

Speaker 1 ([00:02](#)):

So tell me a little bit about yourself. Well, my name is Shayla demure and I'm a seasoned of, which means that I'm of age and let's see, I'm a journalist by education and by passion. I'm a community organizer.

Speaker 1 ([00:31](#)):

Let's see. I'm a community mother. I also have my own kids. Okay. And, um, I've been a community mother since the early eighties. And um, from that it just sort of like propelled me into the work that I'm doing, just sort of like being the keeper of the children. Um, and I started the organization unique woman's coalition to be a direct response to the need for organized movement for black trans people. And that movement includes different variations, different levels of things, um, opportunities for us to gather just to, um, build community, build bonds. Um, in a lot of times families are developed from those environments, from those spaces. And then there is advocacy where we're out. I'm fighting for equity, fighting for equality, um, our org UWC we try to be the voice for black trans culture here in Los Angeles. And now that we're formalized and now that we're in office space now, black culture has symbolically arrived in different ways. Um, every other culture has a operation, you know, and now black trans community has an operation. So I'm really happy about that and I'm really is static. Just thinking about our future.

Speaker 1 ([02:31](#)):

Where do you see your, where do you see the future? Well, right now we're focusing on several different things. One is that we are trying to build leadership. We're trying to build or take community members and give them skill sets that they'll be able to advocate for their, not only themselves but other community members. I've been doing community work for over 25 years and it's important that black culture builds legacy and I'm trying to participate by building leadership. I'm putting others in the forefront and sharing our platform, giving them ability to have a voice where maybe they haven't had one before. And that's all. That's one thing. And that's important that we build leadership so that we could continue the work that we do. The other thing is just in create spaces to continuously create safe spaces for black culture, black community to gather even healing groups. We have a healing group that we will be introducing to community next month and that's just basically for us to gather in the same room and try to be the healthiest versions of ourselves.

Speaker 1 ([04:08](#)):

Hopefully get a skill set that allows us to condition ourselves, that allows us to process some of the things that we, we incur being a part of the world. You know, a lot of our trans folks are disenfranchised from their family at an early age. A lot of times we don't process that because we are in the struggle of trying to survive and so we can give some of those skillsets to help people process some of those things as if they can move forward and show up in a more healthier way. Then we can get more things done. As a community, we can take more stands as a community, as a collective community, and that's really what our org is about. We also act as a sort of a clearing house sort of of four other black trans led grassroots orcs. We provide them space. We try to give them an infrastructure so that they could build their own organization, their own group so that they could prosper.

Speaker 2 ([05:25](#)):

And how is UWC, I guess I don't know if addressing is the right word, but like helping with the HIV crisis. How, like how do you, what does the organization do to help support those who may have and should I be?

Speaker 1 ([05:38](#)):

Well what we do is that we certainly are a referral system. We try to make sure that we keep information updated as much as possible so that we can refer community. And also here in this location we actually, um, through one of our, we actually provide health care for HIV positive community. We also offer housing referrals, medical assistance, and also just um, support groups as well. So they're able to get a well rounded medical and community support system.

Speaker 3 ([06:29](#)):

[inaudible].

Speaker 2 ([06:29](#)):

And what would you say is like one of your greatest accomplishments as an activist so far? I know there may be lots of w what are some of your favorite accomplishments?

Speaker 1 ([06:43](#)):

Well, I think first of all, being able to formulize a group for black trans people, you know, um, and early on, in fact we're the very first trans led organization here in Los Angeles and so we just so happened to be black. And so that's part of the caveat. The other thing is that we've developed an event called trends giving and is one of our community offerings that we've been, we just actually had our 19th celebration and so it is one of the longest running events for community at large here in Los Angeles. And again, that is a contribution from our, or even though we are black driven or it's an event that the entire community has opened to. And so that's our part of our contribution. We're also founding members of the first trans pride festival in the United States called trans unity pride. So that's an accomplishment. We're black people effecting community and culture.

Speaker 2 ([08:02](#)):

And what would you say, I guess is one of your biggest struggles?

Speaker 1 ([08:07](#)):

Because one of the bigger struggles is getting our own community involved. Okay. We're not always anxious. We're not always quick to participate even in our own growth or elevation. So sometimes it takes, you know, that being, that motherly figure who's constantly, you know, reminding you, Hey, don't forget we have something going on. Or don't forget that your voice is important. And so I think that is one of the difficulties is just getting your own community to participate in their own elevation, their own evolution.

Speaker 3 ([08:54](#)):

[inaudible]

Speaker 2 ([08:54](#)):

and what would you,

Speaker 1 ([08:56](#)):

what advice would you give to someone who wants to get into activism for your community? Like what would you say here are the top three things you should do or not do? I think the first thing is to find out what you, what motivates you, what you want to be able to dive into something that you have an interest in and that will keep your interest. Um, coming from your heart isn't really important. It's not really about having the education, it's really just about having the heart and the commitment to wanting to be change that you want to see. It's one thing to, it's hard to walk the walk and talk the talk. Yeah. And so having people or having something to ground you keep you grounded in those times where it becomes respectable politics versus advancing your community

Speaker 3 ([10:08](#)):

[inaudible]

Speaker 2 ([10:14](#)):

and where do you see your activism and the future? Like where do you see it growing and building and five years from now, where do you want, where do you want it to be?

Speaker 1 ([10:28](#)):

Well that's a really interesting question. I know one of the things that I'd like to do is build a black caucus, you know, that is translated, but it's open to all of black community so that we're all at the table as collective. Being able to map out what our strategy plan is. I love to do that. It's time for trans people, particularly black trans people to be at those round tables where we're having discussions with our allies and excuse me, thank you. We're having those uncomfortable conversations that will create understanding that will reduce some of the stigma and increase collective energies.

Speaker 2 ([11:33](#)):

I'm not sure I get everything. And then what initially got you into activism? What was like, was there a turning point or community?

Speaker 1 ([11:44](#)):

We have chosen families and so I've, again, I've always been this mother figure to many, and one of my very first, um, he was in high school, but he just glows to me that he became HIV positive. And so dealing with his diagnosis, that is the key. The, that was the start that I wanted to help him as much as I could. And so the first thing that I could do was try to learn as much as I could about HIV and so that I could be a resource and a helpful person for him. And in that getting in that world, it lets it, I also was able to learn that there weren't many trans people, um, particularly black high that were involved. And so that encouraged me to be, I said, well, okay, I do have a certain privilege with the way that I look with my educational background, so why don't I use this to the advantage of our community? And so that's how I got started. Perfect. Thank you.