

*Interview with Samuel Scarborough
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Samuel Johnathan Scarborough is a Durham native currently studying at UNC-Chapel Hill. He serves as an organizer and communication coordinator for the Durham Youth Climate Justice Initiative, an organization focused on climate activism led by young people for young people. The initiative emphasizes advocacy and climate conversations to spread awareness. Scarborough has also become involved in gun control activism with both Students Demand Action and March for Our Lives, which aim to advocate for gun control through different avenues.

MEGHNA KOYA: Okay, there we go. Okay, so, I just wanted to let you know that the time is yours so if there's ever a moment where you want to elaborate on something more than that's totally good. I'm here to listen to you. And also, if there's something that you don't want to talk about as much because it's sensitive, then that is also completely okay. To start us off, what kind of inspired your activism.

SAMUEL SCARBOROUGH: That's a great question. It's actually a question someone asked me a couple of days ago. I always think back to my upbringing. One of the things that was stressed to me when I was younger was that I am part of a village, and I could not achieve the things that I have achieved without that village. As I move forward in life, my mission is always to give back to those who gave to me and also work to create a world that is better than the one I found it. I think that's what really moved me towards activism. When I first started, I think this was 2019/2020, especially around climate justice, I was really concerned about climate change, but also the immediate instances of environmental injustice against Black residents in Durham. So that was kind of the specific moment. And then, I guess what I said previously is the reason why.

KOYA: Okay, so you kind of spoke about how part of the reason why you got involved and aware was because of your village. Can you talk about where you are from?

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely! I am from Durham. The Scarborough name has a very interesting legacy in Durham. My great-great grandfather or great-grandfather, one of the two, was a prominent business owner on Durham's Black Wall Street in the Hayti community.¹ He founded one of the oldest funeral homes, I think period, in the country, and they played a very vital role in bringing people into this world with the nursery school that they had, and also helping families as they lost loved ones moving out of this world with the funeral service. That history, that rich legacy of what I guess some would deem Black excellence today, really carried strong in my upbringing. A lot of attention you know towards going to Hayti and learning about that history, learning about the importance of different civil rights movements that took place in Durham and the local area. When I think about my village, it's that whole area, not only my family lineage, but also the Fayetteville, Street Corridor, and that Hayti community.

¹ The Hayti community, also known as the Hayti District, is a historic Black community that is now a part of the city of Durham, North Carolina.

KOYA: That's amazing! I can't believe that I didn't know that about you. Thank you for sharing. How do you think that kind of thing is tied into your environmental justice? You said that you noticed environmental injustice around you.

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely, one of the things that I noticed was pollution. Studying this more closely when I was in high school, it started a little bit in Hillside and carried over to [North Carolina School of] Science and Math (NCSSM).² I was thinking about stormwater runoff, and how that was related to urban sprawl, and the city spreading out. That also got me thinking about questions of displacement from urban gentrification. As I was moving into the environmental justice space, I was thinking about stormwater pollution but also the intersectionality of environmental justice and economic justice and racial justice. These things are all interrelated. When I started noticing how stormwater pollution and urban gentrification and urban sprawl were all connected, and were disproportionately affecting people in my community, but also other people as well, that's what moved me to take action, and join the Durham Youth Climate Justice Initiative, which I am now a co-lead of, but our group has been a little inactive because everyone has been in college and very busy.

KOYA: Can you talk a little bit more about the work of the Durham Youth Climate Justice Initiative?

SCARBOROUGH: One of the things we help do, this might seem very unrelated, but one of the things a lot of our members did in 2020 was work with the Durham Office on Youth, which is a part of the Durham municipal government, a smaller agency and a part of the bureaucracy that focuses on issues pertaining to young people especially outside of school. One of the things we worked on was creating the Durham Youth Summit on Safety, and we talked about what does safety mean for youth residents. What is the safe world that young people want to see out of Durham? How can we get there? What are some of the challenges to safety that we see? One of the main things we were talking about was police brutality in our schools from school resource officers, but another element of that conversation going back to environmental justice was the ability to have access to clean water, access to breathing clean air, having you know upkept sidewalks so you can skateboard and do all those things. Even though those things may seem very trivial especially as I get older, those things are very important to early childhood development, establishing social relations, but also the physical biology of your body. Making sure that what you are eating and what you are drinking isn't poisoning you and isn't contaminated. Those were things that we were thinking about in that initial conference. From there, we went to do stuff around transportation work, and a couple of education series before I went to Science and Math, and kind of leaned off the work a little bit.

