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Interview with Badly Licked Bear

Badly Licked Bear

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Interviewee: Badly Licked Bear

Interviewers: Angela Soto Cerros and Zoe Forsyth

Date: November 23rd, 2020

Location: Zoom

Collection: Auntie Sewing Squad Oral History Archive, SBS 112: Women and Social Change, From 1890s to the Present, Fall 2020

Length: 00:46:44

Overseen by: Dr. Chrissy Yee Lau

Autobiography of Badly Licked Bear

Badly Licked Bear is a member of the Auntie Sewing Squad (A.S.S.). For the first 34 years of their life, they grew up between Ranchos Palos Verdes and San Pedro. Currently, at 42 years old, they live in Los Angeles. They became involved because they felt the obligation to help with the COVID-19 pandemic. Badly Licked Bear has a history of organizing mutual aid and believes mutual aid is a valuable aspect of community building.

Thematic summary

The first part of this interview focuses on the background/childhood experiences of Badly Licked Bear. That transitioned into a discussion on how they practically raised themselves in a hostile society. Growing into the person they are, they began to explain to us how they got into the Auntie Sewing Squad, and their role of driving the relief van to Navajo Nation. After talking about the A.S.S, we discussed how their past work as a curator shaped them. Then we transitioned into a conversation on the effects of the pandemic and current election.

Time stamps

Background/childhood of Badly Licked Bear: **00:00:00 - 00:06:38**

Badly Licked Bear personal journey: **00:06:38 - 00:12:50**

Auntie Sewing Squad involvement: **00:12:50 - 00:24:16**

Badly Licked Bear's community work history: **00:24:16 - 00:30:21**

Being in the Auntie Sewing Squad during the pandemic and election: **00:30:21- 00:38:21**

The future of the Auntie Sewing squad and moving forward: **00:38:21- 00:44:19**

Wrapping up the interview: 00:44:19 - 00:46:44

Transcript

Angela: You would you like five minutes to prepare or do you think you're going to do?

Badly Licked Bear: No, I actually just reviewed the questions again. I've done a number of interviews about those projects.

Angela: All right, if all of us are ready I can start recording now. Okay, that's okay. Yeah. Okay. All right. I'm starting now. Alright, so my name is Angela Soto Cerros my project partner is Zoe Forsyth, we are interviewing Badly Licked Bear who is an Auntie Sewing Squad member on Zoom. The day is November 23rd 2020 and the time is 10:35 a.m. The goal of this interview is to record the perspective and experience of the Auntie Sewing Squad members during the covid-19 pandemic and the election season of 2020. As the narrator, I want to remind you of your right to confidentiality. You can request to stop the recording anytime. You're not obligated to answer certain subjects. If you wish and you can exclude certain parts of this interview from being published. However, this interview will not have a lawyer and client privilege meaning that this content can be used against you and be viewed by anyone once released. So with that being said thank you for being here and welcome to the interview Badly Licked Bear. How are you doing?

Badly Licked Bear: Okay. Yeah. Yes.

Angela: Thank you for sharing. I will let Zoe start the interview now.

Zoe: Thank you. Hello. Good morning. To start this interview. Would it be possible to maybe get a little bit of background of your history, from the spreadsheet you did give a little bit. We're interested in maybe going a little bit more in-depth. Where you from. How was your journey on getting to where you are now?

Badly Licked Bear: Zoe is frozen.

Zoe: Oh, I'm so sorry. Can you hear me?

Badly Licked Bear: Yes.

Angela: Yeah!

Zoe: Okay. I'm so sorry. Thank you for letting me know. To start off this interview. Can we get a little bit of your background from the spreadsheet? You did give a brief summary, but we're interested in going more depth like where you're from, how your journey was.

