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## Interview with Cenders Bailey

Cenders Bailey

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Interviewee: Cenders Bailey

Interviewers: Viviana Martinez and Ayva Savoy

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Length: 00:44:51

Overseen by: Dr. Chrissy Yee Lau

**Biography:** Cenders Bailey is an African American woman who is empathetic to disenfranchised communities. She is retired physician's assistant, a wife, mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, and a Sewing Auntie in the Auntie Sewing Squad. She learned to sew from the women in her family and used her sewing skills to make masks during COVID-19.

**Interview Summary:** (00:00) Cenders Bailey discusses how she learned to sew from her mother and sisters and how to make a pledge for a mask campaign in the Auntie Sewing Squad. (08:24) Bailey then shares why her experiences as a woman of color influenced her approach to making masks for those forgotten or underserved. (16:27) She then discusses several aspects of how and why she joined the Auntie Sewing Squad, including the questionnaire she answered before being accepted into the group and how her sister, who was ill with and eventually died from COVID, served as an inspiration for her to sew. (25:22) Bailey shares about the various forms of Auntie Care like Sauntie Care and how she always added a personal note to her mask packages. (32:21) Lastly, she talks about what she is doing in the period of ASS retirement, including donating masks to local schools and pantries, as well as learning to sew handbags.

## **Transcript**

**Viviana Martinez (VM) [00:01]:** Okay, we're recording.

**Cenders Bailey [00:03]:** And you got the consent forms, I think I sent them in two separate emails. (laughs)

**VM [00:09]:** Yeah, I'll touch back with you on that too.

**CB [00:10]:** Okay, if you didn't just let me know. I scanned them and attached them, but if not, I'll just screenshot and send a photocopy of it with the phone.

**VM [00:21]:** Perfect. Okay. So, we're going to go ahead and get started. As an introduction my name is Viviana Martinez and my partner here with us is Ayva Savoy and our Auntie that will be interviewing is Auntie Cenders Bailey. It is Wednesday, December 1st, 2021 at 11:31 a.m and we are conducting this interview over Zoom about the Auntie Sewing Squad, which sought out to make masks to prevent the spread of COVID-19. More specifically, for the more vulnerable communities that were not able to access masks.

**Ayva Savoy (AS) [01:01]:** So then we already did our little good morning, but again, good morning.

**CB [01:05]:** Okay. (laughs) Good morning again. (laughs again)

**AS [01:07]:** We want to thank you just for taking time out of your schedule, just to sit down with us and even do this interview.

**CB [01:12]:** Oh, you're welcome. You're welcome. No worries.

**AS [01:15]:** Yeah and then we just want to get into like some of the questions. I think we sent you most of them.

**CB [01:23]:** Yes.

**AS [01:24]:** So you kind of already went over most of them. So the first one is just telling us a little bit about yourself and your background.

**CB [01:32]:** Okay, I am a wife, a mother, a grandmother, a great grandmother. (laughs) I am a retired physician assistant. I like to spend time with my family, cook, walk, read, do community service whenever I can. My 94 year old father-in-law lives with us, so we celebrated his 94th birthday this weekend. So he had a good time. I baked him a cake, buttermilk chocolate with buttermilk chocolate icing.

**AS [02:08]:** Okay.

**VM [02:09]:** I have a question for you. You said you're a physician's assistant, did you feel more of a connection to help out more vulnerable communities during this [time]?

**CB [02:21]:** Yes I did, yes.

**VM [02:24]:** Well, alright. So who or what your childhood influenced you to start sewing?

**CB [02:31]:** It was my mom and then eventually as my sister, as she started to sew, I learned to sew from them, just sitting beside them and watching them transform. They would see something maybe in a catalog or in a store and say, oh, that's too expensive because we couldn't really afford a lot. I'm the baby of eight, back then. And so they'd look at it, they'd go home, get some butcher paper and make a pattern and transform it into something beautiful. So I learned to sew by watching them.

**VM [03:04]:** And was this something that lasted just for a few years, or was it always something that you kind of continued throughout your life as a mom, and a grandma, and a great grandma?

