ViE - Pandemic Divide Conference

**Female 2:** it was more than just a life or death situation. It was like breaking up communities. It was really suppressing certain racial groups and more so than others. There were just so many implications to the pandemic and now we're just barely picking up the pieces it feels like to evaluate in what way were they affected and how can we help them, and how can we start to put it all back together.

**Sergio Berrera:** Mostly because I think there's still a lot of unanswered questions, at least from what I've seen about the effect of pandemic on, racial and ethnic inequality. And so I was very interested to kind of learn how exactly the pandemic led to worse outcomes for particularly black and Hispanic, households in the United States.

But I also kind of wanted to understand a little bit more about like why inequality in the past, led to these, disparities and outcomes, particularly when you're thinking about like cases or even thinking about deaths as a result of the pandemic. So I've learned a lot just by watching a few of the, the seminars and got a lot to think about.

**Timothy Green:** Hi, My name is Timothy Green, the fourth. and I'm here representing the city of Albuquerque as Culture Change Leader. And I'm also here as a PhD student from the University of New Mexico.

Like the rest of the country, it really devastated our most underserved communities. Especially when we started to look at existing disparities that were already there, structural disparities around health, education, mental health violence.

And so within the city of Albuquerque, you know, we had a, we have a pretty progressive mayor. We had, you know, science-based and data-driven, research and, and kind of a, a focus towards that. But I think it's had a, a real impact, like I said, on our underserved communities, specifically migrant and immigrant communities.

And then we have the legacy, of colonization, right from the Spanish, from then from Mexico, and then Anglo-Saxon America. And I think being at the intersection of the Latinx Latino Latina diaspora,

I can't exclude also, you know, the 24 indigenous nations we have there. So we're at a unique intersection. but I think right now, within the city of Albuquerque, what I do as culture change leader, we're trying to, to leverage racial equity tools, right?

We're trying to create feedback, mechanisms and accountability mechanisms so that way we can make sure equity, diversity, and inclusion is happening within the city of Albuquerque. That means, you know, cluster hiring, bringing in, marginalized and underserved, communities coming into work, training people around, anti-racist education. So that way we can all work together in inside this democracy. So

This conference is wonderful because what's happening is, is you're having a confluence of different intersectional studies, right? You're having people from economics; you're having people from critical education. You have, folks coming from the health, right? And they're, and they're kind of all having this framework that racism is an epidemiological challenge that is killing us, right? It's not only killing BIPoC community, but it's affecting the white community as well. And so I think the beautiful thing is we're having all of these people come together to try to, push theory forward so that we can put it into action.

**Paula Terrell Perez:** My name is Paula Terrell Perez, and I am a professor at North Carolina Central University.

We know that with HBCUs we have a lot of support for our students. However, I think that with the shutdown, what we didn't consider is that some students actually don't have anywhere to go home.

And that came to the forefront that just because we say now you can go home, school's closed, some students were actually homeless. And so their only place or residency was on campus. So that was something that really came to our, I guess we wanted to put it at forefront. And also food insecurity, you know, some students didn't have a job. They depended on their resources on campus for food and shelter. So that was a real wake up call for a lot of professors.

**Dr. Vivian Carter:** My name is Dr. Vivian Carter. I am the chair of the Department of Psychology and Sociology on the campus of Tuskegee University.

**Jason Gillikin:** Okay. what brings you to the Pandemic Divide Conference?

**Dr. Vivian Carter:** Well, one of the things that brings me here is the fact that you're bringing together scholars to really talk about the impact of, covid on those, what we call minoritized communities, and, bringing that together with a lot of the young, undergraduate as well as graduate students. So, that's what's intriguing me.

**Jason Gillikin:** How's the energy been so far? Like, a, a lot, you said a lot of young graduate students. there's a lot of great speakers here, who are, you know, not young students

**Dr. Vivian Carter:** no, the energy has been wonderful and the speakers have been absolutely fabulous. I'm very excited about the book that's coming out and look forward to actually utilizing it. A lot of it in my class, especially, I was today when they were talking about the, student debt, that's something that I utilize in my courses that I teach cuz I teach a course on health disparities, bioethics and policy.

