

WEBVTT

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Mike Harrington: Alright. So again, thank you for joining me today. This shouldn't take a long time. But I'm just going to talk a little bit about the work you're doing it Wednesday.

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Mike Harrington: Especially in light of the time in. So for my first question. What is your name and what organization that you're representing today.

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Leslie Velasquez: My name is Leslie Velasquez and I work for one thing.

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Mike Harrington: And what is your role at appointing

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Leslie Velasquez: My role at up one day is Environmental Justice Program Coordinator.

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Mike Harrington: Thanks. So, so now we have three questions I'm going to ask

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Mike Harrington: The first one is going to be how is your organization and or community being impacted by and responding to the coven 19 crisis.

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Leslie Velasquez: Um, so my organization.

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Leslie Velasquez: Spin and my community's been heavily impacted by

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Leslie Velasquez: We've actually seen a lot of deaths.

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Leslie Velasquez: In the families that we serve.

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Leslie Velasquez: And we predominantly serve a low income black next and African American community. And those are tend to be people of color black and brown people tend to be hit hardest by coven 19 especially in New York City.

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Leslie Velasquez: We've been responding in a lot of different ways. At first, we were just reaching out to all the families. We serve calling them checking in making sure they're okay.

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Leslie Velasquez: And then we sort of followed up by we created a resource guides, we called people and just ask them what they need and connecting them to different resources around the city, whether that be food or, you know, getting like Wi Fi or a laptop for school, things like that.

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Leslie Velasquez: And now we're doing a lot of like direct response stuff. So we're helping to administer

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Leslie Velasquez: Like some giveaways and a food bank out to nature houses.

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Leslie Velasquez: And we're also during the summer. We're going to be doing some more actual like fundraising for the undocumented families that we serve, because they're not eligible for government. Government stimulus checks. So they're being hit extremely hard by this

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Leslie Velasquez: And hopefully going to be helping people out as well as just continuing our work in sort of networking around different resources and services for the city to be able to train people to help other people like apply for unemployment benefits or different things like that.

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Leslie Velasquez: So yeah, it's a very holistic approach.

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Mike Harrington: Oh. Sounds like you all been very, very busy.

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Mike Harrington: In a lot of ways. Could you tell me a little bit about the resource guide.

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Leslie Velasquez: Yeah, so the resource guide I worked on that actually with someone at their co workers.

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Leslie Velasquez: And it was just compiling a lot of sort of the other resources that we'd seen from other guides

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Leslie Velasquez: But then also, you know, like getting information from seeing websites and stuff and just breaking that down and making it more like understandable. So that can be members could like look at it and quickly just kind of gather information, but they needed

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Leslie Velasquez: But also it had things like you know like funds for restaurant workers for artists. So just like trying to keep it continually updated is something that we're working on. And so that we can like distributed in like our food banks or, you know, through calls or online.

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Leslie Velasquez: Yeah, so it has like a multitude of of resources on it.

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Mike Harrington: Thanks. And if you'd like. We can share that as well.

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Mike Harrington: If people want to see day. Okay, so the next question I have, are

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Mike Harrington: What lessons are you seeing from this that we could apply to responding to the climate crisis.

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Leslie Velasquez: Um, I think we've learned a lot of lessons through coven 19 and how those can apply to the climate climate crisis.

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Leslie Velasquez: For example, I think, well, we've seen like studies, there's one from Harvard about how communities living in areas with CT or quality have been more effective.

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Leslie Velasquez: Like over 19 with higher infection and death rates and actually saw a study if the other day, forget where was from. But I'm just connecting the fact that communities who live

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Leslie Velasquez: In areas of water environmental hazards tend to have higher coven 19 infection and death rates.

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Leslie Velasquez: And you know that like completely makes sense because these people live included areas and all of those factors together can cause chronic health conditions that are just making more vulnerable to getting sick in general.

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Leslie Velasquez: And I think through this. We've seen you know that our government, both at like the federal and like state and local level is like woefully unequipped to quickly respond to crises.

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Leslie Velasquez: And like in a lot of

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Leslie Velasquez: Cases actually like reluctant

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Leslie Velasquez: To do that so

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Leslie Velasquez: At least in our org we've kind of learned that

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Leslie Velasquez: A lot of the work that we need to do going forward in terms of resiliency for the climate crisis and for future pandemics like this because they will

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Leslie Velasquez: You know, become

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Leslie Velasquez: All the more common.

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Leslie Velasquez: Is that we really need to do the work ourselves.

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Leslie Velasquez: And of course, like we want to pressure our government to stand up and do more and they should

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Leslie Velasquez: But we, you know, need to be there for our community in the event that they won't be and we need to connect to other partner organizations and really like build these networks of resilience and resources.

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Leslie Velasquez: And that this has to be like a coordinated approach because I think in the beginning, a lot of people were just kind of off doing their own thing and there wasn't necessarily a lot of communication because people were just responding very quickly, but we can all

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Leslie Velasquez: If we like coordinate and work together, it'll be a

lot more of effective response and also just that.

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Leslie Velasquez: You know, like I was saying before, with all these sort of environmental hazards environmental justice issues that make people more vulnerable to

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Leslie Velasquez: Not just, you know, climate change, but pandemics like this and other crises is that that is the result of like decades and decades of government disinvestment and all of these like factors come together and they're all like systemic issues that really need to be addressed.

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Leslie Velasquez: And so just continuing to hammer that point home like

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Leslie Velasquez: Even for example.