**CB [03:13]:** It lasted for a long time, and then I stopped when work got really hectic or something. I just didn't have time. But then I picked it back up again once I joined the Auntie Sewing Squad.

**AS [03:31]:** Because I feel like a lot of people like in our society, like they don't feel like sewing is a necessity or feel like we need to learn that. So, I feel like more than half of the people or like population in our society doesn't even know how to sew I feel like.

**CB [03:46]:** Yes, I know, I know. I tried to teach my granddaughter some things this weekend when she was here, and she was like, can we do it later? You know that young generation. Exactly, 18 and under. But then when she discovered I made scrunchies with a zipper? She's like, Oh, this is neat. I can carry my chapstick and I can carry my money and my keys.

**AS [04:10]:** She's like, ok, I'm into it.

**CB [04:12]:** Yeah. So she said, Next time I come, you're going to teach me how to make this. So hopefully she'll follow through.

**VM [04:20]:** Do your grandchildren know or understand what you did for the Auntie Sewing Squad project?

**CB [04:28]:** Oh yes. Oh yes, they do. They constantly, I mean, everybody in the family (had) probably 10 or 12 masks, so they have ample supply of masks. Even if one was dirty or they didn't do the laundry, they'd have a backup, always. So my son, my daughter, my grandkids and then my husband, my father in law even has his when he goes out to the doctor or whatever, and I will always show them, send them this is what I just made. And they're like, oh my god, how did you make all this? But I got to where I could make one hundred, sometimes a hundred and fifty in a day.

**VM [05:09]:** So how long would that take you would you say?

**CB [05:12]:** Sometimes I had to start probably eight (am) and I'd break for dinner and I maybe have 75 to 100 done by then. And if I had done more than one pledge, I knew I had to get back to sewing after dinner so that I could complete both of those pledges because sometimes I would have three pledges running at the same time with 100 pledged or 50 pledged there or whatever. And I was like, why'd I do that? But I would always complete all the pledges and get them out because I know they were needed.

**VM [05:46]:** By pledge, What do you mean? Can you elaborate on that?

**CB [05:50]:** Well, on our page, the private group, we have a group of Aunties called the Super Aunties and they would vet the requests for masks to ensure that those people were in need of them and couldn't pay for them, couldn't provide them for themselves. So they would put up say we have a request from Standing Rock for 1500 masks, and the Aunties would start pledging, they would say 1500 masks, x amount for adults, x amount for children or if they were all adult. If there were any specifications that the group that requested them, no red, no ghost, or different things like that so that it wouldn't infringe upon their cultural needs. So then you'd pledge and you'd watch that pledge grow to see, and then the Super Auntie would say, "Okay, we only need 75 more. Who's going to bring it home and pledge that 75 or whatever?" And a lot of times they got more than what they needed and they would say, hold off, we're going to do the farm workers, and that's a big ask. So, hold on and you can pledge for that one. But the Super Aunties would request the mask and then the sewist or the Aunties would pledge whatever they could make within a two week time period and get back, get it in the mail for that individual that requested it.

**AS [07:19]:** Like a competition.

**CB [07:24]:** It was fun, it was fun. And as far as sewing, eventually I started challenging myself. In the beginning it was like 40 masks. I started out hand sewing them because my daughter had my sewing machine, so I hand sewed in the beginning and for my family and what hospital employees requested, one or pantry or whatever. And then I was like, okay, those look pretty good, but I can't do a large amount. So eventually I was able to locate the sewing machine and start sewing them on the sewing machine.

**AS [07:59]:** Yeah, I bet that sped things up.

**CB [08:01]:** I would compete with myself.

**AS [08:04]:** Okay, so the next question's kind of long, so bear with me here. So similar to how certain groups were overlooked during the pandemic, have you personally ever felt looked over? And if so, how has it affected your outlook on life, particularly as an Auntie?

**CB [08:24]:** Oh okay. Yes in the past overlooked. Yes. As a woman and a woman of color, most certainly, and how it affected me as an Auntie, I was in a group with, it was a godsend, I was in a group of like minded women who had possibly experienced the same thing, if not something more devastating that I had through the course of a lifetime, because you are a different nationality or a different color or whatever it may be. And it made me really want to communicate and be in that group because we were all on the same plane. We all experienced something similar, if not worse.

