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Oral History Interview

with

DeeDee Tostanoski

Interviewer: F. De Salvatore

Narrator: DeeDee Tostanoski

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Lloyd House, 220 N Washington St, Alexandria, VA 22314

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Summary:

Tostanoski reflects on her experiences with the Alexandria Community Remembrance Project, serving on the Soil and Marker Committee, and going on the Pilgrimage to Alabama.

Notes:

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General	Soil and Monuments Committee; Pilgrimage to Alabama
People	Lillie Mae
Places	Alexandria; Alabama; New York

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:00:06] I'm DeeDee Tostanoski and I am not quite 70 years old. Today is November 29th, 2022 and we are at the Lloyd House.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:00:17] Great, great. So why don't we start with maybe describing what led you to to join the ACRP [Alexandria Community Remembrance Project] pilgrimage to Alabama?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:00:26] Well, I'm on one of the committees. So I'm a part of the Soil and Marker Committee. So I've actually been engaged with this process for about three years, I guess. So, you know, it was almost like I'd be crazy not to go after that. So to me, the better question was, why did I want to be engaged, you know, in the process at all? And, you know, the answer is pretty much a universal answer. You know, we've done, we Americans have done a lovely job of whitewashing our history and leaving out a lot of people and a lot of events that don't reflect well on us. And you know, I think that needs to be corrected. So, you know, when this was a vehicle for working toward correcting that in a small way, I was all about it right away.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:01:33] Yeah, can you talk a little bit more sort of why you decided to join in and to really be a part of a committee and not just join a one off event. But you've been part of it for three years.

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:01:48] Yeah. Well, I guess I just am growing, you know, more and more aware of the reality of my own white privilege and recognizing that there's a whole universe out there of folks who have lived a very different experience than I have, and that it's, you know, my responsibility, if you will, to have a better understanding of experiences that are different than mine. You know, I'm a hyper educated, upper middle class white woman. I mean, other than being a woman, I don't have much to complain about. I mean, you know what I mean? [Laughing] I'm happy to be a woman. I don't mean it that way. So, you know I don't have had much, you know, of that kind of negativity in my life.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:02:44] Can you explain what were the kind of conversations that you were having over the three years? What kind of decisions had to be made?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:03:00] Well, the Soil and Marker Committee was responsible for collecting the soil, which, you know, we did most recently. And really the markers were the big things. So we worked in close collaboration with I think they were called the History Committee, if I recall correctly. But they're the ones who know actually, they were the Research Committee who researched the backgrounds on the two gentlemen who were lynched to find out as much as possible about the you know, about those individuals as people, but also the circumstances surrounding the crimes associated with their lynchings. And then, so based on the work that the research groups did, you know, our group then was responsible for taking that information and getting it down to a size that could fit on a historical marker. And then planning. And we also had to choose what the marker looked like. And, you know, we had, you know, we couldn't create a whole new thing, but there were choices like sizes and colors and that sort of thing. So we, you know, made those decisions and then we worked on the language. And I don't know if you've often had the pleasure of working on something, working on a written product with a committee. But it's challenging. Fortunately, my former career, you know, prepared me well for that. [Laughing] But anyway, so then we, you know, worked on the two events commemorating each of the individuals which were on the anniversary of the dates they were lynched. The first of those took place during

the pandemic. So it was actually a fairly small ceremony because even though it was outside, it was still limited. And, you know, it was kind of an invitation only. But that's when the the plaque was, you know, unveiled. And all the relevant city officials, you know, came and spoke and had their part. And the city poet laureate, you know, did a poem and some other things. And then we were responsible, likewise for the second ceremony when the second plaque was installed. And then with the soil, the job, if you will, was to figure out where to get the soil from. Because the two locations, of course, Alexandria is urban. And so we couldn't, we weren't really free to dig up soil under sidewalks because we would have had to disrupt, you know, it would have been a construction project. So then we had to figure out, well, what other locations, you know, would be meaningful to each of these two gentlemen. So in one of the two cases, there still is a home at the address. And so the city sought permission from that homeowner to get some soil. The other one, we couldn't do that. But each of them was members of churches that are still here. So, again, with permission, we got soil from those churches. And then, you know, we also got soil from other sites in the city that, you know, from Freedom House and from the African-American Museum. So sites that would be relevant to the African-American community. But the the two jars of soil were actually a little bit different. So it wasn't like we went. Well, we didn't do it. The city archeologist actually physically collected it. But, you know, the contents of the two jars was different.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:07:19] Interesting. What did it feel like to be a part of these important decisions? Discussions?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:07:28] You know, it was. It was, gosh, I don't know. The best word I can think of is meaningful, which is kind of not a great word, but it felt, you know, it felt like important work. I was glad to be doing. I was glad to be doing it, you know, with a group of people. You know, I certainly would never have felt that it was something I could do by myself. That I, you know, either had the authority or the knowledge to do that on my own. But coming together with a group of people, you know, it felt like, you know, that great minds, you know, that several minds can produce something better than what you can do. Despite the hardship of fighting over whether you want to have the word "a" or the word "the."