Badly Licked Bear: I wasn't sure if you ended the question there or not. Yeah, let's see. I'm from Los Angeles. I'm 42 years old. I'm from the South Bay. I guess is the region of Los Angeles that I'm from and I live for the first 34 years of my life between Rancho Palos Verdes and San

Pedro which are basically both on the same Peninsula. Just Rancho Palos Verdes is a sort of upper middle class. Enclave and San Pedro is considered- It's a blue-collar town. But because it's a union town. It's also kind of like an upper-middle-class Uniontown if that makes any kind of sense in a lot of ways it says, you know, and and that's where I'm from. Let's see. I know you had questions in your prep that I was adopted at Birth. And so I was raised by a white identifying Jewish Family that are primarily like the descendants of Russian immigrants..Russian and Ukrainian immigrants. And and then my own background is mixed race. I'm Native American Latino and Caucasian. And so yeah, I guess I lived most of my life in South Bay. I was I got really really lucky at a very young age and I was a curator and visual arts director for mid sized nonprofit. I didn't start out at this as the Director as a directory to renters, but I started working basically at 17. I left home at 17. I immediately went to Community College and started like working in the Community College art gallery and then somehow by the time I was around 22, I was the coordinator for a midsize art profit that and then by the time I was like, you know by the time I retired as I kind of joke at about 32 from that job or 33 from that job that I was the visual arts director for that. And so I feel like I had it that's a big factor in my life is that I probably I started working and living independently when I was seventeen, where's most of the people that I knew growing up like a lot of my friends are doctors not just as a medical doctors, but like with doctorates. It's the people I went to high school with. Not all of them. But a lot of my peers were, and so like I found myself in a position of being the boss while they were still doing their undergraduate work. You know and so I really spent my 20s working 70 hours a week a lot of the time in a community-based organization Indian Community leader. I also own my own art gallery during that time for a five year period. I closed due to too much on my plate and then in my 30s I need- I went back to school. I completed my undergraduate degree in Visual and cultural studies at The Evergreen State College and then went on to get. Green critical theory and creative research from the Pacific West College of Art. So I'm you know, like so I kind of wanted to pivot at some point my career away from like that kind of thing. It's doing field research, which there is not this not a job that really exists in the world. Unless you're extremely wealthy, I believe or something. I'm not quite sure how that works. But you know, I'm a curious person and I like being curious and then I became an educator largely. I moved to the educational administration first and then was teaching a lot. Teaching doesn't pay very well. The administration got me health care and you know, because for most of the never most the past seven years, but about seven years ago six years ago seven years ago. I became very very ill with an autoimmune condition. And so for the first three years that I went into education Administration might Healthcare was a serious issue and I couldn't afford to not have employer-based health care. That was very very ill. And I'm in remission now at this at the current time and I've been for most of the past five years. So now I teach more and work less. That's what kind of things like, you know, and I've worked as an artist most of my adult life as well. I guess.

Zoe: That's very inspiring. I had a different question, but I want to go back to you and say that you moved out when you were 17. How was that? How did that grow you into a person?

Badly Licked Bear: I was trying to get out of my adoptive home at the earliest opportunity. My parents were not My adoptive parents were not people that I can relate to they were not supportive people. My adopted father is deceased now, he died about 18 years ago and my adoptive mothers still living and I do have a relationship with her but it's a really distant one and

not a very comfortable one. And so by the time I was like 15 years old, actually I was trying to have myself emancipated from my parents and made a ward of the state and I kind of backed off from that and then if I was 17 my parents. We lost our family home at a certain point and then moved into this condo and then because of a tax laws used to work you had to they were renting you had to buy a house the sort of years or you had to pay capital gains taxes on the value of the home you sold. This is no longer the case the United States and my parents wouldn't penalize tremendous that they might have actually suffered a lot of tax penalties because of this and so they are under pressure to move and weirdly enough like I was leaving to so I moved out with like a 3-foot by 3-foot cardboard box of clothes and like 250 dollars in quarters. I had saved and then they moved to Murano Beach. They moved into a town and we just kind of moved away from each other and that didn't work out very well and I started a relationship with them at that point and I didn't understand how credit works and things like that. I didn't really have much of an income. So my godfather did help me get an apartment like, you know with a friend in a crack house, well former crack house because it's cheap like and so like, you know, like they're like, what's the cheapest place we can you know, I can put this person. Oh in a project adjacent to a crack house. And so that's where I live for a while and then I lived in a slightly less shitty place and I was working. I was working at a record company in Marina del Rey and commuting about six hours a day and it's both directions by bus three or four different buses and. I did that for a while and went to Community College and then moved back in with my parents for a while, which is not a great move back out and then his time and then by the time I was like 21 or 22, I was basically like I was full time. I was working full-time at a salary. They're very very low salary, but I salary and I was you know independent and you know, and you know, and on my own in that sense, they I really really wanted out I had a really really violent childhood. I talked about this a lot. Sometimes I had a childhood that was violent, but my adopted father was threatening me violent and my childhood as a queer person and as a person of color was exceptionally violent. I, in a way that I don't think my students now or even you know, like people your age or people from the generation after me because I'm at the tail end of Gen X understand how violent High School experience can be. For certain kinds of people. It just doesn't appear to be that kind of violent.