**AS [09:10]:** I think that's cool, too, that you guys can all relate, not in just the way of wanting to give back and be a part of something bigger, but also just in the way that like you have been looked over and you experience the same issues.

**CB [09:23]:** Mm-Hmm. Mm-Hmm.

**VM [09:25]:** It only makes you feel more connected with the people that you're working with...

**CB [09:31]:** Exactly.

**VM [09:32]:** And want to work with them when you're all on the same page and have the same sort of end goal in mind.

**CB [09:38]:** Yep, we have the same goal in mind. We're shooting for that same obstacle, same goal.

**VM [09:46]:** Going back one question. How did the pandemic affect or and influence your desire to reach out to those communities, which I know we kind of touched on, and then more specifically, the ones that were looked over in the CARES Act, which was the COVID relief fund. I'm sure you're [familiar with].

**CB [10:08]:** I consider that the groups that were overlooked, I call them the forgotten, the farmworkers, the indigent workers, any person of color, the elderly and the poor. And it was being a poor individual. As I grew up, I could relate to them not having what they need at the homeless or whatever, the sex workers, someone in prison. And it made me want to help them get where they need it and it made me want to help them protect themselves. And as a physician's assistant, that was even more overbearing, like what is wrong with the government? People need this, do they not understand that it's highly communicable, what is going on? I have always been for preventive medicine, prevent it before it happens. When they first found out about it, it should have been brought to the public's attention and nipped in the bud early on. They may not have been able to eradicate it, but at least they could have stopped it where it did not kill millions of people. So I just, I wanted to help those who can't help themselves.

**VM [11:23]:** Now you mentioned that you have sort of been in their position before. How might you, just connect with the fact that they're doing this just like you did, but in a huge pandemic where I mean, everything just seems impossible to get a hold of, I mean, whether that be like toilet paper, how we did see that and food and even more so, I mean, they're homeless or not able to do that. How do you think that affected them?

**CB [11:55]:** I think it more so than what before the pandemic, if they were in that position. I think if someone hadn't reached out to help them, it would have been a situation where some of them may have just given up. If you remember the news early on, once the pandemic first started, you saw a lot of suicides and those suicides are not the homeless or the underserved or the forgotten individuals. Those were millionaire children. They were artists who were used to the flurry of the paparazzi chasing them and being out in public and the social media and everything. They could not stand that isolation and that loneliness. So just think they had the means, just think about the people who don't have the means and how they feel lost and devastated. So it was important to get them when we had not just the masks, but we also had warm scarves and hats and mittens we made for the homeless population, something to keep them warm because you think, I always think if I were in that position, I would want someone to take that initiative to help me. And it's important that we all try to think that way but you and I both know that that doesn't always happen. So for me, it's always a thing to think positive. Remember where I came from, because where I came from and where I am now, we always go back. You know, it's not a given that you're going to stay where you are today. And my thing is it only takes a second to be kind. So always be kind. It's easier to be rude and nasty to somebody than it is to be kind to them.

**VM [13:51]:** And going back to what you said about how the Aunties made mittens and hats and scarves was that a pledge? Or was that just something that you, Aunties, noticed and wanted to contribute?

**CB [14:08]:** It was a request, from individuals to the aunties, and they vetted those requests also. But even though we made those mittens, gloves, scarves, whatever, we didn't let our obligation where we had pledged the masks go to the site. Those were extra obligations that we chose to accept. It was cold in New York. Or cold in South Dakota. And we just recently finished a coat drive and they're doing hand knitted drive with hats and mittens and stuff and a blanket drive even though we're retired.

**AS [14:57]:** That's cool that they feel like they can come to you guys and say, like, "Hey, this is what else we need, here's more ideas you can help us." I feel like that'd be such an honor to be able to do that for them and give back to them in that way.