KOYA: Okay, definitely. You kind of talked about bureaucracy and getting involved in that. How do you think change happens? What are your perspectives on how change should be implemented or can be implemented?

SCARBOROUGH: That's a great question! I think one of the biggest things, I think you know it involves the state apparatus, and it also doesn't. One thing within the state is education, which is something that we've seen in this moment that there's been a lot of attacks on education,

² Science and Math is a nickname that refers to the North Carolina School of Science and Math located in Durham.

especially historical truth-telling. I think one of the things that is very important for change is making sure that we learn not only like national/world history, but especially local history if we are trying to change things on the local level. I think education is a big thing. I'm thinking about also working through the state to accomplish things, so you can implement legislation that can work towards a greater goal. Getting people in the legal system, whether it's in the courts or actually lawmakers introducing legislation, to take that step forward towards the end goal. There are also things outside of the state like non-profit work and mutual aid. Mutual aid is something that I think is sometimes thrown to the side in these conversations. Mutual aid, so just going out and giving people clothes that need clothes, giving people food. Those types of actions can also be very liberatory, very important for whatever angle you're trying to work towards in activism.

KOYA: Right! Yea, those are all great points. I hadn't really thought about the local history part because I feel like that's not something that is always talked about in school education. When you are talking about change through getting people in office and representation, I remember at [North Carolina School of] Science and Math, you were really involved in student government. And so, what are the ways that you kind of tied your activism to being a part of student government?

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely. My role specifically in student government was co-director of state-relations so I went to UNC-system association of government, UNC ASG, meetings. We went there to kind of advocate for the school so I guess that's where my activism went in, in terms of what is in the best interest of the student-body. Working closely with our student body president, our student senate president, and the other co-director of state-relations. Just working to see what would be in the best-interest of the school, I think that's a skillset that I developed from activism. What does my community need the most? How can I actively move towards that whether that's through negotiation with people I might disagree with or just moving outside those negotiations creating my own systems, my own institutions to achieve that. I guess that's how it ties into ASG even though ASG had its own problems, in terms of adultism not really giving students the power, enough empowerment to actually change things structurally, We were able to do what we could with the cards that we were dealt.

KOYA: Speaking of adultism and all of that, what are some of the biggest obstacles that you faced as a youth activist, and what are the things that you do to get around that?

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely. One of the things is definitely, I am perceived as naive. I am perceived as my goals being unreasonable. Those types of things. One of the things I always harp back to whenever I am confronted with that is that all these social movements that have gotten us, as racial minorities, our rights have been spearheaded by young people. When you go to decolonization movements, when you go to the Black political rights struggle in the United States, even when you go back to the antebellum South in the civil war, a lot of the people on the frontlines fighting for rights are young people. A lot of the people who in their time thought that "oh, this thing won't end" or "you won't get these rights," those things were spearheaded by young people. I always kind of go back to that historical element of "hey, I didn't live through all these things that y'all have lived through, but when y'all were my age, y'all were also asking for these things that were deemed radical." I always try to connect with them on that level because I always try to meet people where they are. I don't always assume people are coming in with the

worst intentions even though there are people with some very bad intentions. I try to meet them where they are.

KOYA: That makes a lot of sense, and I think that you touched on a point that is kind of like the core of what we're doing, which is that a lot of people tend to write youth activists off as unreasonable when a lot of the major changes that have happened have been led by youth activists. It's important to talk about. Back tracking a bit and speaking of communities, now that you've gone to college and you've gotten more involved in gun violence activism. What has kind of led you to go down that road?