Francesco De Salvatore [00:08:27] Really? So there were this kind of discussion?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:08:30] Oh yeah. But frankly, that's normal. I mean, I don't say that in criticism of anyone on the group. And, you know, I was just as guilty as the next person thinking, "Oh, no, you really should say it this way."

Francesco De Salvatore [00:08:45] Tell us more about the challenges that came up.

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:08:51] You know, it's really, you know, there's nothing specific to say about it. It's just that. You know, people have very different ways of of expressing themselves. And there was one disagreement that I recall, and I can't tell you the words nor do I remember which of the two gentlemen it was. But in one case, the individual, I think, was castrated or some other sexually abusive thing was done to his body after he died. And we did have a conversation about whether we should say that explicitly on the marker or not. And you know, some people felt that and we ended up saying it. So some people felt that that was a bit too much for a marker in public. And you know, the children could be looking at that. And then you'd have to have a whole explanation with your kid about what that meant. And then others felt like, no, it was a heinous

thing, and it should be reported. So that was probably the only substantial disagreement that we had. And like I say, others were, you know, no, I think it sounds better this way or it sounds better that way.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:10:18] Interesting. Interesting. What? Were there any relationships that you developed, people you met through this experience, being on the committee?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:10:30] I don't know that I would say I developed any long term relationships in the sense of, you know, I now have buddies I didn't have.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:10:37] Sure. Yeah.

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:10:39] There's one other person on the committee who I already was friends with. So that was nice. And, you know, I appreciated getting to know the others. David Spinrad, Rabbi Spinrad, was the head of our committee. And, you know, I really enjoyed getting to know him a bit. You know, but I didn't develop any friendships in the sense of, like, you know, now I know I have coffee every week with Susie Q.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:11:14] So tell us. Okay. So you were on this committee and then you were on the pilgrimage. So can you maybe explain sort of or not explain. Can you describe some memories that really stand out from the pilgrimage?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:11:31] Oh, golly. Well, it was incredibly moving. The first morning that we were there was the Soil Ceremony, and that was where we, you know, we the group from Alexandria presented the soil we had collected to the Equal Justice Initiative representatives. And there was a whole program around that. I mean, it was frankly more moving than I would have expected. I mean, I sort of thought it would just be like, here it is. This is good, you know? And it was it was probably about an hour long. And there were some really good talks in there. I should add too that one of the things that struck me throughout the pilgrimage and it first became apparent at that soil ceremony, was how many of the kids from the high school were there? And that was really a really wonderful experience. You know, we felt like, wow, we're really multigenerational here. And the younger people are basically learning stuff that we didn't learn when we were in high school. You know, I often had a feeling not so much through this process, because I've undertaken to study, you know, the history of racism and slavery in our country on my own before all this. And, you know, I constantly have this feeling of, like, we were just lied to, and I get really mad about it, you know? So seeing all these kids, teenagers who are not being lied to, you know, it was really powerful. And I really appreciated that.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:13:28] Why are you angry? You said you felt angry about almost like you were lied to. Why? Why do you feel that way?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:13:37] Well, because there's a whole lot of history that was not shared with me as a kid or even, you know, I mean, I've done a lot of digging maybe for the last 15 years. I don't know. I can't remember exactly when I sort of started on this journey. But you know, finding out. You know how horrific. And I don't want to say that I ever bought the story that you know, there were good plantations where everybody was one big happy family. I mean, I never necessarily bought that. But, you know, finding out some of the really true egregious things and coming to