**CB [15:11]:** Exactly. It's rewarding. It makes you feel good because, like I said, put yourself in their place. How would you feel if you had nowhere to turn, no money, no clothes and you're homeless and you're out there and you're cold? I think on one of the reservations right before it got cold last year, they had found a homeless individual frozen. And we always talk openly and honest because it's a private Facebook group. So nothing has to be, you don't have to watch your voice as much in there, Kristina allows us a little bit of leeway in expressing our opinions. And we have a phrase about when the masks weren't provided because of the CARES Act and all



that, we would rage sew, which meant that we would just sew nonstop until we got as many masks as we could possibly get sewn for when the pledge to start rolling in, they would be available for those individuals.

**AS [16:23]:** Like pre-made, basically?

**CB [16:27]:** Exactly, yes. And we had a fund, Kristina did fundraising or there was a fundraising Auntie because we had all these Super Aunties, we had a spreadsheet Auntie, We had a bouncer Auntie. But if people didn't do what they were supposed to, you got bounced out. And then the Super Aunties that vetted the group that requested the mask so they would always go through who needs what and we would always know. Or if we had masks that were already made, we could say I have 100 or I have 50 masks already made, whose face can I put these on?

**VM [17:07]:** Okay, that's great, it's great that you guys had a community where everyone was honest, everything was open. I'm sure it kept it real and nothing was sugar coated, especially during a hard time. I mean, I think it was a hard time for everyone, let alone, having not necessarily that burden, but a weight of going the extra step making the masks, and I mean, I'm sure that there were times, I can only imagine that it was hard and it's nice to have...

**CB [17:36]:** I think sometimes after a while it was like, how did I finish those? I must've done those in my sleep.

**AS [17:44]:** You're just on mechanic mode.

**CB [17:48]:** Exactly, exactly. I'd be like, okay.

**AS [17:50]:** So moving on to the next question. This is kind of basic. Just tell us how you got into the Auntie Sewing Squad. Like what made you want to join? How did you find out about it?

**CB [18:03]:** Well, I wanted to do something because I'm an active person. And then with lockdown, once it started, you can only make so much banana nut bread, so much sourdough bread, and I saw it. It was either an article on Google or in a feed on Facebook so then I sent them a message on Messenger. And she said, check the private group, search for the private group, answer the questions and see if you get accepted to the group. And that was probably in July. And so I was accepted and I sewed until retirement August 15th this year. So in the group, it was like twenty six hundred masks that I donated, sewed and donated. But overall, with my family and people that I donated outside of the group, it was close to thirty five hundred.

**AS [18:58]:** Wow. What were some, I'm just curious, what were some of the questions like to get accepted? Like what was like the rubric or kind of what they asked of you?

**CB [19:07]:** Where did you learn to sew? I think it was. Do you agree by these guidelines? No bullying, no harsh language, no, you know, picking fights, things like that. And then what was the other? I think it was just two questions, but I got accepted and I started sewing. And we had in the beginning it was hard to get like elastic, fabric. So we had the Auntie who were not sewists would search for fabric before the lockdown, elastic things like that. And then we had cutters, people who didn't sew they would cut the patterns. If someone wanted pre-cut masks, so all they had to do was sew them, and then we got our supplies. If we needed fabric, elastic or thread, we'd request a box. We get a box shipped with fabric elastic thread. And usually you might get something like a little button that said "we go down sewing" or something like that. You get some tea and different things like that because then we had Care Aunties. Also, those are ones that didn't sew, but we took care of each other so that you didn't get burnt out. So you might get a care box and you might have two pounds a Starbucks coffee, some cookies, some tea, different things like that, even just a little handwritten or handmade card from the Auntie that sent it. And then you had a group of Aunties that sent to one local Auntie that was the major care person, and then she wouldn't ship the packages out. And then eventually it was other Aunties that different states that may be a Care Auntie as well. You might get a package from them. And we had a form that if you were down and out and you needed a care package, you fill the form out and they'd send you a care package.

**AS [21:04]:** Send one my way!

**CB [21:09]:** Yeah, yeah.

**AS [21:13]:** Well, that is really cool because I feel like that's like a little the motivation you need to keep making the masks and stuff because you're giving so much and you're always constantly making them sewing them. It's nice to get something in return.