SCARBOROUGH: So actually what led me to go down that road, I started during my time at Hillside and also [North Carolina School of] Science and Math. I worked with the Community Safety and Wellness Task Force, and we did a lot of things around finding community alternatives to policing to address systemic violence. One of the things we're kind of keying in on for the subcommittee in that group I was doing was sexual violence. A lot of the work that I was doing was motivated by what was going on at [North Carolina School of] Science and Math with sexual violence and stuff like that. I was thinking this is the same stuff happening in my community. If [North Carolina School of] Science and Math isn't going to move on it, I might as well see if I can get Durham to move on it. That was something. For gun violence specifically, I was really motivated by instances that have happened close to my neighborhood, people that I know who were negatively impacted by gun violence who are survivors, and family members of those lost to gun violence. I went to Chapel Hill. I wanted to get involved in the activist scene. I didn't expect to be with the group March for Our Lives. When the shooting incident happened on campus, I noticed we were all in a state of disarray. I wanted to do what I could with the activist background. I already had to help people who were organizing already to think about changes that we can make on the state-level. That's how I got into this work. I currently work for 2 organizations at Chapel Hill working on the same issue: Students Demand Action and March for Our Lives. It's a national organization. Their chapter at UNC is really focused on improving on how UNC-Chapel Hill responds to these incidents, but also what the general assembly, our state legislature, can do in the future.

KOYA: That's really important. You mentioned that you were involved in two organizations, both March for Our Lives and Students Demand Action. Can you talk a little bit more about the individual work that each of them do, and how they kind of differ? What kind of spaces do they occupy?

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely. In terms of organizational structure, Students Demand Action is a little more restrictive. Their national board doesn't allow students to have as much wiggle room as we would like. I'm pretty sure you saw the whole incident where we got kicked out of the capitol building in Raleigh. That was more so with March for Our Lives just because their national organization is less restrictive. In Students Demand Action, we are doing more work towards improving how the university responds to on-campus lockdown events such as asking for locks on doors, asking for training because not every student that's at Chapel Hill is from the US or even the ones from the US haven't all had trainings for lockdown. And so, that was an important thing. There's also language inequities in terms of the alert system they used. It was only in English. Anyone who is non-native English speaker is left in the dark, and if you're out

there in a very scary situation and you have nowhere to turn to, no support system, the risk of danger is so much higher. So that was another thing we were thinking of as well in Students Demand Action. Right now, I am working loosely with that group, and also through student government to kind of get the Board of Trustees to make changes at the university. Now, in terms of March for Our Lives, we're doing a lot more towards the legislative side, so thinking about how we can protest at the general assembly even though it's complicated right now with the Republican supermajority. We're going to try whatever we can to get any type of negotiation for common sense gun legislation, so we're thinking background checks, assault weapons ban, safer gun weapon storage, and anything that can save at least one life, that's something that we are pushing for on the state legislative side for March for Our Lives.

KOYA: I am really glad that you brought up the point about the changes that need to happen at UNC because I did not know about the language barrier for the alert systems, the locks on the doors, and training. I think those are definitely important steps that need to be taken. You mentioned being forced out of the capitol building. Can you expand on that just for the record and so people can learn from it?

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely. This was September 12. We had a rally in the quad of our university in late August right after the shooting incident, and we were asking for safer gun legislation. We didn't hear anything so we were like let's take it to the capitol building. Let's take it to where these laws are made and make sure our voices are heard. We had a rally outside of the building and then we moved in and talked to legislators. While the house was in session on the floor, we were up in the gallery. They had recognized us because one of the legal assistants put in something for them to recognize us. We just decided to use the moment as a moment of civil obedience because we were tired of inaction from our legislature, we were tired of the lives lost, and we were tired of having to keep going back to this. This is the fight that my parents had in this country, and this is something that has to change. That's when we stood up and chanted, "Vote them out" towards the Republican side primarily because they haven't really done anything. While we were chanting "Vote them out", the police officers came and pushed us right on out the building. We gathered right outside, and just stayed there chanting for a good 10-15 minutes and went our separate ways. We plan to organize in the future. Go back because this fight is ongoing. Even when we get a legislative victory, we can celebrate and keep moving on because there's always something else to fight for.

KOYA: Very true. If you're comfortable, could you expand more on were the police officers being violent or were they being more polite with you? How was their interaction with you as students?

SCARBOROUGH: Yea, so they were not as physical as other incidents that you've probably seen across the country regarding police. I would always say even if it's not as extreme in terms of punching or as forceful as pushes, there's always an element of violence with interactions with police especially when we're expressing our first amendment right, we're not doing anything violent per se against the legislators. We're asking for our schools to be protected, for our communities to be protected. There's always an element of violence with the police, no matter how forceful it is. It wasn't as physical as some other incidents. I am grateful that no one lost their life or no one was seriously harmed though.