realize that, you know, particularly as a woman, that, you know, that slave women had no control over their own body. Now, to a certain degree back then, white women didn't have a whole lot of control over their own body either. But it was, you know, hugely different. I mean, African-American women were being raped. White women were not being raped. I mean, they might not have, you know, their parents may have decided who they were going to marry and they may or may not have liked the person, but it was a very different circumstance. So, you know, and having your children taken from you, I mean that's beyond my comprehension. And so, you know, I think there are things that you know or, you know that I knew but never really stopped to think about maybe. And then a lot of things that I never knew, you know. So, you know how much racism is baked into our world or in particular into our country? You know, my dad served in World War II and, you know, he bought our first house using the GI Bill. Well, finding out that the GI Bill was not available to black people was shocking to me. You know, that kind of stuff where you're like, you know, that totally gives the lie to work hard and you know bring yourself up by your bootstraps or whatever you want to say. Well no, we as a society created obstacles for African-Americans to have the same opportunities that my own family had. That was pretty stunning when I learned that.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:16:16] When did you learn that? How did you learn that?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:16:19] Well, like I say, I'm going to guess 15 years ago, I just to put a.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:16:23] Number on it.

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:16:24] You know, a number, I don't exactly remember, but I, you know, just started reading and educating myself and you know, going to seminars and it, you know, I really just decided that was a big, a big hole in my understanding of my education and I started really looking into it. You know, I can't give you a date.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:16:49] But no, I only have.

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:16:51] No, but I need a time.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:16:53] You have a time?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:16:55] I time stamped it. Yeah. No, I think it was probably about 15 years ago.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:17:00] How does it change how you view your past?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:17:05] You know, not, not hugely. I mean, quite frankly, I grew up in a very white world. I didn't have the opportunity to get to know African-Americans other than the person who worked at my house. You know, who we dearly loved. And we certainly would say that she was a member of our family. And, you know, she came to my wedding. I mean, she, you know.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:17:36] I don't. What's her name?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:17:38] Lillie Mae. Lillie Mae Murray. You know, and I mean, she certainly whipped the heck out of me when I was a kid, as she did with all of my siblings when we

misbehaved. So, you know, it's not like I ever had a thought that she was somehow, I mean, she was an authority person. She wasn't like somehow less than me. Like, I didn't ever mess with her, you know, like, no.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:18:04] Well, she'd whooped you.

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:18:05] Well, and. But she also loved me, you know, and I knew that, you know, I mean, she hugged me. She kissed me. I hugged her. I kissed her. You know, and I you know, it's, you know. Not popular to say that, you know, that this African-American person who was in service to my family was a member of the family. But that's the way we all felt about her. And I, you know, I learned years later, you know, my dad was in the automobile business. And so she bought, he bought her cars for her, I mean, he didn't purchase, he didn't pay for them. But he, you know, she told him what she wanted and he would get it for her. And so he would get it at, you know, his price, which was much better than she could do at a dealer. And I learned many years later that at one point she had an accident in her car and it was banged up. And so he told her to go to a certain body shop where, you know, he did a lot of business, and he said, you know, and I'll tell Joe or whatever to, you know, to take good care of you. And so she went there and she dropped off her car and then, you know, came back on the day it was supposed to be ready. And of course, she had to take a bus to get back there. And it was expensive. And of course this is back before anybody had credit cards. So I don't know how much money it cost, but I'll say \$700. So she's traveling on the bus with \$700 and she gets to the place and there was some miscommunication and she was like \$10 short of what it was supposed to be. And the guy would not give her the car and so she had to go home, get ten more dollars, take the bus back. And that's what she had to do to get her car. And when my father learned about it, he never did business with that guy again. Which was a big deal because he had a fleet of cars. So when I learned that, I don't remember when, but after my dad was dead and my dad's been dead 25 years, I just felt so proud of him for that, you know.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:20:23] What's your dad's name?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:20:25] Edward. Edward Tostanoski. So we're New Yorkers.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:20:31] Okay. From the city?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:20:34] Well, the suburbs. He was born in Yonkers, which is the first city outside of New York City. And my mom was raised in Bronxville, which is the town next to Yonkers.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:20:45] So it was, sorry. What was her name again?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:20:51] Lillie Mae.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:20:52] Lillie Mae. So was Lillie Mae the only African-American person in your life growing up?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:20:59] Pretty much. My dad had African-American employees. So when I would go, you know, when I would go to his place of business, I would see folks who were primarily mechanics from the cars and trucks and busses and, you know, always very pleasant and