**CB [21:28]:** Exactly. It lets you know that regardless of where you are sewers whether you are a cutter or whether you are a Care Auntie you can tell that everybody in the group loved each other and cared about each other and had your back. So keep sewing or as the overlord Kristina Wong always says sew or I'll cut your fingers off.. when she was just kidding.

**VM [21:56]:** Did you ever receive a care package or a care box?

**CB [22:02]:** Yes, I received several, and then we had care packages, care boxes we could request specifically from Kristina because she had the World Harvest, I think it is, it's a food pantry, and they had this surplus of like Starbucks coffee. So we paid five dollars and we got 20 pounds of coffee or we got 20 pounds of coffee and six boxes of girl scout cookies. But it was fun. And one other thing I'll add my sister died from COVID last year. She was in rehab for about a year,

getting strong enough to have a double heart valve surgery. She had the surgery and the surgery was successful, upon the day that she was due to discharge back to the rehab, she was diagnosed with COVID and she died seven days later. But during her time while she was in rehab, we got her an iPhone and I taught her how to facetime and I was like, oh lord, what did I do that for? Because once she learned her facetime, she just went on and on. But that helped me because with that technology, I got to spend that year with her. Had it not been for that technology, I would not. And sometimes when she wasn't in physical therapy, exercising or whatever, she's like you're sewing, ok, but we can talk and I'll watch you, and she just watched me sew so that was also an inspiration for me, and I made the staff at the greenfield rehabilitation masks and ear savers for their masks for that whole floor that took care of her.

**VM [23:58]:** Well, I'm sorry to hear about your sister but that's so sweet that she was your motivation and she was able to be there for you during that time. I'm sure it's really heartwarming to have those moments with her. So.

**CB [24:14]:** Yes, thank you. Yeah, she enjoyed it.

**AS [24:18]:** Yeah, it's hard, definitely. My mom had an experience where she was in the ICU from COVID for a couple of weeks, and we just facetimed literally, and it saved everything, she looked forward to those facetimes every day, I'm sure, was like the same for you.

**CB [24:33]:** Yes, yes. Technology is a wonder these days.

**VM [24:38]:** And it taught you to join the Auntie Sewing Squad it seemed like so, which is always comes full circle.

**CB [24:44]:** Yes, even though we're retired, there's some people who've dropped off, but I'm still on the group. We still, like I said, the coat drive, the blankets, the knitting...I don't knit. I used to be able two years ago and I should have kept up with it, but I would probably stab myself now.

**VM [25:06]:** Well, moving on to the next question. And you kind of already touched based on it. So it's okay if there's not a lot you have to say, but how did the Auntie Sewing Squad support you during this time? And then in what ways did you support other Aunties?

**CB [25:22]:** Ok as I said before, they supported us with care packages and just the support that we need it, like if we needed to vent about something, like the riot that was at the Capitol or anything that was in the news that was upsetting were it the shooting at the nail salon or whatever, people were allowed to vent within the confines of that group and still feel safe. And then also, you knew that if you needed to reach out to the Auntie Sewing Squad because you were hurting or you needed help, they were always there. And just that being in the back of my

mind during the course of the time with my sister, I always knew I could reach out if I needed to. They were always there and my giving back we had like a Secret Santa, so we called it Sauntie Care, and so we signed up, we gave a lot of dialog things that we like, like books, reading, walking, what foods we like, what adult beverage we may want or whatever. And so a name got selected for us. That person didn't know and then we built a box for them and shipped it off to them, handwritten cards, they let us know about their fur babies, whether they had cats or dogs. In mine I included a cubed pincushion with cats and dogs on it because she had cats and dogs, and then I put little treats in there for her babies as well as treats for her.

**VM [27:00]:** Oh, how sweet. That's so thoughtful.

**CB [27:06]:** Yeah, so that's how I did. And then it was nice. I mean and now we're doing Christmas cards. We signed up to send each other Christmas cards or photo cards or whatever, just a note or whatever.

**VM [27:17]:** That's so great that you all keep in touch. It seems like you guys are really close.

**AS [27:21]:** Yeah. I was about to say the same thing. It sounds like you guys still enjoy keeping in touch and doing little things for each other just to let you guys know you're thinking of each other and you guys are still connected.