KOYA: But I feel like that incident of them pushing you out was still very harmful, and I'm sure you guys felt that way.

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely, and also Tim Moore, the speaker of the house, made some weird off-hand comments while we were leaving. Afterwards, instead of trying to meet with us and trying to think of ways to solve the issue, he goes instantly to the press and talks about how maybe our UNC-system schools shouldn't be gun-free zones. Maybe all the students should be carrying guns. All the professors should be carrying guns. It just seemed very insensitive. I think there's also violence there as well in terms of not truly honoring the concerns that we were bringing to the table, just kind of writing us off as these college students who don't know what they're doing.

KOYA: I guess, then, what kind of successes have you seen with negotiations with political leaders? Do you think that method versus civil disobedience, where do you think it is best to use each tactic? How have you seen it work out for you?

SCARBOROUGH: That's a great question. You're bringing home these really good questions. In terms of victories, one of the victories I can definitely point to is the announcement of the Office on Gun Violence Prevention in the White House. That was big, primarily because it will give states, like ours that don't necessarily have the political force within because of the Republican supermajority, some assistance in any type of activist efforts, any type of community-level efforts, more so on the city and municipal level to address gun violence. I'm also reminded of, I think it was in California, they enacted some type of gun violence regulation. Those things are definitely victories, even if they are not necessarily in the state of North Carolina. Any move towards justice anywhere is always a success. I think in terms of civil obedience, it's always important to think of the risks, not only the physical risks of how are we putting ourselves in danger, but also in terms of the press, thinking of how the media spins stories. Things such as achieving the moral high ground in the public eye. Those are things we all take into account when thinking about civil disobedience. We're not just out here trying to burn things down for no reason. We want to be very intentional on how the news will cover it and how our message will get sent. We don't want our message to get confused. We don't want to just be written off as these college students that want to wreck things or burn things. We want to be seen as these young people with valuable insights, with valid concerns. They need help. We need help. That type of thing.

KOYA: Right. Speaking of that, what are the types of things that you kind of have to do when these media outlets invalidate you as activists, and kind of villainize what you are trying to do for change?

SCARBOROUGH: Yea. One of the things we have to do is one: stay strong and stay convicted in our meaning in terms of not deviating from what we're fighting for. If we're fighting for the prevention of gun violence, we got to stay that course no matter what the media says or anything like that. We have to figure out what ways we can get that goal accomplished, and in terms of response, we've been privileged to have connections with media outlets for the most part that have been very generous with their coverage of the issue. That's not necessarily something that

we've had to deal with a lot, but when we're talking more right-leaning outlets, that's been kind of difficult, or some of the social media posts which are a whole other element of the new age. One of the things that we've always tried to stress is using the tools that we have access to to combat that narrative in the best way possible. If that's making an argument with stats and figures through the media, that's something that we will try to push through. If that's making a moral argument towards going back to the moral high ground, that's something that we will do. It's thinking about the different rhetoric that we can use with the media sources and outlets that we have access to. Spin the narrative in the way that we want it spun.

KOYA: So you kind of talked about taking back that narrative power. You kind of mentioned social media, but how do you think social media has changed this whole field of activism? What do you see as the benefits of using social media to organize or maybe get the message out there? And what do you see as the drawbacks?

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely. In terms of social media in general, there are studies that show the negative socio-emotional outcomes from social media, that's already something. In terms of activism, one of the things it definitely helps with is getting the message spread as far as possible in the quickest amount of time. Because in decades past, it was putting up a poster up somewhere or going to your local institutions, your school, your church, whatever, and trying to tell people there. On social media, because everyone is up there on instagram, all it takes is a very effective marketing strategy to get your movement some traction to get more eyes on it. I think one of the things that has been, I don't want to say a drawback but a challenge for us, is kind of transitioning some of the engagement that we're getting online to people in-person. We'll have videos. We'll have posts that get a lot of engagement that will engage tens of thousands of people, but when we're planning in-person events, it's hard to get the same number of people here for a variety of reasons. That's one of the challenges, I would say for social media. I think another thing is also it can create more opportunities for the message to get diluted. When we're sending the message out, we have the power to determine what that narrative looks like, but once it gets spun in different directions on social media because it's not as centralized, it can definitely kind of change what our narrative means to other people, if that makes sense.