whatever. But I didn't know them really. It was just like, "Hi. How are you doing today?" So, yeah, there was no one in my school, no one in my, in any part of my world. When I was, I think a sophomore in high school, I believe a young, two sisters who were African-American came to the school on a scholarship. And the one who was in my grade, had some issues. I mean, I couldn't have said that at the time. I just knew she was odd. Her older sister was wonderful and she ended up graduating. The younger one, I think she only lasted a year. And I, you know, I'm a kid, I don't know, I just thought. But I must say, I felt guilty that I didn't like her. Because I'm like, "Here's my chance and I don't even like her. What's wrong with me? Am I a racist?"

Francesco De Salvatore [00:22:21] Huh.

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:22:22] But that was it. That's my whole experience.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:22:27] So you had an awareness at that time.

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:22:31] Oh sure.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:22:33] And do you think that comes from your father or what do you think they came from?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:22:39] I have no idea. I mean back that long ago. As an adult, I've become very interested in and work with, I don't know to phrase it, you know, with the social justice gospel and actually the church I attend is 78 I think years old. And it was started as an African-American church.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:23:09] What was the church?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:23:10] Our Lady Queen of Peace in Arlington. So, you know, a lot of this is related to, you know, justice issues and certainly racism is a big justice issue. And then learning that, you know, people who are poor and who happen to also be people of color, in fact, are poor because we created a society that made sure they were poor. But, you know, when I was in college, I actually studied city planning and was interested in communities. And, you know why some communities were very vibrant and others were terrible. You know, and I certainly back then had no understanding of some of the political decisions that played into that. You know, and part of me would like to go back and read some of my textbooks and see if I could even find any of that stuff or if that was another case where we were all lied to. And that's not what I ended up doing as a career. So, you know, it's not like I have followed that throughout the years.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:24:31] Interesting. We got a little off track now. Not off track but we had gotten here because you were talking about the high school students being there and how, you know, it was great. Intergenerational. Can we pick up maybe a little bit what else stood out to you from the trip?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:24:54] Well, because I've been following the Equal Justice Initiative for many years, long before I you know, this project was started, I was already a supporter of theirs. And, you know, I had read Bryan Stevenson's book and, you know, was very interested and actually continue to be very interested in criminal justice reform. So a lot of, you know, what we saw were

things I had certainly seen photos of and and that kind of thing. You know, seeing it in person is certainly different and more powerful. I don't mean to, you know, denigrate that. One of the things I knew I would be frustrated with because it's the nature of this kind of a trip, is that you don't have enough time at each of the places. So particularly at the Peace and Justice Museum, which is where all the pillars are. You know, to me, that's is a very contemplative place. And we didn't really have time to be contemplative. It was kind of like, walk through it, see everything, be you know, in awe. I mean, it wasn't like it was nothing, but I would have liked to have just been, had the time to sit there and absorb. Absorb that. You know which of course there wasn't that time. So that was, but going there was was very big. I mean I'm not. And then his and I can't, one of the things that happens when you get old you lose the names of things but the museum which, you know, has moved to larger quarters and again, was fabulous, but way more than you could possibly do in the amount of time that we had. But one of the things that that really stood out for me in the museum was the very clear storyline of slavery to mass incarceration. And I've read about that, and I knew that in my head, but it just was much clearer to me from the museum. You know, it was maybe, maybe not clear, but in a visceral way, you know. It became like you kind of owned it versus just sort of knowing it in an academic sense. And the other thing that that really struck me from the visit was the trip to the Mothers of Gynecology Monument. I mean, that was, you know, mind numbing. And that's not, I guess I had read about that story before going there. But it's not, again, another, you know, situation of being lied to. You know, so here we make this doctor into the father of gynecology because he's invented or whatever is the right word, all these wonderful gynecological procedures, you know. And then to learn that he did that on African-American women who had no say so and without anesthesia. I mean, that's you know, that's just stunning. You know, as a woman, you kind of, your whole body contracts when you think about that. And several of them had, you know, had multiple surgeries done on them. Several of them died. So, you know, I. It just was a whole stunning new piece of reality that I, you know, just kind of boggles my mind. And like I say, I had read about it beforehand. But again, seeing the the statues and hearing the artists talk about her thoughts and why I did this and why I did that and why I did it this way and. You know, it was just very powerful. And she was. She was awesome. Oh, my gosh. She's actually, she and that project are featured in People magazine this week. Which she told us was coming when we were there. But, you know, I knew it was coming, but I hadn't really thought about it. And when it came, I was like, "Oh, this is the one." There is a great article. But anyway and that would to me, again, probably because I'm a woman, you know, that really spoke to me. And but also because I was so impressed, you know, I'm not an artist. I can barely draw a straight line. But seeing what the power that the artist and other artists have done this as well. But this one was something that really spoke to me, you know, that the power that one person can have in really through art, other mechanisms as well, but in this case through art, you know, really opening your eyes and causing you to have a very visceral experience of something that, again, you may have read about, but, you know, the power of the artwork and the power of the woman behind that artwork. And we got to meet her on the trip. I mean, she was, when we went to visit that site, she was there. And so she spoke to us, and she's oh, my gosh, unbelievable.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:31:12] You said, you know, as a woman, it was I forget what word you used, it was stunning or shocking. Right? Can you maybe explain that further for us? Just like, how does that affect you?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:31:28] Well. Again, you know, women. I mean, the whole abortion thing right now. You know, women don't have agency over their own bodies and. You know, again, I'm a

