

Narrator: Danielle

Interviewer: Chase Nelson

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Transcribed by: Chase Nelson

Chase Nelson: You had mentioned all the protests going on around George Floyd that happened throughout the summer, and how that galvanized you and a bunch of people. And so you were also talking about electoral politics and ballot measures that are coming up. So, moving into the fall, how—what did your work look like around that, particularly in light of the upcoming election?

Danielle: Yeah, so, in the fall, so much phone banking. So much phone banking (laughs). I would say those are—(sighs) I'm trying to think, tactically, how we were plugging into the different campaigns. So our statewide campaign was "No on [Proposition] 20." Which would—we were pushing for [people to vote] no on 20. If it had passed it would have made it a lot harder for folks to get parole. It also would have designated certain misdemeanors as felonies, like carjacking. I don't know, very stupid things—I don't want to s—things that should not be designated as a felony. It was very much designed and backed by law enforcement with the goal of incarcerating more people. It was just a very bad potential proposition. It did not pass. But I helped do phone banking for that.

[01:55] I also—we had a request from the organization to have, basically, an open letter against the proposition from rabbis across the state of California. So I organized efforts to get synagogues to—basically, like, (laugh) organized a big spreadsheet of all different synagogues around California and worked with different Bend the Arc members across the state to share the letter for folks to sign on to. And that was really helpful because I don't know that we've done the best job with tracking things like that. And we were able to track—I have a spreadsheet of all of the people who signed onto that, and also people who were interested in further engagement, which will be really helpful for future campaign work. We used a Google form to collect that information. So that's just going to be a really helpful tool moving forward, which is why I'm spelling that out some more. And, yeah, I would say those were the main tactics there: phone banking and getting that sign-on letter together and out.

And then for Measure J [note: Measure J propositioned for the allocation of at least 10 percent of LA County funds towards combating racial injustices through community investment], like I had mentioned, Bend the Arc collectively hosted three house parties and phone banks. I did a lot of phone banking for Measure J. I want to say in the fall I was probably trying to phone bank for them at least once a week? Sometimes twice or three times a week (laughs). But, yeah, I don't know, just a lot of phone banking. **[04:05]** A lot of—particularly because of mail-in voting, a lot of phone banking incorporated voting information as well. I really enjoyed that. Not only talking about why Measure J was meaningful to me, but also helping people be able to vote in the way they needed to vote. And the other thing is Cal—I'm from New Jersey and we don't always have twenty plus propositions on our ballot when we're voting. There's so many propositions to vote on, and it can be very very overwhelming, and really confusing, and people are just bombarded with messaging. A friend of mine created a spreadsheet that had a lot of different progressively-aligned organizations in LA and their voter guide recs for

each of the propositions and electeds and so forth. And I had that handy when I was phone banking, and I just remember hearing people be really overwhelmed, and being like, “So I have this guide, do you want me to text it to you or email it to you?” And so many people being like, “Yes, please, that’s so helpful.” And so that—(laughs) I remember one conversation where this woman was like, “I really don’t want to talk right now but could you actually just tell me about this measure because I’m trying to vote today.” And I was like, “Sure.” **[6:00]** So I don’t know, it was—I enjoyed talking to many different voters, and getting to have conversations with people I don’t know about things that I care about. And learning why they might care about it, what makes them nervous about it—all of those good things. And then the election happened (laughs).

CN: Was that your first election voting in California?

D: Um, it was—you mean like presidential election? Or just like elect—

CN: Yeah, presidential or big election, I guess, in California.

D: It was my second big election in California because I moved to California—I’ve been—coming June I’ll have been here three years. So I was here for midterms, but I was like a baby Californian at that point and was still voting as a New Jersey resident (laughs).

CN: How was it voting in this past election? How did it feel?

D: It felt really good. It felt very exciting. I mean obviously (laughs) there was a lot of anxiety packed into the president piece, but I think locally it felt very exciting to get to vote on all of these different propositions—Oh, I didn’t mention this! But I helped with—Bend the Arc, like, created a voter guide. Which is really awesome, and got distributed pretty far and wide around LA. **[08:02]** And have been told from many different sources that it was quite helpful. And I helped with that. So, yeah, I just, through that work, felt like I knew a nice amount about a lot of the propositions, and obviously worked closely on a couple of them. So it really—it felt very good to get to cast my vote for those things.

I think there were some really big local and statewide wins. There were also some very big disappointments. But, yeah, it felt very good to vote after having been very civically engaged.

CN: Could you describe some of those wins and losses a little bit? And how it made you feel about your work?

D: I mean, Measure J passed which is huge. Prop 20 did not pass which is great. No on Prop 25 which was really really awesome [note: Proposition 25 was a referendum on replacing cash bail with a risk assessment algorithm]. I know affirmative action in California didn’t pass, which is just very shitty. There was the carve-out for Uber rideshare drivers to prevent them—to keep them as contractors [Proposition 22], which sucked. So much money went into that. Those are just a couple (laughs).

CN: So how did your work change once the election was over?

D: **[10:00]** Bend the Arc-wise, we started thinking about our next campaign. So I would say, between then and now, have been in campaign selection process. Yeah. That's basically been what's up.

And then, I would say I've been—more recently have been trying to go to the county Measure J implementation subgroup meetings to stay plugged in on that front.

CN: What role do you have in choosing the next campaign?

D: So I facilitate a lot of, like—it's a state-wide campaign selection process. And I, as a co-chair for Southern California, facilitated our chapter's process in terms of elevating our top three campaigns. And then I represented our chapter as one of three reps from SoCal to actually go and cast our vote. So, yeah, I have just been thinking through voting selection processes to identify a best campaign for our committee, and now statewide.

CN: **[12:00]** Can you describe a little bit about what those campaigns are? [crosstalk]—your top?

D: Yeah, I think I mentioned at the top that the campaign we selected is a youth justice reinvestment-oriented campaign. So, yeah, that's known as the PROMYSE [Promoting Youth Success and Empowerment] Act, and that's what we ended up selecting as our statewide campaign. Other campaigns that we were—I guess that my chapter had elevated—one is preserving the presumption of innocence. And that is a pretrial reform bill. It did not get picked up by legislature. They were trying to push an alternatives to incarceration statewide budget bill as a part of larger pretrial reform, but that's a statewide coalition that includes Justice LA folks and other like-minded coalitions and organizations across the state. So that was something that we were considering.

We were also considering dropping life without parole, which is basically an alternative death penalty sentence. We were looking at potentially eight different campaigns in total. I would say all of them very important work that I stand behind. I think it came down to thinking about what made the most sense for us as an organization and where to lend our support.

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