**CB [27:33]:** Yes. And I think on the 9th, if we can watch Kristina's show about the Auntie Sewing Squad, it'll be live streaming. We can watch that on the 9th, the show that she did in the New York theater.

**AS [27:48]:** I didn't know about that.

**CB [27:53]:** Oh, you did know about that. She did. I think it was like two or three weeks, she did a one woman show about the Auntie Sewing Squad and the New York theater, and she had her Hello Kitty sewing machine that she sewed on and then her chair was a big pincushion, and they had big spools of thread on the set and everything. But it'll be streaming, and even people who are not in the Auntie Sewing Squad can purchase tickets to watch the live livestream.

**AS [28:12]:** Okay, we're going to have to let our class know about that. Okay, so they can tune into the livestream.

**VM [28:27]:** That's so awesome. Thank you for sharing that with us. Okay.

**AS [28:32]:** Okay, so the next question, as you know, we're in a women's studies class or women's history class. So there's a lot of like inspirational women that we learn about, that we

talk about. Do you have any like inspirational women specifically like in history that inspire you or like even inspired you to join the Auntie Sewing Squad?

**CB [28:50]:** Not that inspired me to join, but just inspire me. One would be Michelle Obama being the first Black first lady from 2009 to 2017. Maya Angelou because of her civil rights as well as her writings and her poetry. Auntie Ruth because of the Supreme Court and she was always a jurist and always sought to see that people were treated fairly. And lets see anybody else, oh, I can honestly say the women in my family because the majority of them are teachers and for me, I'd say it takes an act of Congress for a person to be in a teaching setting. Taking in and molding young minds to be better individuals in the world.

**AS [29:51]:** Yeah, that's very inspirational, especially that you come from what sounds like a family of like really strong individuals, strong women and strong educated women. That's really cool.

**VM [30:06]:** So for our next question, what accomplishments in the Auntie Sewing Squad are you particularly proud of? I mean, there's a lot. The whole sewing squad is...

**CB [30:20]:** Oh yeah, I would just say pledging and completing every pledge so that I could get mask on as many faces as possible. So I would say that my greatest accomplishment, because I was just the sewest, even though I say I'm just a sewing, that was just as important as anybody else's job. But I would just say just doing the mask and completing the pledges and getting the mask in the mail as quickly as possible.

**VM [30:25]:** I bet sealing the box or the envelope on those masks was really just like...

**CB [30:27]:** Oh yeah, yeah, we always put it like a personal note in instructions. And we had our Auntie Sewing Squad stickers covering the boxes with and like, we couldn't put anything extra because a lot of times they don't need extra stuff. So you'd want to put just a note saying this is from Auntie Cenders. The masks are prewashed, but this is how you care for your mask. You can hand wash it or wash it in the washing machine, but air dry it so that you can save on the elastic, different things like that and love and care to you, something like that.

**AS [31:38]:** That's sweet, though I think I would want to send a message just like it's from me to you.

**CB [31:44]:** Exactly. It's very personal. Whenever I went to the Post Office, they would be here comes the mask lady.

**AS [31:53]:** I would love to write a little note, I think that would be my favorite part. So I know we talked about like you doing the jacket dry, the coat drive, and then you guys also knitted like beanies and gloves and stuff for like outside of the masks and the pandemic. But are there any other global issues that you would want to help out with outside of just like the masks and the pandemic and the whole COVID thing?

**CB [32:21]:** Nothing majorly global. It's just that we help with the food pantry periodically. I'll say, if someone needs something that reaches out to me, I'm more than willing to help that person that's in need. And I'm kind of like the vetting Aunties, I vet that individual to ensure because sometimes people do get taken advantage of, so it's best. But as far as global things, I just want all of the pandemic to end, but I know until the government steps in and does what they need to do, it's going to be ongoing. Until the people are better educated, because some of the things you hear people say, well, if I take the vaccine, you're going to be sterile or you're going to do this or you're going to do that. But I think the medical profession needs to better educate the individuals for all the false information, they need to counteract that false information that's going out. There's nothing I can do about that, but if I could, I would, but any time I hear someone say something that's incorrect about the vaccine, I do try to correct them. And I always carry extra masks so if somebody needs a mask, I always have an extra mask in my purse to pass on in a Ziploc bag that they can have. I used to give them to the workers at Wal-Mart before lockdown because they'd see me buying the fabric and say, oh, what are you getting ready to do? I need a mask. So I gave them a mask.

