an element in bringing people together.

[00:33:38] I wonder if you have any thoughts on that. But but but but perhaps more urgently, we talk about the values of diversity.

[00:33:51] But I wonder if you believe that there should be as diverse set of approaches as we have taken to public health in the United States, where the federal government has basically said the states and municipalities will decide for themselves what's good for them. And there's been certainly some controversy about whether we wouldn't have we wouldn't have been better served by and by a more national approach to the pandemic. And now as we get to the point of distribution of vaccines, there is a fair amount of diversity in how that's going to happen. I wonder if you could tell us and Daniel, I know that your husband is a doctor, your focus on having a public health officer. I know this is important to you. How are you approaching this issue and how do you relate to the feds on this on this very important next phase in fighting the pandemic?

[00:34:54] Well, if I get to start, I'll say never mind the federal government, how about the state government? You know, you may remember that in the absence of a federal response, a lot was pushed on to the governors and the governors took very varied approaches. And then there were which ones had better relations with the president? Right. It happens that our governor has a very good relationship with the president. And that did help us to get early supplies of tests and things like that.

[00:35:24] But as but on the other hand, our governor has really restricted local control over response and has really pushed for full opening and things like that. So that has been a challenge. We have been fortunate because we do have a major teaching hospital.

[00:35:45] We are one of the first recipients of the vaccine. I have to tell you, as of an hour ago, in in in about two days time. Three thousand people had been immunized in Miami-Dade County at Jackson Memorial Hospital, and they have set up an incredible assembly line. And of course, we have a lot of skepticism about this as well. So we are working hard at having prominent citizens across sectors, across communities, races, ethnicity, speaking up to try to help overcome some of that natural skepticism. But there's a sense of such excitement, such joy at being at the forefront at the beginning of the end is how they refer to it. One doctor said it's like being the first person to walk on the moon. That's how they felt about being at the front end of getting this vaccine. So, yeah, we're going to have to. And one of the mayors mentioned about the importance of rolling this out in a way that is equitable, but also in a way that takes that deals with people's fears, which

are so very, very real in so many of these communities. And, you know, you need to have those trusted intermediaries across all those different communities to help to make it real.

[00:37:08] I think that's a really good point in cities in a way, might just be those trusted intermediaries as opposed to the federal government. Do you feel we would have been we should have had a national approach to this pandemic? And is this now a time when we really should share to a local implementation?

[00:37:33] That's a question that if I were just to say knowing not knowing any more than I do, that we really did need the collaboration, the coordination from the federal government and the, you know, as being a city and a lot. And the president said a Democrat state, we did not have the opportunities that were allowed for some of the Republican governors. And it ended up that we had to work really hard, harder. But I think that our governor, Roy Cooper, recognized that we were a state that's very diverse. We are rural, we're urban, we've got corridors, we've got different populations, black, brown and white people everywhere. And he allowed cities and counties to take steps that were above and beyond what might be necessary for a different part of our state. And I think in that large part, that has helped us a great deal. But this idea of access to our vaccines and a part of the disparities that people that experience, I believe, is going to be very, very difficult for us is in some ways we've got to reinstall some trust that has been broken for four years. I mean, magnify it in terms of the disparity and and the lack of unity. So I'm hoping that by the end of the summer, as the new administration comes in, we talked about the United States of America. We talked about the word unity. Can we take those values and incorporate them in a public health model that allows people that really need the speccing to have it as needed and allows for everyone to be able to participate?

[00:39:31] As mayor, my goal is to educate, educate and when available, be a model for people to say, as a black woman, mayor and a leader here, I've got to step up and say this is an important vaccine. I'm taking it and I can take it. You can take it. And we need that kind of leadership that we're building.

[00:39:52] And it goes to some of our community building our neighborhoods where we try to approach problems like violence, where we try to approach problems like homelessness. Those neighborhood leaders are essential to any of these efforts, and that includes the public health portion of it. So we're going to be reaching out to those those leaders. It's not always at the top. It's sometimes just your neighbor saying, I'm going to drive down and get my vaccine or the vaccine is coming to our neighborhood and are you going to walk over with me? That kind of trust is what we have to have to make this work across our entire community.

[00:40:34] Well, it seems to me this is a huge opportunity for local government to rebuild trust by getting the job done right. Jim, how are you seeing things? And in the business community? We are represented here in Philadelphia.