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Leslie Velasquez: We learned through this and having our children having to do remote learning is that a lot of our families don't actually have Wi Fi at home or computers so

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Leslie Velasquez: You know, that's like basically at this point the Unnecessary, unnecessary to survive in the modern world. And that's not something that people think about or think i think a lot of people

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Leslie Velasquez: Who come from a privileged place don't even consider not having Wi Fi is like a thing that people go through

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Leslie Velasquez: And and the fact that, you know, a lot of people in our community are also their essential workers. So they're going to be more vulnerable because of that too.

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00:06:53.730 --> 00:06:54.000

Leslie Velasquez: Yeah.

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Leslie Velasquez: Sorry, I was wrong with it.

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Mike Harrington: Oh no, that was great. Now, I mean I, there's a lot of connections there and you know I'm aware of those as well. So no need to apologize like

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Mike Harrington: Yeah, we really want to want you to share your expertise and what you're saying about how these things are

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Mike Harrington: Connected so ya know it's you. You could have gone on for 10 minutes long.

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Mike Harrington: Did you have anything else to add to that, or

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Leslie Velasquez: Hey, I think I like

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Leslie Velasquez: Round about Lean covered all the things I was trying to conflict.

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Mike Harrington: Okay, and then I have one more written question and then we'll have one last thing. If you have any final thoughts but

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Mike Harrington: The next question is, what message would you like to get out to the people that may see this or read the blog posts for ways that people can help support the efforts that you're doing.

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Leslie Velasquez: Um,

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Leslie Velasquez: People can support our efforts and a lot of ways of Wednesday we actually like never really fundraise before

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Leslie Velasquez: But we're starting to do that now. So you can donate directly to our organization.

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Leslie Velasquez: And like I said before, we are doing a lot of direct support work this summer. And going forward, and especially helping our undocumented families, but just our families in general because they really are suffering. A lot of them have lost people, a lot of them have lost their jobs.

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00:08:13.680 --> 00:08:15.210

Leslie Velasquez: And they just going through a lot

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Leslie Velasquez: But also a major thing that we're working on that we've been working on for a while. But now we're kind of adapting to respond to this crisis is that we've developed a call to action. We call it

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Leslie Velasquez: And that's a five point policy platform that was originally part of our, our air campaign and it specifically

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Leslie Velasquez: Was developed with students actually from the new school as well as the Pratt Institute and community members and it comes up with like urban design.

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Leslie Velasquez: And policy solutions to improve air quality and just sort of the environmental conditions of our neighborhood, but

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Leslie Velasquez: You know, after Cove, it happened. We started realizing sort of the connections between coven environmental justice issues and it's expanded to be



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Leslie Velasquez: Very much like a holistic sort of set of policies to improve community development and health in general. And so it includes things like

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Leslie Velasquez: What I was mentioning before about developing a community wide response, working with different partners and across sectors and with elected leaders.

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Leslie Velasquez: As well as, you know, continue to help our community by referring them to resources and training community members to be able to guide other community members through sort of these processes to be able to get services.

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Leslie Velasquez: And yeah, it's just kind of really tying coven 19 and the crisis and all that that has revealed

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Leslie Velasquez: About the gaps and sort of our community and our ability to respond to these things to air quality, environmental issues in general. And so we have a petition that really outlines all those policies and people can sign on to it. It's on change.org and I'm sure we can share it.

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Leslie Velasquez: But learning more and then there's also different ways to just get involved with our campaign for our air going forward.

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Leslie Velasquez: We're about to start phase two, which is really about mobilizing community members and elected leaders and building a coalition to, you know, implement and advocate for the policies and the call to action. So that's a really good way to get involved too.

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00:10:19.530 --> 00:10:23.280

Mike Harrington: Thanks for that. Yeah, yeah. We did you know on and I are on

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Mike Harrington: Our air.

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Leslie Velasquez: Advisory

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Leslie Velasquez: Committee. Yeah, yeah.

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00:10:29.880 --> 00:10:35.340

Mike Harrington: I was able to make the first one, I think it was.

Yeah, it was something I was in the Europe or something, I don't know.

I was not here.

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00:10:35.370 --> 00:10:37.230

Mike Harrington: So it's like I wish I could have made the first meeting.

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So,

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Mike Harrington: Last thing I want to know if there's anything else that you wanted to share that wasn't covered in these questions or any other thoughts or anything that you'd like for people to hear

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Leslie Velasquez: The think

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Leslie Velasquez: I guess sort of the last thing that I would highlight in that, you know, I think a lot of people understand it's really just important to

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Leslie Velasquez: I think as like a primary lens to sort of view this is that it's affecting you know people who are already marginalized, the most like people of color in low income communities are the ones that are hurting the most that are losing family members.

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Leslie Velasquez: Through this crisis and I feel like at first there was sort of this narrative of, like, oh, this is like the great equalizer like

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Leslie Velasquez: You know pandemics don't discriminate. But when you have, you know, decades and centuries of disinvestment and oppression through government policies like of course this is going to

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00:11:39.390 --> 00:11:51.750

Leslie Velasquez: hurt people. The most who have been the most harmed by by that decades of disinvestment in those policies. So, you know, we really have to apply like a lens of justice and inequity.

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Leslie Velasquez: Gracefully economically, all of those things to viewing the understanding this crisis.

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Mike Harrington: Sorry, sorry about that. I muted myself.

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00:12:05.520 --> 00:12:08.730

Mike Harrington: Oh, that was great. Thanks. Thanks again for