**AS [34:08]:** It sounds like you're pretty well rounded, it sounds like you guys try to really help out wherever you can, not just in one area.

**VM [34:13]:** Almost like a real aunt.

**CB [34:16]:** Yes. Yes, yes.

**VM [34:21]:** So now that you are retired and the whole auntie group sounds like it's retired, is there, do you have, I mean it seems like you do, have a desire to help those in need? And do you feel that there's more that can be done? If so, what?

**CB [34:46]:** I've continued, not donating masks in the group, but my daughter's friend requested masks for her children's school so I made 600 masks myself for them and then I made. My daughter is over at food pantry, so I made a mask for all the employees that are there. So then I took a little time for myself and I started making handbags, took a handbag class. And so you want me show you some handbags?

**AS [35:19]:** Yes show us, I'm intrigued.

**CB [35:23]:** I made this one.

**AS [35:26]:** Oh my gosh, I love that.

**CB [35:31]:** This is like a project bag and it has mesh on both sides and two zippers.

**VM [35:36]:** Oh wow. So fancy.

**AS [35:37]:** It's pretty big.

**CB [35:40]:** I have to finish this one. But it's a tote bag. I have to put the handle on it.

**VM [35:45]:** Oh my gosh. That's something else.

**CB [35:50]:** And this is my current bag. I had to get my pan. I made this.

**AS [35:55]:** Okay, little crossbody.

**CB [35:58]:** And I've been sewing masks and handbags which I like.

**AS [36:00]:** Oh, I love that one.

**CB [36:01]:** It's not your typical tote bag, or you can use it as a gym bag. This is a smaller version out of the crossbody, and then it has it as my patterns in it.

**AS [36:16]:** Oh, yeah, they have like different patterns all inside, too.

**CB [36:23]:** Yes, I'm trying to. Well, she said go crazy with your patterns. So it has a different pattern there, has a different pattern there and two different ones in the inside.

**VM [36:27]:** So we know what your grandchildren are getting for Christmas.

**CB [36:30]:** Yes, they took most of them taking them back with them. And then this the whole tote bag.

**VM [36:36]:** Oh, how cute Little Mermaid.

**CB [36:40]:** And I put foam in this one so that it could stay there.

**AS [36:43]:** Oh my goodness.

**CB [36:49]:** I know you have to go but a few more.

**VM [36:54]:** No, not at all. You have time.

**CB [37:00]:** The backpack without hardware, you just have a knot. Two pockets on the front. Four pockets on the inside. So this is what I've been doing in on. I love my cosmetic bag.

**AS [37:13]:** The cosmetic bag. That's the one.

**CB [37:17]:** I made an apron.

**VM [37:22]:** Oh, how cute.

**CB [37:28]:** This is another crossbody. And it has four pockets on the inside.

**AS [37:35]:** I know, I love how much room they have. I feel like you can fit so much and all these.

**CB [37:42]:** So, that's what else I've been doing in my free time.

**AS [37:49]:** You're really talented. I'm telling you right now that like I could never. I would have thought they would take me some time to learn, but I couldn't.

**CB [38:00]:** Well, with the zippers, because I was like, oh my god, we have to do zippers. I remember the last time I sewed a zipper, I sewed the zipper over the top of a zipper and couldn't unzip it. But the way Vanessa teaches the classes, she's sitting right beside you instructing you how to sew, and it makes it easy. She's on YouTube. Crafty Gemini.

**AS [38:25]:** OK. I always feel like hands on learning is the best. Like, you really get to see it for yourself and try to maneuver and do it your own way.

**CB [38:31]:** Oh yeah. So we get some of those I modified. She always tells us, make it the way the pattern says the first time, then you can modify it however you want later.

**AS [38:47]:** Yeah. So the next question, and this is the last one, I think we kind of touched base on it at the beginning, but maybe not too in depth. So what does your family think about your involvement with like the social issues and starting to create change like your kids, your grandkids?