[00:40:48] I think the issue in the United States and marveled at the fact that people actually make an argument that we can't afford health care for everybody. I mean, it's one of the most silliest arguments that I've ever heard in a nation that has the wealth that it has. And we've had this kind of false narrative that's been set up, especially in the last four years under this administration, that somehow either a capitalist or a socialist. And there's nowhere in between. And there's some of the people who are making arguments about being not being socialist, are waiting desperately for their Social Security check every

month, which is socialism, because people I will have that argument. People say, you know what they said to me once, how Obama is a socialist. I said, well, I don't think so. What do you take that check you get every month? Well, that check I should vote. You earn half of that. Check your portion of that check and the rest of us contribute to the full check that you get every month. Do you take Medicare? Oh, sure. I take Medicare Part B, I have the part B, why is that socialist? Why socialism? Everybody's benefits that they get. They earned everybody else's benefits that they get, they view as socialism. To me, it's just it's so self-defeating as a nation and it hurts us on almost every level. And who benefits and gains the one percent of the folks who are getting all the benefits of this country to begin with, while the rest of us, middle class and lower middle class and poor fight over the scraps? There's no reason why that that should be. And I think that that if local and local governments need to play a major role in this vaccine issue, we have a wonderful governor who works with us all the time. We are the largest city, the state, Pittsburgh's second largest city. He works with them, but he also works for small communities. He's been a fair and equitable, equitable. And I trust him when when this vaccine begins to what's been rolling out already, but as it rolls out even more into phase two and three. And we also need to make sure that we have people of color who stand up and say, I've taken the vaccine. The vaccine is safe. You have to trust me. We have the Black Black Doctors Consortium here in Philadelphia who have been testing for for months and months now, needed a rapport with the community.

[00:43:00] And I think organizations like that have the opportunity to really get people's trust because they're going to we're going to need their trust in order for them to get this vaccine and get this pandemic out of our lives forever, hopefully.

[00:43:14] I think I really do think that it's a huge opportunity for for the rebuilding of trust in communities. I see that we've gotten a number of questions. I did want to make sure that that I asked you, though, about your view of the arts as part of your program, as part of your policies.

[00:43:37] I'm going to start with you since I know it in the arts in Philadelphia and in many, many of our cities isn't it is an amazing source of employment and excitement and it feeds other industries. So, for example, the the art feed, the restaurant industry, the restaurant feeds the arts, feeds tourism and hospitality and museums, feed tourism and hotels.

[00:43:58] So, I mean, there's a whole continuum of of of not just the arts itself. It's everything that it feeds. The sad part about it is in order to enjoy the arts, you have to come together in small spaces, enclosed and enjoy a show, enjoy a play, you know, enjoy musical. So as as we get the vaccine distributed, as this community begins to grow in our communities, we can bring people together again. And we're going to have to find ways within the city and state and hopefully federal government to infuse some assistance into these organizations, both the, you know, the entertainment and arts groups, the restaurants and the and the hospitality and the tourism organizations. And I think we can get there. And again, the most important thing is to get as much of the vaccine distributed as effectively and equitably as possible so that we can all come together again and enjoy, enjoy life.

[00:44:50] I saw an interview with a with a Broadway, an actor, somebody I was maybe I don't even know. But he said at the end of the interview was on one of the new programs, is that what could we do to support the arts? And he said, where a Best Buy. What about you and Charlie?

[00:45:12] Everything that Mayor Kenney said, but I want to add one other thing, we've got to figure out how to support the individual artists in our community.

[00:45:22] We have a wonderful performing arts venue, brings in all of our plays, our museums, our art museums, our history museums.

[00:45:30] All of those are very important. So we have to focus on that, making sure that they can reopen and and the vaccine is important to that. But I think also that if we're going to have artists continue to produce works that are important for the future, that we need to feed this generation of individual artists. And I hope that we'll find ways to do that, because those are the folks that are going to chronicle this pandemic that we've had. And how they explain it will often make history more real to those that study it in the future. So that's my hope.

[00:46:08] Terrific. And you've also got a nominal new public library coming online.

[00:46:13] Phenomenal new. I'm hoping that we get it built on the supply chain. Issues are resolved as a result of an international effort to stop this pandemic.