privileged white woman with a good education, so I probably have more agency than many and I'm long past childbearing years. So the fact that abortion is no longer an option has no distinct bearing on me. But the fact that you know that a woman can be forced to have a child she doesn't want, is a very modern day example of women not having agency over their own bodies. And then when you take that further to a black woman who's a slave, and now I can literally torture you with impunity, you know, as a female. You know how sometimes when let's say, you know, you see someone get punched, let's say, and you have a physical reaction to watching someone else get punched. It's kind of like that. I mean, the body parts that were violated for those women are body parts I have. And you can kind of, not to imply I could imagine what that's like, but in a way, you can. You know, certainly not the level of pain they were subjected to or anything like that. But, and also. Others of the women were forced to hold down the woman who was being operated on. And you know it was going to be their turn next? I mean, just the barbarity of that is just [pause] incredible. And as I say, I mean, I think I identify with it maybe more because I have those body parts.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:33:43] Interesting. Is there anything else that stood out to you from the trip?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:33:58] Well, unfortunately, I got sick, so I had to cut my trip short. So I got COVID. So I missed the two dinners, which I'm sure if I had been there, I would have things to say about them. And I wasn't there. You know, I can't really, you know, address that. So, you know, like you say, the parts I was able to participate in, I did. I was able to walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge because I had a car. So I didn't have to go in the bus with everyone. So therefore, I felt safe. And then of course, that's an outdoor thing. So that was a really excellent and moving experience as well. But you know, at once I had once I tested positive for COVID, my ability to be around other people was impaired.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:35:01] One of things you mentioned before we started was the notion of the white mob and maybe talk more about what you meant by that in our conversation before the recording?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:35:13] Well, you know, watching or not watching, but learning about, you know, certainly the lynchings here in Alexandria. But, you know, when you go to Montgomery, you are faced with a whole lot more lynchings. And many of them, you know, were announced in the newspaper, and "you'all come." But others were in many cases, it was done by a mob. So in cases where it was announced in the newspaper, obviously it was premeditated, which is awful. But there were other cases where, you know, the mob, someone incites the mob to be really angry and to go solve this problem because the law's not taking care of it the way I think they should. And I whip up people into a frenzy. And, you know, it just caused me to think about, you know, is it possible that I could be part of that mob? You know, I'm a white woman. So as I, don't remember the statistics anymore, but an awful lot of lynchings were the result of allegations that a black man in some way disgraced a white woman, whether it was literally sexually or winking at her or not getting off the sidewalk or whatever. But so a lot of it was around the story about white femininity and how we have to guard our white women and take care of them because otherwise these terrible men are going to degrade them. You know, and I mean, we're all a product of our time and our place in history. I grew up in a very white world. I don't, I mean I would like to think that I would never get caught up in something like that. But I guess I can't say for sure that that's true. And that's very humbling to me, you know. You know, if all my neighbors are all wrapped up in saying, "Hey,