And all of this at this conference ties into that. So I'm excited about what we're learning here and how it's being applied and talking about How we can, reduce that income and wealth gap. And then also addressing the issue of disparity, racial disparity from, and, and they haven't said it exactly, but they've described it from a social justice standpoint.

I think that a lot has been talked about equality and equity. but we have to understand something that unless you deal with the structure, the system that continues to perpetuate this, we're not going to have a solution. It's like a band aid to a mortal wound. And, and so in looking at this from a social justice standpoint, brings about that equity and that equality that we're striving for.

**Jason Gillikin:** What, what people or institutions can have the greatest impact on that social justice. Like who, who can make the biggest difference here?

**Dr. Vivian Carter:** I, I think that it's, it's a collective. It's not just one. Okay. we have to build these coalitions, working together, looking at our common ground, that we have.

And that includes, you know, the minority serving institutions, the PWIs, the political system. I, I was glad to see, some of the, people who are working in your legislator, coming in, to really listen and, and get a, a, a clear picture of, of what's happening. I think it's a collective, it's not one or the other.

**Jason Gillikin:** Yeah, absolutely. any other aha moments from this conference or speakers that you wanna shout out?

**Dr. Vivian Carter:** Oh, I always love Dr. Satcher, Dr. Satcher. we have a, a great history, of course, with Tuskegee. He's one of the fir, he was the surgeon general, that did get the apology, for the United States Public Health Service study of untreated syphilis in the Negro male.

So that was Dr. Satcher, who got the president to issue the apology. At first, they had talked with him and said, well, you know, you're over, CDC, so you are former, director of CDC, so you know, it should come. And he said, no, it has to come from the highest level because again, this wrong was done at that level.

**Sayil Camacho:** My name is Sayil Camacho. my academic affiliation is a visiting scholar at the Duke program in education. But my full-time job is the director of Reparative Justice and partnerships at the Equity Research Cooperative.

I think the earlier conversation around, tenure track opportunities and how to support an increasingly diverse professoriate, personally really spoke to me as someone who experiences systemic inequality and the type of glass barrier, to provide a specific example, Latinas and the professoriate make up less than 1% of full professors.

And especially when you consider selective universities, I think it's even less. So it's really exciting that, there's this theory and a praxis to addressing what's a racialized labor force. and that was, that was very moving, because it's hard. Yeah.

**Jason Gillikin:** Well, theory is one thing. What do we do about it?

**Sayil Camacho:** I think that, the approach that was spoken on was really powerful because there were actually systems and processes with theory in terms of retention, understanding the challenges that someone from historically excluded background is, especially going to interface with like, in pursuing their, doctoral studies, but then being part of the knowledge production process on a faculty level.

So a lot of solutions, but one of the most important was as a whole, institution, recognizing that systemic inequality exists for professors, I think was really important.

**Victoria Bryant:** Hi, my name is Victoria Bryant and I'm a current senior at Carolina studying public policy and political science. So I definitely think mental health was the biggest inequity I've seen. I think of course, when you're considering all of these different policy areas, they're gonna be inherently affected by race just because we live in a racialized society. But I think that college's responses to the mental health crisis during Covid for sure, was subpar.

And I think that definitely led to some inequities, whether that be in achievement rates, whether that be in retention rates for different marginalized populations. And I still, so I believe that a more robust mental health package is a need to ensure that students are able to kind of get on the same page and have, you know, equitable opportunities to succeeding in these relative spaces.

In my opinion, it's equity over equality. Just really, when thinking about student needs, really specifying them to the populations of interest. You know, you can't, there is no universal approach and I think in education and in mental health, we've often seen universities and different stakeholders try to do a one size fits all, but I think there really needs to be more emphasis on the specific needs of each student population.

**Dr. Kristen Cooksey Stowers:** Dr. Kristen Cooksey Stowers. I am an assistant professor at Yukon in the Department of Ally Health Sciences and the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Health. But a former, graduate student of Sandy Darity and of this Cook Center.

The pandemic shut down all of our conferences and times to convene and sort of get up to date on what we've been up to. So it's been so exciting that we're now, we're getting back to in-person convenings and just seeing this, this amazing book that's coming out.