Zoe: I completely agree with that.

Badly Licked Bear: Yeah, so I shouldn't be alive, that's a point statistically. I probably it's I'm lucky. I'm really really really lucky and I made some really really hard choices to stay lucky.

Zoe: So with all of that in play with not having open-minded adoptive parents with not having-um the right resources at that time would you say it was really hard to find yourself and be comfortable with yourself growing up?

Badly Licked Bear: I was like I was too comfortable with myself. That was like a really really big issue like going on like. My appearance was such in high school that the school district rewrote its entire dress code policies on the basis of my appearance and there were policy meetings about whether it was legal for them to force me to dye my hair a natural color. Like what could they do to my body? Well might the school district be interested in controlling my actual physical body and I was very comfortable with myself. My parents, my adoptive parents are not comfortable with that at all. I mean, it was a lot of fights. It was like there'd be weird

fights between somebody with hair like you've never seen an older Jewish man who wears a toupee. His wife was like what is called Fairfax red hair which is a hair color that only exists among some sort of Jewish women over a certain age. That's kind of like an electric. It's like Manic Panic red, but like but not right and like they'd be like you have to wear a hat. Like I can't, I won't go anywhere without you knowing this, you know. I was living my life and they were also terrible enablers for all of us and I was just never disciplined as a child and they didn't know what to do. They were just overwhelmed. I was a particularly unruly child. I have temporal lobe epilepsy which affects my personality and a lot of ways and which is a very very very disruptive condition particularly during a hormonal surge of adolescents. Yeah, so that they weren't really prepared for any of that. So I needed to get away from that as much as possible. I'm just yeah, that's I don't know how to explain it. But I was very comfortable with myself. I'm still a little too comfortable with myself. That's a big part of my job and what I do.

Angela: Yeah, I mean like a lot of what you said I resonated with. Thank you for sharing that. So what I wanted to ask now like now like that's where we are going today with the Auntie Sewing Squad? What type of work do you do? What does your typical workday look like?

Badly Licked Bear: Like with the squad? I have a weird position. In that I am the Aunt who just primarily does logistical coordination for large campaigns and deliveries to and from indigenous communities. Mostly Navajo Nation, but also we're running a campaign called Standing Rock and Black Hills right now so I'm not the primary coordinator for that. There are two Auntie's I work pretty closely with who in oftentimes have been the communicators and a lot of that stuff and then of course, I work closely with Kristina. I could because these campaigns require a lot of coordinating and over head start and and staying on mission, which is a really really big issue for them. Yeah. So my day with the aunties is I've never sewn a mask. Don't I own a professional sewing machine? I am an artist who's extremely skilled as a soloist. I don't do math for the aunties. I try to stay in my lane and work on the logistical thing. I also want to mention my partner, Katie Johnson. We live together. Katie is the co-pilot to all the drives back and forth from the Navajo Nation. Also does a huge amount of sorting, organizing, and greeting people at the door. Sometimes people can't understand how a porch drop off works. It's a pandemic. I can wave at you if you need attention, but for safety sake...just drop it. Ahahah. I also work a little bit on the farm workers stuff. Mainly because the big boxes of N-95's that we ship are a little close to Kristina's house to where she can haul on a cart, but I have a cargo van. So, I can just drive over and pick up this stuff and drive it to where it needs to be. Right now, I'm trying to finish packing the things that need to be shipped to Standing Rock. I'm alone in the house right now, Katie's traveling back from Colorado. I don't have somebody to help sort because sort sucks as a job- there's a lot to sort from. I've been doing that. The sorting and organizing is kind of invincible. We get a lot of it. We get a lot of junk. I don't care about that, Kristina likes to complain about that. She's right though- people dump a lot of things on you and it's hard when people are upper middle class and white, and they just dump their underwear drawer and baby clothes into a trash bag and leave it on your porch. It's like, I didn't ask for your underwear. I don't need your golf clubs. No, we're just collecting- I need ziploc bags and adult diapers. You know? I need a mask. You know? So, there's a lot of sorting to make sure when we deliver things they're organized and coherent to people, and not putting a huge amount of work on our partners. There's also a lot of posting on the internet too. There were a lot of sewing machines at