KOYA: Yea, so you kind of talked about it. Maybe your post will get a lot of likes or views, and it's very easy for someone to click a like button, but how do you get people to move past these performative activism actions like reposting stories, and get them involved? What are your strategies to kind of move past that barrier?

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely. That's a great question. In all honesty, that is something that we are still trying to figure out. One of the things that has been helpful to a degree with our specific organization, March for Our Lives, is when we went to the White House and you know we had to be stylish so we took a 0.5 with President Biden. We took pictures with very prominent politicians and activists that a lot of people have heard of or at least seen videoclips of. We posted it on our socials and tried to use it to show that activism can get you a lot of connections, so thinking about incentives for people to join. You know we can use any type of people we can. No matter who you are, where you come from, we could use you in this movement. We could utilize your skills. That type of thing. I think another thing is also stressing activism isn't just like one thing. There is on the ground, boots on the ground activism, like going to protests, but it's

not just that. Our group has a lot of fun, so we try to show that it's not just hard work and very negative like we're human beings, we have to have positive elements to our life. We have to de-stress, so we try to show those more intimate moments as well. We also try to stress that all activism, like I was saying earlier, is not boots on the ground. If you're studying and writing academic papers or studying to become a journalist to help as we're trying to push the narrative in a certain way. If you're trying to study to become a legislator to make those changes in the decisions, all those things are important. All those things are a part of the broader activist movement to get the change that we're trying to accomplish. We also try to stress that as much as we want as many people as possible at these protests and places, it's okay if that's not something that you are able to do at the moment. If your lane is, like I said, towards policy and towards becoming a politician, make sure to ride that lane and make sure to help us down the line. That's kind of our thing right now, but we're still figuring it out. That's been a challenge.

KOYA: Okay. I think you brought up great points that I hadn't thought about like multi-faceted activism like the way that plays out. Could you speak a little bit more about your visit to the White House and what that looked like? Maybe also who you got to speak to?

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely. I'm just going to be completely honest. The White House is one of the most royal places I've ever been to. I hope the butlers or the servants, whatever the term is, I hope they are paid well. The lemonade at the White House isn't the best. I've had better lemonade, but what I can say is the people that I was able to meet, I was able to meet Justin J. Pearson. He's a state representative for Tennessee. I also got to meet Justin Jones again. I've spoken at a conference with him before, but he's also a state representative in Tennessee. They were a part of the very recently famous Tennessee Three thing that happened. The Tennessee lawmakers were thrown out of the state legislature after their protest for gun violence prevention. I also got to meet Maxwell Frost. He is the first US Congressman from generation Z. He's done a lot of good work, and obviously the President and the Vice President. I got to meet both of them, and I think the more meaningful conversations I had were with Justin J. Pearson, Justin Jones, Maxwell Frost thinking about the ways we can kind of grow this movement and get everyone across states on one accord. If we're not able to get something within our individual states, we can push as a greater South for better policies in our federal government. Just kind of networking opportunities similar to what you would find at a conference of any kind. If I'm an econ student and I go to the lecture hall with just students and professionals, it is very similar to that. It was just meeting people, getting contacts, and moving forward from there.

KOYA: Okay, yea. Also touching on something that you kind of mentioned earlier, I know that sometimes activism can be really hard on the people who are trying to carry it forward. What are the ways you take care of yourself and make sure that you're checking in on your own mental health to make sure you're okay?

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely. Mental health is so important. One of the things I do is I try to set a specific time whether it is activism or school, I just cut off all the devices or whatever and just do something that makes me happy. For this past week, I've tried at 8:00, no school, no activism, just doing fun things. Even though it's dark outside, go outside with friends. Watch tv. I love playing cards. I love playing video games, so doing those things, and it's all a part of time management. I guess going back to NCSSM cornerstone just making sure that we have blocked

out time, especially as activists, to do nothing related to our activism and just do the things that bring us happiness. This work, this work can definitely destroy your soul, destroy your spirit. That's something I don't want to happen.