And I have two graduate students here at the meeting. So just an opportunity to, Yeah, share our work and to sort of hear what the Cook Center has been up to.

**Jason Gillikin:** What did you see at Yukon, during the pandemic? from a, inequity standpoint.

**Dr. Kristen Cooksey Stowers:** So one of the main initiatives that I've been, involved with at Yukon, focuses on college food insecurity among the college students.

Um, I think historically there's not been a lot of focus on that because there's sort of this perception that, you know, once you've made it to college, you've arrived and that there's a certain. That type of like almost a homogenous student that's coming from an affluent background that has a safety net.

And so why would anyone be concerned about surveying for food insecurity or certainly, intervening, from a structural standpoint, but we see at the, there was a state mandate for all colleges at Connecticut, really nationally. States were required to report food insecurity, among the population.

And not only did we see, concerning disparities, you know, among Black and brown students at Yukon, but there were, geographic disparities. So the students at stores flagship had lower risk than those in our regional campuses, which are in the urban centers. So we've spent the last three years adding more survey data to that work and doing, more formative research on that.

But really, partnering and, and leveraging that data to advocate for structural change with the provost office. Like what should higher education institutions universities be doing to address food insecurity now that we know about it. I think I am biased towards structural long-term sustainable change. So we're, you know, cooking demonstrations and sort of giveaways are nice and, and you need them.

I really think that these are icing type of solutions and really we should be thinking about physical, structural changes to universities that can, you know, really respond to the shift of demographics among college students. Because the shift in, socio-demographics and the background students come from is because some of the innovation in higher ed policies in f in FAFSA, that's how you're seeing now more of a, a shift of low-income background students coming.

So now it's time to structurally respond. What are the policies. You know, are you able to accommodate, you know, students who are eligible for snaps so they don't have to go off campus? and, you know, are there initiatives that you can create in your cafeteria? There's some really interesting strategies for like $1 cafeterias, marketplaces because there are some, like in the case of our regional campuses, there are some universities, that are located in food deserts and food swamps.

And so even money is not just the only option. There's an environmental limitation. So it means that in some cases you might need a marketplace that provides an equitable balance of healthy and unhealthy food or more convenient foods, if you will. Else they're at the, they're limited by the physical built food environment, which in some places can literally be, just as, as, as, suboptimal as the sort of housing neighborhood, corner stores, bodegas, fast food chains, right? So how do we make sure that there's also the option of fresh produce for our college students?

I really enjoyed, the panel with, Dr. Bentley Edwards, partly because, I also do social determinants of health work and so, but just, you know, the constant reminder and hearing how other people are conceptualizing the interconnectedness of social determinants of health, housing and neighborhoods.

So I do a lot of research on neighborhoods, so just their, you know, comments on labor conditions and work conditions and living conditions and, and how really it's important to think about those upstream factors of health and health inequities, and how the pandemic, you know, exacerbated those inequities, but also shed light for folks who weren't paying attention to inequities that were longstanding.

**Monica Garcia Perez:** I'm Monica Garcia Perez. I'm a professor at St. Cloud State University and also a research affiliate with the Cook Center.

I think one of the, of the topics I were like, I was, drawn to was trying to get the background and the structural institutional in which Covid was happening. That was very interesting to me. And I'm a lot of, because it's something that I'm not exposed all the time, a lot of, institutional background presentations have been for me, like very interesting.

But also, the yesterday was the Asian community and looking at groups that normally are no, the typical that we see, I mean the, there is the disparities between Black and white, but all Hispanics are the one that I work in. So looking at the numbers where the Asian community was something that was aha moment, like, oh, like the Philippines were the, the highest, highest mortality rate in, COVID within the group of Asian. I didn't know that. So I learned it from,

it's like every one of the spaces that Covid affected can be exposing a conference like this where people, different researchers are like putting the light on a different corner of the room. But apart from that, I think now the movement would be about what are the policies and recovering, because covid created disparities and some of those disparities are, again, because affected the group differently.

Some people were affected more than one time or more in more than one way due to Covid. And then I was understanding how we can have all those intersectionality, but also in terms of policies.