one point. A huge number of sewing machines had to get tested, packaged, and processed. Huge quantities of fabrics were needed too, but that's lowered by now.

Zoe: So what made you want to become an Auntie? Has it helped you personally in any way?

Badly Licked Bear: I wanted to get involved as soon as this started happening. Only because I feel like I have a total obligation to do something. I'm-I'm primarily identifying with two relationship based cultures. That is your relationships with other people and your community are the most important things. And so, I never really care what people do. I'm like, oh you climbed Mt. Everest? Did you do it for somebody? Because that's impressive to me. I've always done community work, I was curator and stuff like that. I just think in terms of community building all the time, and I want to be a part of that workload to end it. That was right when Kristina needed someone to drive to Navajo Nation, and I can't remember what I've told you, but basically Kristina was like, "We might drive to Navajo Nation. Is anyone interested?" and I was like, "Well, I have a cargo van. It's kind of big-like too big, and expensive to drive because of gas...but if you need it.". Two days later she said they needed it. I put myself out there, because I've personally spent some time in Navajo Nation as a traveler- not as a- not until now I didn't have personal friendships there or roots. I know that it's a very very rural area with little services, and we weren't sure as to where we would be driving. I was kind of concerned if there was going to be someone who wasn't comfortable with finding their way around Navajo Nation. I felt like I would be a good person to do that. It's basically one trip every month. Or there is a person from Eastern Navajo nation, with a truck, that comes and picks up from me, Brenda. People will confuse that and start giving me snacks in their donations, and it's like I'm not going anywhere ahah just putting stuff in boxes. I wanted to be an auntie. Wanted that obligation. Uhm, you know, I think we live in really really complicated, political times and. Okay so, I don't think of COVID-19- It's not a medical crisis. It's a political crisis more than it is a medical crisis.

Zoe: One hundred percent!

Badly Licked Bear: I'm not trying to dismiss how serious it is. Obviously, it's a big thing. It drives insane to see people who-. There are people who would imagine the 100-200 mass distributors and organizations are meaningless! That it was like, literally we were crazy! I've never had anyone say to me, but I know there are people who believe that! As much as they are people who believe it's not gonna happen to me. They're thinking, "I only have a 1-in-100 chance of dying from this, so I can roll those dice. I don't give a sh*t about other people, so I'll roll the dice for them too". That kind of mentality is really disgusting. So, I think this is more of a political crisis. If you look at the COVID rates. Almost every other country in the world, ya know, it is a political crisis and a racial crisis. It's like seven different things before it's a medical crisis because of how America has collectively responded to it. Even as a racial crisis, I have to listen endlessly about how wonderful New Zealand is and how everyone wants to move there. I have family and deep connections in Thailand and which only has had like 42 cases. Thailand, Vietnam, and Taiwan are all model countries but I don't hear anything about them because they're not run by a charismatic white woman. So, it's one of the most effective prime ministers. It's not a critique of her! It's a critique of Americans. In the same way, I can't imagine a community that's more aggressive. The Navajo Nations lockdowns are harder than anyone else's.

There's no travel on the weekends, you have to stay home. I wish my community had the strength to do that.