come on, let's go get that guy," am I really going to stand there and say, "I just don't believe we should be doing this?" You know, or even am I going to say "Sorry, I'm busy with the children." You know, I mean whatever my excuse is. Or am I going to just go hide in the closet until they all go away and stop asking me about it? You know, standing up against public opinion is never an easy thing to do. And then when you add mob mentality to that, it's much harder. So, you know, again, I'd like to think I wouldn't get caught up in that, but I can't. It's just humbling to recognize that some of those people, you know, are regular people who really and I don't say that to excuse them at all. I mean, it's horrific. But I guess I have to acknowledge that it's not impossible that I could have been one of them. You know, had I been born in a different time and place. And that's like I say that's humbling.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:38:48] What do you mean by it's humbling? Like what?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:38:51] Well, I mean, I'd like to think that I'm better than that. I'd like to think that I would be the person who would stand up and say, "This is wrong. We shouldn't be doing this." But would I really? I mean, you know, I don't have any way of knowing that. You know, when you take it to modern times, I've certainly stood up and said, for instance, "The war in Iraq was wrong." But that's easier in a way, cause there's not a mob associated with that. Again, it's just, it's an interesting thought exercise. And, it causes me to acknowledge the fact that maybe I'm not, I'm not all that. You know, that we all have to, you know, be very wary of ourselves, quite frankly. When you think about the cases where I mean, I grew up in New York and there was a very famous case, I can't remember the woman's name, but the woman was stabbed outside an apartment building. And it took a long time for her to die. And she's screaming for a long time and you know, and no one intervened, nor did anyone call the police. And they said that there were something like 150 people who were a witness to that and no one did anything. You know, and it's sort of like how do you know that you're going to not be one of those bystanders and that you're going to be the person who takes action. I just think it's an important question for all of us quite frankly. And, and what's, and how do you prepare yourself to not be, to not join in?

Francesco De Salvatore [00:40:45] How do you figure? Well I mean you obviously have been reading a lot, learning a lot of things, but how do you figure you are preparing yourself to not be a bystander?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:40:56] You know, just again, to use a very old expression, I think it's somewhat about consciousness raising. You know, being aware that every human being has a dark side and our dark sides can be triggered. And what do we, you know, how do we prevent the dark side from being triggered? I mean, for me as a person of faith, part of that answer has to do with faith. And with, you know, practicing my faith and recognizing that, you know, I'm not in charge of the universe. Someone else is. And/or maybe I shouldn't call him someone, but you know what I mean. [Laughing] Another being is. And so I just need to, you know, stay in my lane.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:41:53] What kind of change do you want to see going forward here in Alexandria?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:42:06] Well, for starters and it's I mean, this is not, I'm not a great visionary, to be truthful. So, you know, for starters, I just don't want current and future generations to feel that they didn't get the whole story, you know, that they were lied to. And I see us making,

you know, progress in that area. You know, I personally feel that and this is not related to Alexandria specifically, it's really all of America. But I think, you know, we haven't made, not to imply we've made sufficient progress where black people are concerned, but we've made even less progress where Native Americans are concerned. So, I mean, we've got a long way to go. And, you know, even Asians, you know, who have been targeted as a consequence or a byproduct of COVID coming out of China. But, you know, learning about the Chinese Exclusion Act and you know. I mean, we've done some pretty nasty things over the years to a whole variety of people. You know, having a ship of Jewish refugees coming here in World War II and refusing to let them land. You know, another thing I sure didn't learn about until I was an adult. You know, I mean, we got a lot of work to do in a lot of different ways. So, you know, I'm glad to see the progress that we've made, but I think we got a lot more to do.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:43:58] That's right. Before we close out, is there anything you want to say before we conclude?

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:44:06] I guess just that I feel very privileged to have been a part of this process. And, you know, I know at least my committee still has more work to do. Some people have gotten a little burned out, and probably we're probably going to have to reconstitute the committee. But I'm not one of the burn outs. And I don't, you know, people have busy lives. I don't mean that to criticize anyone. Three years is a long time to be involved in things. So, but it's for me, it's a very high priority. So I'm you know, of course, you know, we kind of said, okay, we're not doing anything until the New Year. When we came back from the from the pilgrimage, just because that was so intense. But, you know, I'm looking forward to getting restarted in the New Year and learning more.

Francesco De Salvatore [00:45:00] Well, thank you so much, DeeDee. This has been great. Thanks for talking with me.

DeeDee Tostanoski [00:45:04] Sure. Thanks for having me.