**Alejandro Gutierrez Lee:** My name is Alejandro Gutierrez Lee. I am an assistant professor at North Carolina State University in Raleigh. I am a labor economist by training.

I think the conference overall has been great. It has been a great opportunity to really meet people working in different fields. So I really like that there is a group of interdisciplinary researchers from political science, economics, other, social disciplines, really trying to better understand some of the outcomes that we have seen during the pandemic and some of the consequences in terms of, you know, social and economic barriers of interest across different groups.

So I really think that the conference and the speakers have all been great. It has been really, a great opportunity to, to learn about things that even though we know, could be happening we, we don't have as of yet because the pandemic is still ongoing as good information as the one that, that has been delivered to us here. So I think it's a great opportunity to have people together.

I think public policy plays a crucial role. even though the pandemic is still ongoing, we already have enough information to better understand the different impacts that, the virus had on groups across the country. Policy plays a key role at affecting the outcomes, leveling the playing field, and also ensuring that, all groups have access to equal opportunities in terms of health benefits, in terms of treatment.

Um, not that we have vaccines that we have, some other, you know, treatments For covid, it is important to ensure that every single group, particularly the, the communities that have been affected the most, have proper access to, to these benefits that science has brought to us.

**Donald Elsindor:** My name is Donald Elsindor. I'm an associate professor at Meharry Medical College and Associate adjunct professor in infectious disease at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine.

**Jason Gillikin:** Okay. So what have you seen, other than, hesitancy for vaccines? What have you seen as far as systemic inequities, a as it resulted, from covid 19 in the medical field?

**Donald Elsindor:** Yeah, so I've seen people, that just basically have nowhere to get to, where there's vaccine testing or vaccines themselves. And so what we did at Meharry Medical College is to have a mobile unit that allowed us to go where the people were. Meaning that we had a number of people that had poor access to vaccines that were living in public housing. And so what we did is we brought the vaccines to them along with the testing, along with the information that was designed to deal with the mistrust in those communities against the vaccine.

**Devora:** My name's Devora and I'm a freshman at Duke University. An aha moment for me was just realizing the, the cycle in the system in which, like specifically Black students in like all the states. I'm from New York and like how just the wealth gap in America, how that influences where students go to school. Like my family were middle income and that impacted my financial aid and like the amount of loans I have to take out and how like, I wanna go into the medical field. So, for me, you wanna get a higher paying job within the medical field, but then that's leading to like a lack of people who want to work in like lesser paying jobs within the medical field. So it's kind of like leading to an imbalance. I'm learning a lot, so yeah, it's,

**Jason Gillikin:** so how did it affect your, how did Covid 19 affect your, high school experience from a, like a mental health standpoint?

**Devora:** definitely hard being away from friends and like, lack of socializing, which I think everyone experienced. But, the rigor of coursework definitely went down, like, and I think that that kind of led to a lot of students, you know, falling off. And especially in senior year coming back into school, there was just like, just a lack of knowledge on like, basic things.

And it left a lot of students at a loss when it come, when it came to like SAT time and, SAT prep, which was not, happening over Covid. So it kind of left a lot of minority students at a disadvantage because one, you know, your academic life and the way teachers are teaching, they're being a little bit lazy about it, and there's not really regulations on how teachers should teach because it was just like new for everyone.

So it kind of left a lot of students at a disadvantage if you didn't, you know, take it upon yourself to put the effort in. So it was like really easy to get an A and like what's, what's that saying for when students go to college? Like that's putting you at a huge disadvantage.

**Jevay Grooms:** Jevay Groomsat Howard University and the co-director of the Center for Equitable Growth and Sustainable Society.

The biggest impact that happened simultaneously, and, you know, this isn't COVID 19, this is, the Black Lives Matter happened simultaneously during the pandemic, and it was hard for Howard in general to respond was the racist hate, the, we had a lot of bomb threats. We've had cyber-attacks.

We've had, a lot of situations happening at that time and during a time when a lot of people are working remotely, a little bit more difficult to communicate. So I think as a university, it was a difficult time and then it was exacerbated by some of the hate that was brought on from disagreements with the Black Lives Matter movement.