Badly Licked Bear: I do not understand how people cannot do these things, and I, it's not hard. I don't do that much, I don't work forty hours a week as an auntie, you know, if a hundred people work 5 hours a week as an auntie, that's like a tremendous amount of work. You know, I work more than that as an auntie but um, you know I don't need an army of two hundred thousand full-time aunties you know, I just think it's not hard to pitch in, you know, and find something that, I just think I try to find something I can do, and I can do this, I could sow but I would hate it! I just know, I would like to be burnt out, but I get excited when I'm driving the van like I'm doing a thing! People get really excited about it, they think I'm doing something really dangerous, it's not, but, you know, I get to do something, and it makes me feel like a human being

Angela: um, sorry, I lost my track of thought. So I wanted to go back to your history as a curator. You said that you were involved in various mutual aid projects and social practices but I was just wondering if you could name a few examples of your experience.

Stopped at 00:24:58

Badly Licked Bear: Well, so, during I was a curator I primarily saw my role and my program as being oriented towards incubating careers of emerging arts, that was, both within my organization's mission and scope and also our capacity to do things you know. I was not in a position to fund a hundred-dollar thing a mobobber or something like that right. But I was in a position to fund and support projects that were called social practice projects, at the time, the term social practice didn't get used that much until 2007 or 08, people used to say "I'm doing a performative illu-, eh uh, installation". They have some weird kinda made up thing like I understand they are doing a performative or a longitudinal performance of some kind, but these things were often geared around sharing a resource with the community like food, I was part of a group called the portable potluck project that built this colossal table into these huge events where you could share food. A lot of social practice events were about sharing food, there was oftentimes an idea that the average of these items would get then get donated or have some secondary purpose, and that there was an obligation to be responsible to communities as opposed to individuals. That your work was engaging or representing a community either bringing people in and reaching out to a community and if it was good work you were doing it over a long period of time, you know, like a lot of social practice projects are drop-ins, they're like "I'm gonna drop in on this farmworker community for like 2 months and like, do a thing with them and leave and never talk to them again", you know. And those things aren't very meaningful or symbolic, so I really think like, you know projects that involve people meeting their neighbors, you know, finding ways to bring people into an art gallery in a way where they can engage with something that might not just be educational but also politically relevant, which i think is, you know, and then working with the same groups of artists and or individual artists multiple times over a long period of time to support them as opposed to like put them on a shelf a little while and then move on to the next hot thing, which is supporting people longitudinally. And so I'm into that kind of long term relationship building and support, and it was a big part of my practice as well as paying people which is more common now, but at the time I was paying artists to like

exhibit their work, with the idea that there was take-home money, not just like “here's some money for you to spend on materials”, um, that was very uncommon, except for artists who are already extremely wealthy, and then around 2007, 2008, I like practiced on a lot of that work, kind of, it got really, um, co-opted by the museum system as the cheapest way to have an artist do something that could be like educommunicative to a community, and then, in my opinion, again, the museum is like “If we can get like the darkest skinned poorest children in a photograph with this project, then like our rich white donors will support the museum”, and so I feel like that’s one of the big critiques of social practices, really really coopted by people who already had power in institutions, a lot of architects, you know, people who have like “I have a degree” or “I'm an architecture firm and also now doing a museum project”. The people who innovated that community were largely people of color, largely women, um, where kinda left by the wayside, or you know, and so uh, just sorta that’s my roots

Angela: yeah

I should make it clear that also the organization I used to be the director, visual arts director, there’s an executive director and a visual arts director, and I was the visual arts director, and uh, and I had a great partnership with my executive director, and uh, it has fifty artists studios that are work only, not live-work, they’re specifically for work, and so my job for that decade, when I was in my twenties, was managing a community like that was my, its kind of like being a mayor, but it’s more like a city manager, like no one, elected you, they’re kinda stuck with you, you not popular necessarily, and your not really a landlord either, and it was really challenging as somebody who was like twenty-three or twenty-four to like evict people in their 50s or something who were not using their studio anymore. But also to build community and a community is really marked, in my opinion, by how many births have you experienced and how many deaths have you experienced, that’s a real big thing for me like you’re really building community when you realize there are new human beings in this community that came out of a human beings body, right, and then there, and then when you watch people pass out of the community, and I think that’s, I’m not interested in community building that’s event-based, in that sense, should community, where it’s like yeah, there were 10 of us here fifteen years ago and now there are only nine of us. You know, I think, that’s what, those, it’s kind of like a scar of community, and I don’t mean scar in a negative sense but it marks you