[00:46:24] Whatever it is, it is excited about it because it is also going to be one of the one of the best examples of a modern digital library as well as the Danniella. And you're in you're in a place where we work very hard to make our general environment. What about you?

[00:46:45] Well, first of all, nobody has done more for the arts than the Knight Foundation in Miami.

[00:46:50] It's just extraordinary. And truly, we are an art destination, Mr Basil, this year. But it'll be back. And we did have our local version of what's again unique about our art scene is that it's global, that it's homegrown as well as it comes from all corners of the planet. And it's a key part of our differentiator as a tourist destination.

[00:47:19] So our Convention and Visitors Bureau incorporates arts fully into the tourism message. You know, it's the experience that's different from the cookie cutter. So definitely, definitely a key part of our economy.

[00:47:36] And we've been able to maintain so far our county budget through the pandemic and helping really having a strong sense of of keeping these organizations in business to get through these these trying times. I'm very proud of that. And, you know, it's really what puts us on the map in so many ways.

[00:47:58] And you've got one of the best county arts councils. I guess we say the leadership of local sports.

[00:48:05] I do want to make a comment on your your your your observation that the arts, the performing arts really require the gathering of people. And that's simply not possible. And what we've been doing at MIT has been on a number of organizations and I'm thinking of some in Philadelphia and some here in Miami City Ballet or Sony, where they are simply taking digital and saying, OK, I can come to the show, but why did I bring you into this? I have to watch. The other day a fascinating tour of the stacks of the Wilsonian Museum of Propaganda Arts. I didn't even know they had those thoughts in the building.

But it creates it's an opportunity to build a different relationship. Lily, do you have any questions?

[00:48:59] We do. And this has been a great conversation. We do have a lot of questions from the audience. I'm going to elevate a couple of them and to build upon them the most. Your most recent comment around virtual convening is and so there's a question, mayors around public meetings and how you're leveraging technology to better connect to your constituents and if that's going to really change for the future once this pandemic is over, leveraging technology to that, they're connected to your community. So I would love to to hear from you on that.

[00:49:39] American technology has obviously we've done all done more zoomin team's goals and than we would like over the course of the last nine, 10 months, that has kept us in touch with with with our constituents. And it allowed us to conduct business in the city and have public meetings and to convene kipping folks to do things. I do think, though, somebody has been in politics, in government for 30 or 30 years or so, it's not the same thing that I recognize with folks is that they're frustrated when they do a public meeting and they're all Zoome or they're on teams and they get they can get shut down. I remember being in city council meetings and in the six hours I spent in city council where there would be raucous, sometimes council members didn't like that and I didn't like it sometimes myself. But it was more it was more free public discourse than you can get in a virtual setting. And I think people get the public gets frustrated because it seems as if the people in charge can control the medium because they have the leverage on the mute button. They can put time limits on people's own people's comments. So it is does although we've had to do it, we have no other choice and it's been effective. I'm really looking forward to get back, getting back to get yelled at.

[00:51:02] When we talk about this, I think the collective makes a better decision. And I think exactly what Mayor Kenney is saying when you're on Zoome or any platform that allows you to have the meetings, it's almost like you speak and someone else speaks. I think it is limited the ability to build greater ideas and greater solutions. And my I believe that the public being present in the room along with the council, gives us the synergy that's necessary for good governance. I know that many people are much more comfortable with technology, but for me, collaboration and synergy and governance, those are really important. So I'm looking forward to the opportunity when we can actually someone can say something and someone can think of a better way to make that work for everyone. I think that's what the limitations of technology are, unless we can figure out how to do it better.

[00:52:00] Got it.

[00:52:01] And I and Mayor, you are what's really been interesting with with your care is you are using some of those dollars to address the digital divide, to get folks connected, which I think has been a really interesting usage of those dollars and a pivot a little bit. There's a question around the public realm and and and there's been a lot of changes with how we leverage streets, how we use public spaces. There's been record demand of public spaces recently. And I'm just there's a question around how are you thinking that through for the future of the public realm in public spaces. Mayor Levine, you want to jump in here?