The conference has been great. It's been great because in academia, a lot of the conferences are very academic, very research papers, very heavy, very dense.

These talks have ran the gamut and have been really interesting from very technical research to very macro kind of thoughts on the pandemic.

**Sonya Douglas:** My name is Sonya Douglas and I am a professor of education leadership at Teachers College Columbia University, and founding director of the Black Education Research Center.

I was invited to present, the findings from the COVID study that the Black Education Research Center conducted last year. So basically we, shared the findings from the study, which really point to the need to protect and defend the rights of black children, to make sure that they're learning in safe and affirming spaces.

We also talked about the importance of investing in mental health counseling and psychological supports and services, in schools for both students and teachers, commitment to professional learning and the development of educators to make sure that, they're prepared and equipped to, to educate children, to really revamp curriculum and think about what we are teaching and ensuring that we're teaching the truth and that children have access to the truth and critical conversations that can help them to be really informed, members of society.

And then we also talked about the importance of, viewing parents, community members, and black scholars and researchers as equal partners in developing the solutions, the solutions, that will lead to improved educational opportunities.

**Jason Gillikin:** So, as a speaker, sometimes you, you thrive on the, the feedback that you get. What has been the feedback so far, and what have been the aha moments from your talk, that, the people have, have, come up to you and, and, and asked you about?

**Sonya Douglas:** I think one of the most exciting things is to have a group of undergraduate students, who are at North Carolina A&T University, who kind of just, you know, said that the, the comments really resonated with them in terms of the focus on supporting, the education of black children and youth.

Um, and that it actually piqued their interest in a career in education. So that was, I think, a really great to hear, especially given that group and what they've experienced in Covid and I think how critical their voice and their contributions will be going forward. So that was really heartwarming and, and encouraging.

**Luis Basurto:** My name is Luis Basurto. So we were interested in looking at how the pandemic affected preventative care. So we were interested in seeing if, for example, mammograms and colonoscopies before the pandemic started look different, you know, at the end of 2020.

And then we were also interested to see if there was additional differences by, along racial ethnic lines. So yeah, that's what we were presenting. And, we find obviously a massive reduction in preventative care around like the time date cleared the national emergency. So March, April, big drop.

And then we see a rebound effect, starting during the summer. the rebound effect is not nearly as like the same magnitude as the drop, so there's a lot of people that left, the health system and did not come back yet. So yeah, we were just trying to, you know, see what that looked like because when we started looking or, you know, at the early stages of the pandemic, no one was looking at this stuff and you had no idea the magnitude of changes.

and then for the racial ethnic differences, do we find some differences during the drop at the beginning? not so much during the recovery or rebound period.

I think I was surprised by the magnitude of the decline. I was expecting it to be, you know, a big decline, but it was just massive. And I mean, that's worrisome because the health system is making choices. So there's a, trade of you don't want people to die now of covid, but how will this impact, you know, these like cancers that might go unnoticed for a while

I think it was really impactful to hear the nurses, talking about their experiences. I think, you know, we all kind of had, like, had some sense of how difficult it was, but just hearing it from them yesterday was really moving. And I mean, if, if I am ever so appreciative of like the work they do, but now so, so much more. so yeah, I mean that, that was, that was really nice to hear how they like group together and, you know, push through us as a team. So, yeah.

**Sumaya Abdul Razak:** My name is Sumaya Abdul Razak. My research is about, food swamps, prediction of, food shopping habit and then food access among racial minority in the North Hartford promise zone in Connecticut. We started this research based on the evidence that new establishment of supermarket does not necessarily increase frequency of shopping at food stores.

So we decided to assess to know whether food swamp, predict this behavior, and when I say food swamp, it is areas with a concentration of fast food, convenience stores, mostly labeled as unhealthy stores compared to the healthier alternatives, which are the supermarkets and other larger grocery stores.

, we assessed their frequency of shopping in these stores, that is both the fast food and then the, supermarkets to see which one they frequently shopped in, and then why. So when we did it, we realized that they shopped in both, they go to both supermarkets and they also shop in the fast food.