Angela: yeah

Badly Licked Bear: people do, most of the time people get old, and it’s natural, it’s not, I don’t wanna say its sad, but its naturally part of it, and you know, its booded by the fact that people get married, have like three kids and your like “oh you have babies!” yeah so, that’s my sense of community

Angela: Yeah, mhm, so I guess going back to the pandemic, um, ever since the pandemic started, like, have you seen like any significant changes or like shifts in your personal experience or have seen in the community

Badly Licked Bear: I mean I'm not out that much, I just feel like im, this might be my mood right now, but im like absolutely confirmed in my belief, that like, it seems that most of us as

human beings are pretty selfish, and I don't feel like, I don't like to be cynical in that way. I have a reputation of a bit of a cynic but not in that way, I like to think that people are really really capable of doing it and I just think people aren't, and that's been my biggest reception. I live in near downtown in Los Angeles, and I do work outside with a home, right now helping a friend take care of her kids, and so I'm in a bubble with my household and then a secondary household and that's literally my entire world, and so I drive basically this short distance between the two places. I just think, it seems like, people are treating it (COVID-19) really normal, right now in my community of like very, very sheek, cool people, there's like a lot of night club action happening, there's a lot of, like not in my immediate community but adjacent to me, not my friends not people I know really, but people who think they're very fucking cool, or having a lot of fucking Saturday night parties, weekend after weekend, right in my neighborhood. You know, they're assholes, there's a lot of assholes, that's been my perspective, and can't even believe it. Yeah, I just think we have seen a lot of about how selfish Americans are. I don't wanna make this about people, I just think Americans who've made themselves very special people, separated themselves from all of the human beings by this notion of exceptionalism or something, and I feel like, I think you'll see this even in the way people immigrate here, people immigrate because they wanna be part of that! So, you know, it's like, what do you leave behind when you become an American

Angela: yeah!

Badly Licked Bear: I think that's part of the problem, but I live in a mostly Latino community, like Latino super majority community, and uh, definitely more people in this community wear masks than a lot of other places. I thought like maybe part of it's that a lot of people are blue collared, have to wear masks at their jobs normally for things, you know, they do something that's dangerous, or they're a nurse, so it's like "This isn't hard", you know. For other people it's very hard.

Angela: yeah, yeah, I resonate with that! I wanted to ask you more about like the election season, um has your involvement with the Auntie Sewing Squad community been affected or like or influenced by this?

Badly Licked Bear: Well, I mean, politically I definitely had to make a decision at a certain point when there was a lot of protests around George Floyd and stuff, and not to participate physically, because I was doing so much work with the aunties at that point, that like, and it was so hard to get tested at that point too, that it was hard to figure out what was my window to do these trips to Navajo Nation. So I basically had to like sit at home, and be really really be isolated. I kind of had this thought at a certain point, one of the joys of being an auntie is that, knowing that like if things go really really bad in this country, and like, in some way, then I'm already part of a thousand member work essentially of people who can immediately pivot to something meaningful. Whether that would be like political action or direct action, you know, I know that aunties, the aunties did produce banners for some of those protests, you know because we have sowers, I know that Kristina was involved, she's great at that kind of like lettering, she's just, I don't know, her days have more hours than yours and mine, that's my theory, I don't know how that works, ask her! She gets a lot done, and um, but you know, the general election cycle, I just feel like the chatter in the aunties group is so confined to like COVID stuff that we don't,