[00:52:49] Well, I would start with parks. Yeah, so. And libraries. So parks and libraries were two step children in our county budget and no more more essential parts of

government that people than people ever would have imagined. Parks, obviously, because we're all safer outdoors and we have the good fortune. Again, I'll just rub it in a little bit that we live in paradise and.

[00:53:19] Eighty two degrees today.

[00:53:21] Oh, incredible. So and now that I'm mayor, I have a really beautiful view of the bay. I'm just saying. So, you know, parks have not been adequately funded. They've been left to disintegrate in many ways. And now we just can't get enough of them biking, all of that, everything that has to do with the outdoor spaces and then libraries, libraries, we know are the great equalizers. I'm very jealous about the Charlotte Library. I've got to know more about it. But our libraries were defunded, diminished also, and they became the true service providers across the board for access. We even set up virtual access to the Internet in the park parking lot. We marked off spaces where the Internet would reach so you could drive up and participate. They took on the application process for essential social services, dropping off and picking up of all kinds of essential things. So I just say it's a different look at government providing spaces that are for social good.

[00:54:38] The mayor could I just want to say one thing, I do want to thank the Knight Foundation for their assistance with Philadelphia on our beverage tax or sweet beverage tax, because that in addition to pre-K, it's all about parks and public space, because when you have good public spaces in your neighborhood, it makes you feel there's equity in your life, like your city, your community cares about your neighborhood and your kids because you have great play, places to play, great places to contemplate, to lay in the grass, to see a fountain. Not just wealthy neighborhood should have that. But every neighborhood in the city should have their places of peace and contentment.

[00:55:16] And I think, Mayor Kenney, that one of the most interesting initiatives that we partnered with, with you on was around play streets. It's just such a simple idea of shutting down your streets in your neighborhood and turning it into a public asset which was expanded during covid. I just it's so simple, but it's amazing. It's really extraordinary.

[00:55:36] And the neighborhoods that are struggling, it's safe. It also can keep the kids safe. The cars are not zooming down the street. It really is really wonderful. Thank you so much.

[00:55:46] Mayor Lyall's. You have any thoughts on this? You've done some really interesting things with closing down streets to Charlotte.

[00:55:54] Of course, we're just trying to keep up with Philadelphia and Miami Dade. But the idea that we during the time that the weather was good to allow those small businesses that are in the hospitality and restaurant business to be able to build a patio into the public street space probably made it possible for that restaurant to stay open. And so we believe that those kinds of spaces for straights are because Charlotte was built around the idea that everybody would have an automobile, including golf. If you had five family members, everybody in the fight, every member would have a car. And we built all of those roads and we built it. So you can drive fast and straight through. But what we realize now is that's not the same value on one. It impacts our climate and on our air quality, too. I love I think the mayor said something about gentrification is related to climate in our community. Gentrification is the reverse of suburbanites coming in and wanting to live inside the city. And they don't want to have a car for everyone. And the cost of a car in our state can be as much as five thousand dollars for all of the things that you have to pay

taxes, gas, maintenance and the car. So and so we need to figure out a way to make it possible that we can use streets in a different way that makes the city more livable.

[00:57:26] Yeah, there's a huge equity component to this. With that, we we are at a time and it's hard to believe it flew by. Alberto, do you want to make some final remarks?

[00:57:39] I'd like to make this. One of the things I most like about Jim is the backgrounds of the people that I talk with. And I love the fact that, Jim, you've got Octavio's car behind you. Yes, it is the size of city hall or of a 19th century African-American activist in Philadelphia. And I know that you thought that you were on the council and put it up while you were mayor. Congratulations.

[00:58:07] Thank you. He represents the only the he represents the only public place statue of an African-American in the city of Philadelphia. Even if you think about it, how amazing that's never happened till just a couple of years ago. By marching and violence are taking stuff down.

[00:58:25] We're putting stuff I see via a photograph of Charlotte in the background. It looks like you've got building cranes and going to that city is constantly, constantly rebuilding, reimagining itself and all of that that that we can can adapt and will thrive is useful, not as valuable as the theme, not only for the pandemic, but sea level rise.

[00:58:55] And that brings together the conglomeration of this multicultural, diverse community that we, you and I both live in. I admire your leadership, your integrity. The three of you believe in your common sense, practical approach to intractable problems. We're going forward with you through.

[00:59:19] But thank you very much. Thank you very much. Thank you. Stay well.