So we, we, we intended to, not intention, we suggested actually that they should dismantle the fast food areas, cause that is one of the reasons, cause it's of low quality food stores. They wanted to bring supermarkets, they bought a supermarket, but they're still not shopping in the supermarkets but rather accessing, which is much more convenient cause it's rather closer and it's at each corner of their neighborhood they can find a fast food. So people go there more often than the supermarket.

I've learned about the black history though. I'm here, I'm Black, but I'm not from America. I'm from Ghana, in Africa. So I just came here to do my master's and through this conference I've learned about a lot other Black history, how they came together to form their, to care for themselves in terms of health when it was not available and what we can do now if we are still facing these same issues.

Cause it has been done before. So we can still come together to fight for our right to access to healthcare, to access to food, to access to other things. So if, if, if Blacks are united and they're able to advocate for themselves at least they'll get equal services as their counterparts. A lot of people are there. America is big. We have a lot of people and it's might not be easier for the government maybe to capture. And so the one that talks most, the one that advocates most, they pay more attention to you. So it is, it'll be good for them to also rise up and then advocate to get attention.

And I also learned how inequalities can impact the outcome of health. Like the, through the Covid 19, one of the presentation which assesses impact of the inequalities on, food, like on Covid 19 outcome. We realized blacks were dying and they taught me blacks were, one with the disease, but it's actually because of their state housing, state work conditions, and all those things that were impacting, their health than the other ERs.

So if we improve the health of the blacks, their living conditions of the blacks communities, they'll get better health outcome as their other counterparts. So all in all, I learned that to eradicate health inequalities, you have to eradicate inequality in every aspect of a person's life. Inequality in housing, inequality, in work condition in.

Every aspect of inequality before you'll be able to eradicate inequality in health. That was wonderful in, that we were expecting, right? So in some way our quantitative data didn't show like something dramatic. Right. And then also when, when the, I think what is has been really good about this event is that, it is showing, you know, we're learning, we're going back to really, learn what was the impact of the pandemic.

And what I like about it is that it's really make a, a lot of the presenters, they not only kind of like show, you know, this impact, but they also move forward that, and then provide recommendations of how to move forward. So I think conferences like this are very important right now because the thing you know, now we know, right?

For example, the last presentation showed that there was a, a large drop on math scores for Latinos, right? So during the. So what are we gonna do about it? Right? So I think that's why I think this, this conference is very relevant and I, and I hope you know that it brings more attention to what do we do next to fix, the challenges that the pandemic brought, especially for, minority communities.

James Onorevole: James Onorevole. I'm here with Carolina Small Business Development Fund, CSBDF for short. We're presenting a poster, in conjunction with ResilNC about the effects of loans versus grants for small businesses in North Carolina during the pandemic.

So essentially during the pandemic we administered grants and loans to small businesses that were, that applied for them. And then during the past, like six months or so, we administered a survey to follow up on those grants and loans. And the idea was to measure the extent of impact of grants and loans and to see if there was a difference between the two.

In one case, a loan, you have to pay the amount back at some point with a nominal interest rate, and then a grant it's their money to use. So we were looking at in what way are these financial assistance tools helping small businesses? Are they specifically helping them develop greater social capital?

We're looking at the, their ability to connect with other businesses within their community and whether a loan or a grant helped in more in one way. So there were a number of different categories we were looking at to, to gauge if there was a difference based on the survey results.

I was surprised. I thought that grants would be far and away something that were easily preferred and created better outcomes for the small businesses. But as you would see on our poster, we have a graph at the very end showing our results. And it's split 50/50. In fact, two of our categories where we are testing the difference have no difference at least no statistically significant difference at all between loans and grant recipients, on the other hand, two favored loans and two favored grants. So I, I honestly thought, you know, a small business can get essentially free money and very few restrictions, and do with what they would like and needed. But it really didn't pan out to be that that was far and away the best tool.

I think the scope of the pandemic and its effect on people, organizations, communities, businesses, all, all these different topics are being covered with all these posters, and they are showing that it, it was more than just a life or death situation. It was like breaking up communities. It was really suppressing certain racial groups and more so than others. There were just so many implications to the pandemic and now we're just barely picking up the pieces it feels like to evaluate in what way were they affected and how can we help them, and how can we start to put it all back together.