you know, we just, it's just all stress everywhere, and like I said, COVID is a political crisis and its connected to the election. You know, as somebody who works in COVID relief, I am really glad that Pfizer didn't announce any findings, whether they couldve or not about the efficacy of their vaccine before the election because it wouldve essentially functioned as a November surprise. I'm not a big fan of global pharmaceutical corporations, but I do appreciate that somebody mightve at least had that degree of judgement, you know, to not have a repeat of the memo effected the 2016 election, the thing with, uh, you know, Hillary Clinton and her emails, and all that stuff. But, it makes the election that much more important, which makes it, like we have no national, I don't know, Im a an art teacher most of the time! And I teach history most of the time, like I often times ill teach art history towards the idea that when the United States eliminated the NEA individual artist grant in 1989, we ceased to have a coherent art policy in the nation, we decided not to have, The united states does not have an art policy, we have policies with all kinds of things but we chose, we, you know, and that was primarily in a way was simultaneously homophobic and mysogonistic, with a lot to the AIDS crisis. Like have we also chosen to not have, you know, at least until like January 20th in theory at this point, like to not have a health policy? I mean thats, it feels like that, you know, the lack of coherent national healthcare policy in the face of a pandemic is going to be something that gonna be like, the focus of an entire semesters of world history, of U.S. history, in the 21st century at this point, like its gonna be unimaginable to, I can only hope that its unimaginable concept, I hope its, it should be as unimaginable as slavery, thats stupid. Its not as grotesque as slavery, but its should exist in that, with the holocaust, where its like no should, where human beings made these decisions, double down on them for like six months, eight months, is insane. So, uh, yeah, like a lot of people I joke that I'm a single issue voter, the issue is the complete elimination of student loan debt, so which is like not, not on the table, you know i don't wanna say, it's like the least important thing right now. So, as someone who hasn't paid a student loan payment in like 8 months, it's surreal, lets just say that. So like, you'll be here, trust me! It's exciting, it's thrilling! They email you all the time, you get attention!

Angela: Uh, sorry, I'm really liking all that you said, um, yeah. I'm just resonating with it. So um. In our class, we have read more about the Auntie Sewing Squad and we uh, listened to an interview and um, learned that like, the Auntie Sewing Squad isn't intending to stay long. Like once that the pandemic, I guess is over, if um, it's going to be a temporary movement so like since the Auntie Sewing Squad intends to be temporary movement, um, what would be like your takeaway from this work? And like moving forward in your future with this experience?

Badly Licked Bear: I think I've said a couple times that whatever I do next in my life is probably gonna be pretty influenced by, by this. This- The work I do at the Auntie's is probably more fulfilling than almost anything else that I get to do. Um. It puts me in contact with people who have real needs, um, you make real change, and uh, and it really requires you to work really really well with other people. And um, I don't know what that means at this point. Um. I think it's- you know- I'm- I'm- I've been offered classes next semester and I'm planning on becoming a teacher in the spring, but I don't really know what I wanna do, at that- past that point? Um, and I just feel like, um, its- its- gonna be the primary, and even more so than the pandemic, the fact that it happened in the pandemic, like you know- it's- the past three or four years its- its- you know my life it's one of the things that I really feel like something changed- has changed the direction of my life in a certain way. Um. And, I'm not saying I don't want it to stop, um, but,

but like I just- uh- I feel like there's a lot of- there's a network of people who are really really like ready to go on stuff and I'm kind of interested to seeing what kind of comes out of that. What smaller networks emerge. I wonder if some of those already are, you know people who are like, have their niche, issues. I mean I primarily work- I'm- a lot of the stuff we're doing with indigenous communities right now is not specifically COVID related at this point. And it's- you know, we're talking about mission creep and stuff like that. So, um, and so like we try to like, keep it in Auntie's on the box in a way. But i'm really glad that we're not, um, planning- that we're not trying to build an organization. Um, I've seen really really big failures on that, like- do you know the Wall of Moms group? From Portland, the Portland Protest?

Angela: Um, I think I might've heard something, but I'm not really familiar.

Badly Licked Bear: There is a group called the Wall of Moms, and they got a lot of national coverage. 'Cause they're moms and they're putting themselves basically in- literally in harm's way, at these George Floyd protests and other- you know, BLM protests in Portland. And they, basically like, formed a nonprofit 'cause they were getting like so many donations. It was probably putting somebody's individual tax situation into a crisis. And then immediately, like it disintegrated into this whole like - "Well how much does this person get- gonna get paid now?" Right. And so like a big part of why, Kristina and I and other people who- you know- who, work with the Auntie's, especially those of us who have experience as nonprofit managers or like community leaders, don't want this to be- have more structure. And- and- it's because, the minute we do those kind of things you have to start paying people salary, carrying liability insurance, building a board, and doing all sorts of stuff. And- the costs of operating the nonprofit quickly equalize to the amount of benefit your giving. And right now, because it's a pandemic and people can't like- it's hard to do the math right now, like, while I make this I would lose this much money if I just- it's like a lot of us don't have work right now or have as much work so we have the time.