**CB [39:04]:** They enjoy it. And they were surprised when they were like, you're doing what? And you made what? I'd send them the pictures. I was like expect a box. I sent your mask. And then because my daughter had bought some masks and then she's like, my mom's mask are the only ones I wear now. And they all ask her, where did you get that? My mom. Where'd you get that? My mom. So she has a friend who is, she's a chiropractor and she's doing some sort of charity thing for girls where they send them bags that are stuffed with health and beauty products, deodorant, toothbrushes. So my daughter volunteered me to make a few of those bags and she was like, mom, you like to do charity and community service, would you like to donate some bags? So I told her I'd do 10 so that they can fill them with those things. But they enjoy the fact that I do things and they're happy that I do them. This week I should be receiving, I'm not sure if your classes have been told about the wings that were created for the Auntie Sewing Squad. So it's wings that are made with scrap fabric from sewing masks and they're wings, and they have a space where you can stand in them and take your picture. So right now they're traveling. They went to New York to Kristina's show, and then now they're traveling down the East Coast, the East Coast Aunties get them first. So they are on their way to me. And we put them up and then we'll do a photo shoot with them, post them in the group, and then we sign the back of the wings and then we ship them on to the next Auntie. And then eventually, I think Sandra said she may make a calendar with all the photos.

**VM [41:11]:** You kind of have to now.

**CB [41:16]:** Yes. Well, and we have a book. Yeah, yep, there's a book out. So and we're in the museum somewhere.

**AS [41:19]:** That's a cool way to even utilize the recycled fabric. It's a good idea to send them around and stuff.

**CB [41:25]:** Exactly. But there's a there's a quilt also given to Kristina with all the Aunties, which I, actually I lost two sisters and with COVID, and one that had a stroke. So I miss getting my quilt block in the mail to them, so I'm going to make - Kristina wears constantly a fanny pack with an ostrich on it - so I'm going to find Hello Kitty fabric and make her, and then I'll sign it. So she'll have something with my signature on it. So that's what we're doing right now is the wings of hope.

**VM [42:04]:** Oh, I love how everything seems to really come full circle with this group, and it just because you're retired doesn't mean that you cut ties.

**CB [42:12]:** Exactly. Exactly.

**VM [42:22]:** That's so great.

**CB [42:26]:** Yes. And there are still lots of Aunties in the group sewing masks and sending them out to schools or like Team Brownsville in Texas and different places like that. I just got caught up in my bag making and making the masks for the schools, that I haven't pledged in the group, actually again. But I probably will.

**VM [42:50]:** Well, thank you.

**CB [42:52]:** You're welcome. I'm sorry about the mix up this morning. Like I said, I was trying to get the kids out and I was like, 11:30, oh my god!

**VM [42:55]:** I'm glad we're able to get it in today. Thank you for your time and patience through all of this.

**CB [43:08]:** No, no worries. It was a pleasure. Always a pleasure to help those that are learning.

**AS [43:13]:** It was a pleasure hearing from you, especially like all your experiences and everything. It was really nice to hear.

**CB [43:20]:** Well, thank you. Thank you. For me, I can honestly say another thing that Auntie Sewing Squad gave me was it was therapeutic during the lockdown because it gave you a sense of purpose other than, like I said, making sourdough pizza bread, sourdough rolls, sourdough bread. It gave you a purpose. You were doing something to help with the problem that was at hand, which was the pandemic. So that was a major plus for me.

**AS [43:57]:** Also safely being inside in the comfort of your own home.

**CB [44:05]:** You can weigh your own packages on the scale, call for a pick up and put them outside the door and then once lockdown was over, if I didn't call or didn't have that many, I just ran them to the auxiliary post office down the street. All right, ladies, it's been a pleasure. I hope I gave you all some good information today.

**AS [44:28]:** You did, you gave us great information.

**CB [44:36]:** And your teacher will be like, what's that bag show at the end?

**AS:** Whoever wants a bag, she's got them.

**CB:** And you may have to crop that section out.

**VM [44:43]:** I'm going to go ahead and stop recording. Okay.