**Makayla Loeffel:** Makayla Loeffel. I'm here with, Dr. Vivian Carter. we attend, well, she's a professor and I'm a student at Tuskegee University. So today I am presenting the Macon County Covid 19 task force. And to basically give you guys a rundown, March 13th, 2020, that's when we got our first case of Covid.

And not a lot of people had access to clinics or, hospitals to get screened or get the vaccination. So, Tuskegee came together as a community to create the taskforce, which helps, screening and vaccines.

Honestly, I was excited, to let people know that we are here to help. Tuskegee, if you've ever been, it’s nothing but land and it's no clinics around, nobody really there to help people. So I'm really big on helping people, helping my community, and I just want people to know like, Hey, we are here if you want the vaccination, we're here.

We, we partnered up with different clinics as well around, and if you wanna get screened, we're here as well. And also, our results, we helped up to 75% of our population, so I'm really happy about that.

So if you guys do not know to Tuskegee is very expensive, almost 42,000 a year. And, I'm part of the middle-class community. So, you know, we don't, we're not poor, but we don't make as much, we're not wealthy, so I don't really get a lot of loans or grants. So what I did take away is there are some loans for a psychology major, because I'm also a psychology major, so that helped me out.

To be completely honest, I did not know anything about this conference. My professor was like, Hey, I need you here. This is for the task force. I'm like, okay, that's fine. You know, I want people to know about Tuskegee University, get our name out there and as well as what we do for our community.

So I was just very happy and just very excited to let people know like, this is what Tuskegee University is, not the syphilis study that you guys misconstrued on the false information or anything like that. This is what Tuskegee University is.

**Amalia Chamorro:** Amalia Chamorro,

**Elizabeth Zamudio:** Elizabeth Zamudio

**Amalia Chamorro:** so we were presenting on the impact of the pandemic on Latino K-12 student education. We actually released a report in July at our annual conference in San Antonio. we're here representing Unidos US, which is the largest Latino civil rights organization in the nation. And so our report took a look back at the progress that had been made over the last 30 years and some of the gains that we had made, and then the impact of the pandemic and how we have to really focus on recovery of Latino students going forward. So we also provided a set of policy recommendations that can be taken at the federal and state level to make sure that our students get back on track.

**Elizabeth Zamudio:** Taking the recent NAEP results from 2022, we see that Latino students have had tremendous setbacks, where we were traditionally in, from between 1990 to 2019, we had seen advancement of Latino student success. And unfortunately, due the to the pandemic, we're seeing the side effects of a drop in, in EL learners advancement in math scores, in reading scores, and then in also in college graduation and high school graduation, rates.

**Amalia Chamorro:** I mean, there's a ton of funding that the federal government did provide to the states over the last couple of years that states and districts are still figuring out how to use those resources. And so we do have a set of, ideas as to how they can best use those to support the students that need them the most from meaningful parent engagement to families to make sure that that continues and that parents are seen as equal partners with the schools to make sure that their students are getting all the help that they need.

Also making sure that we are making targeted, supports for academic recovery. And that includes, tutoring after school supports, summer learning to make sure that students have all those wraparound services that they need to be able to continue to make progress in their, in their unfinished learning.

**Elizabeth Zamudio:** What I really enjoyed with the conference was the intersectionality of the, there were so many diverse speakers. We had, different, sectors that were represented in the conference and we see how the pandemic not only affected the education sector that were most intimately involved with, but it affected so many other areas, not only health, but then also we see there's the mass incarceration forum that's happening tomorrow.

And, it was really interesting to see all of our different sectors coming together and speaking about the effects of this large-scale pandemic that affected all of us.

**Amalia Chamorro:** You know, we just appreciate the invitation to come and attend and present at the conference. It's always great to, you know, Go to new places. This is my first time in North Carolina. I've never been on the Duke University campus. It was also an opportunity to, as someone who works in education, including higher education issues, right, to be able to go and visit and present at an institution of higher education such as Duke.