Zoe: Yeah

Badly Licked Bear: If it weren't during a pandemic I think, and someone wanted to do this kind of work, people would probably say "Let's start a nonprofit. Let's make it roll." But, right now, because we're all volunteers, and we don't have a formalized organization. We're prepared to dissolve, as necessary. We're really responsive to ideas at mission creep 'cause it burns people out. And we just don't- we don't want to fuck around with it. And no one can like, "I'm paying your salary to do this, like do this extra thing now that's not really your original mission." And then it would- the cost, we would have to raise more money to pay a skeleton staff and then a part-time executive director, even one who's taking a low salary. You know, their healthcare costs alone would be prohibited. And, more money than we're raising at a given point. We'd have to like- then you'd have to have a development director and all those- you know to- write grants. And we've written a couple grants and stuff like that. We didn't get the big one, that I wrote. Um, and uh, which was a bummer. Um, 'cause it was gonna be a cool project, but uh, but we don't wanna become a fivelancy tree and we wanna like- but I also don't want us to like, "go to the wind". I think we're all gonna be, you know, a lot of people knew each other beforehand. So, yeah. Although this winter clothing drive has me have this scheme where I can find like a network of rich people. And like make it a permanent funnel where all of their kid's

luxury ski wear just gets sent to indigenous communities. I have so much high-end ski wear at my house right now. And I know I'm not tapping that well, I know there's a- there's like a- there's a, rich people with ski wear that wear 'em once group. And I need them, to care. I don't wanna- that's not my nonprofit I don't wanna do that. That's not my passion, so I'm just. But there's a project there, so.

Zoe: Finally, it's a little bit off topic, but what does "seven equal m" mean? And like did you want us to know that as we were preparing for this interview?

Badly Licked Bear: What did I- I- I- I thought that was a typo in your questions.

Zoe: Oh, really?

Angela: Ohh.

Badly Licked Bear: What did I do?

Angela: Oh, um-

Zoe: There was like a connection on the um-

Badly Licked Bear: That sounds like some QAnon-shit.

Zoe: This- on the, um, on the spreadsheet. And it said like, "What do you want the interviewers to know going into this interview?" And you just wrote "7=m".

Badly Licked Bear: Wow, I don't know. I would wanna know the answer to that too if I were in your position. But that's probably me like copying the form field or something like that or. Cut and pasting? I don't know. 7=m. I.

Zoe: We'll find out.

Angela: Yeah.

Badly Licked Bear: Yeah. Let- Let it be- Let that mystery stand.

Angela: Yeah. I-I thought- I was like "7=m that's so like mysterious, like what is that?"

Zoe: I know!

Badly Licked Bear: Yeah. There's no greater mystery than total nonsense. Yeah, I don't have an answer on that.

Angela: Okay, yeah. Then for sure. So, um, well, that concludes the end of this interview, um, Badly Licked Bear. It was a pleasure interviewing you and thank you so much sharing and um, sharing your insights with us. But yeah.

Badly Licked Bear: Well, good luck with the project. And I- We know we- A lot of work has been done to kinda like capture what we're doing. And um, again as somebody who's been through a lot of mutual aid projects and social aid- social practice projects, particularly by people of color and particularly by women and also by people in the community that, became invisibilized, later. I- I'm- I'm- I'm- I'm- glad that a record is being, constructed. And a narrative is being constructed. And I appreciate you doing it because, if we had to do it ourselves it wouldn't get done. Or it would get done five years from now badly and no one would care so. Thank you very much.

Zoe: Thank you.

Angela: Yeah thank you. Alright, so um, if it's okay, uh, if any of you have any last words you can go ahead and say them but, if not- if- I'll stop the recording right now. Yeah alright, I'll stop recording.