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Kennedi Boler, Oral History Interview, 2022

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Eastern Michigan University, Oral Histories

Interview with Kennedy Boler (KB) conducted on November 23, 2022 by Charles Boykins III (CB) for You Li's Journalism 313 course.

Transcribed by Charles Boykin III

CB: You are here. I was hoping it would work.

KB: Yeah, I heard it.

CB: The way I had to go about it was so ghetto. Like, it's already, like, the recording part already stated that I couldn't get it to you, so we might have to rush a little bit, but I got the questions. You ready?

KB: Yeah.

CB: So, you know, first state your background, your family history, where you went to school. Occupation. All that jazz.

KB: All right. My name is Kennedy Bolar. I went to school, Romulus schools, my whole life. And then I went to college at Eastern Michigan University. I am the youngest of five siblings. I have four older brothers, and I'm the only girl. Background. I'm from Inkster, Michigan, but I grew up in Romulus. And I go to school at Eastern Michigan University for a major in journalism and a minor in marketing, as well as another minor in apparel, textiles, and merchandising.

CB: That's wonderful. So, let's start with question one. Give a description of your mental health pre and post pandemic.

KB: My mental health pre-pandemic was in the stages of being better. Mental health has always been a struggle for me, pretty much like my whole life. But before the pandemic, I was on a really healthy road. You know, just getting it together, developing better ways of coping and things like that. Post-Pandemic. Oh, oh, oh. Say, oh, say. During the pandemic, I took a few steps back just because of, you know, not strictly because of the pandemic, but I

guess the pandemic had a way of bringing out a few of my triggers or unhealthy habits. So, I kind of, you know, took a few steps more before the pandemic hit. I took a few steps back. I want to say in 2021, my mental health was great. A lot of things were working out for me during the pandemic in terms of, like, work and mental health and just things like that and then post-pandemic. I would say this year in general has been a lot to deal with, just given a few family issues I've had and just different experiences that really dampened my progress. But currently I am taking the steps to get back on track through ways of therapy and ultimately just taking my time with everything and just trying to remember all the positives I've learned in the midst of like, I guess, self-help in the midst of all that before I've actually seen or sought out professional help.

CB: Question number two, did you feel that mental health was directly impacted by the pandemic? If so, why?

KB: I would say the beginning of it, like March 2020 probably too. So, like July? Oh, yes. Probably to like March 2020 to September 2020. It was impacted. I lost my job. I worked. I'm a fitness instructor and cycle instructor. So, in March 2020, everything shut down, including the gym facility. So, I lost my job. I'm also a full-time model, so modeling slowed down. Given that we could not have a full set. We had to social distance and capacity. The capacity laws and things were affecting set life. So, everything slowed down a lot for modeling or shifted to more online casting and things like that. And at home photoshoots, that was a big thing. So that affected my career. It was hard being isolated and away from friends and being in industry wise with work used to being around people all the time. That was a hardship for me during that time. In July, at the end of July, I had broken my ankle just being out skating with friends. Made a pandemic just a little bit worse because you had to be isolated. So, my friends coming to visit me and things like that was few and far between because of isolation and curfews and things like that. And it caused a little identity crisis within that time. Just putting myself in negative situations that I didn't ultimately have

to be in, trying to cater to, you know, just feelings or just my ways of escapism, I would say it caused me to reevaluate who I was. Losing all those titles, the canny, the fitness instructor, the model, I was kind of left with just Kennedy. So, I had to figure out, you know, who I was in healthier ways than. That was like a huge part of the pandemic. So, it definitely affected me mentally as well as like physically, financially, as I'm sure a lot of people.

CB: Okay. Thank you for the insight. Question three. So post-pandemic work tools or methods have you use to solidify who Kennedy is outside of the titles?

KB: I would say I developed those probably during the pandemic. 2020 was hard for me, but 2021 was pretty amazing. I started instructing again towards the end of 2020. Everything took off again. I will say January 2021 with modeling. So, for most of 2021, I was on like a cloud nine. I had enrolled in therapy at that time. It was just more so the fruits of my labor, really helping me through, showing myself that I can get through difficult times and reap the benefits of just sticking with it. So, I would say trial and error was my. Was my therapy or my, you know, my coping mechanism at that time. Now, I do have a therapist and that's been helping a lot. It's not as frequent as I would want it. Therapy is expensive, but nevertheless, it is nice talking to someone and being able to get insight or gain insight on why I feel the way I feel or why I move the way I move. Or, you know. If you know the steps, I'm taking the right direction. Yeah.

CB: That was good. I like the conciseness.

KB: Details are easy to read.

CB: Well, listen, at least two out. So, four. Do you believe the pandemic made you stronger, mentally, stronger, or weaker mentally? And if so, why?

KB: I wouldn't say the pandemic necessarily made me stronger, but the experiences or the events that took place during the pandemic are. But that was not a direct result of the pandemic which made me stronger. I mean, of course, other than like, you know, my titles and stuff being taken away. I feel like my titles being taken away may develop a stronger

sense of self. And then the events that took place. Kind of developed a strength in confidence and belief. I would say I had in myself to get things figured out and. Be able to find solutions, you realize that there's always a solution. And then I also did the pandemic. I really developed a way better relationship with God, for sure. At this point, like me and God definitely have a secret handshake because just the relationship I developed with him during the pandemic, it wasn't necessarily a direct result, but it was more. It was the perfect time to work on that when everything was against me. I guess that's when we call on him. But that kind of happened and yeah, so that's also one of my biggest takeaways is like my relationship with God definitely enhanced and came full circle. It's pretty funny really.

CB: So, we're at question five. And lastly, what are some things that you can recommend to people who are in the search of themselves post-pandemic?

KB: Just keep going. Keep going forward. Don't give up. I know that sounds cliché, but in a time that we're in right now, it's really easy to give up and it's really easy to have that "might as well" mindset. I say veer away from that as much as possible and stay optimistic for the future and that there is a future and that there is a place for you in it. I would say in the search of, well, a place for you in it and a place for your future self that you're developing to be in as well. I would say if you are in the surgery yourself, that everything you need is already right there. Everything that you're looking for is already within you. You just got to believe it. And, I would say. Everything is as it should be. Even if you don't want it to be that way. Everything is as it should be. So just be confident in the process and know that. If you already believe it, you're just in the process now. You've really got to have faith in the process because it's going to happen if you say it.

*Recording Ends