KOYA: Yea, I feel like burning out is something that is very common thinking of the activism sphere, so I'm glad that you have strategies that help with that. Where do you want to take your activism and what you are doing right now in the future? Where do you want to go with this? Or like I know it's not always sustainable to have a specific end goal, but what is your macro-level best idealized version of everything even if it's not feasible, if you know what I mean, right now?

SCARBOROUGH: Yea, so I think that the macro-vision or the end goal if you will, is to just create not only a better world than when I found it, but also when I think of safety, I think of having equitable access to resources. I think of living in a condition where you don't have to live under the threat or fear of violence, and also making sure that you're able to express your authentic self. So I think that type of idealized world is kind of the macro-vision of what I'm trying to move towards, at least. I think one of the things I want in the future, I guess with my path, I'm thinking of going to law school, so maybe doing work as a state or federal congressperson in the future to help with policy. Yea, that type of thing. I guess in terms of macro vision, that idea of safety so you know what I said earlier. That's all I really thought of right now, but I will definitely give more time to think about that in the future.

KOYA: Yea, I'm sorry to throw that at you. That was kind of a hard question to answer.

SCARBOROUGH: You're good! You're good. You're good.

KOYA: I'm excited to see what you do in the future. Another thing that just came to mind when you were talking about the space to be yourself is I know that in some activism spheres, some voices are excluded. The people who are put on the forefront of a movement aren't always like people of color. How do you kind of deal with that aspect of activism?

SCARBOROUGH: That's 100% true. The same systems of white supremacy and institutional racism that we are fighting against in the activism space, at the same time, permeate those spaces. One of the things that I did especially with the rally in Raleigh during September was in my speech, I brought up like North Carolina A&T University because a lot of press, a lot of coverage was given to UNC-Chapel Hill, but North Carolina A&T had a shooting two days prior to ours, and their incident had virtually no coverage. It didn't make national news or anything like that. I think one of the things is if you're in a more privileged place in those spaces providing a voice whether it's highlighting things that are happening to other groups of people or giving them, providing them the place to kind of step up and have that voice. Empower them. I guess, our group, specifically, March for Our Lives, is predominantly white. One of the things I've made sure to do is lean on my family and my support networks. Whenever I am at meetings and stuff like that, I'm kind of on my own, and there's always that pressure of trying to feel like you're representing the whole group even though that is not necessarily true. You're not. I guess leaning on the people that I guess my village, leaning on the people that have helped me get to this place has been very helpful in navigating that space.

KOYA: Yea, that makes a lot of sense. That's important. I feel like that's definitely something I see a lot of where people kind of expect a person of color to kind of explain everything to them. That can be incredibly pressurizing and tiring as well. Speaking on that, in your movement and the spheres you are active in, how do you deal with someone messing up or saying something wrong? How do you like to call them in and deal with someone where it feels almost like a betrayal where you are working towards the same thing, but they messed up? How do you talk to them about that?

SCARBOROUGH: That's a great question. I think, honestly, if someone makes a honest mistake, I treat it the same way I do with other things which is just being honest and having a conversation with that person. It doesn't benefit the movement, it doesn't benefit our relationship to just be antagonistic towards that person to I guess demonize them. It's more impactful to have a one on one conversation with them. Also understand that we're human. We make mistakes. We say the wrong thing sometimes. One of the things that happened with March for Our Lives was, I don't want to call him our de facto leader, but one of the main voices in our space, he did a video recording in a classroom during one of the lockdowns. Although it received a lot of positive attention, it got a lot of valid criticism for how he carried himself in that moment, and one of the things that we did was instead of going on social media and attacking him or cutting him off, we just went and had a conversation with him. We just talked about "hey, these are the things we can think about in the future to grow from this mistake," and we issued a public apology. We issued a public apology on our page especially directed to the students in that room, who had their safety jeopardized in certain ways by his actions. The primary focus was never to kick him out of the movement or demonize him. It was always thinking about, from a restorative justice lens, how can we restore what has been lost? How can we restore both the humanity of the people that were harmed and also the humanity of the person that did the harming? That's kind of the approach we took to talking to him.

KOYA: That's amazing. That's a really good practice that I feel like sometimes gets lost, but you also just talked about something that is super big, which is restorative justice. Do you mind expanding on that and explain what that looks like to you?

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely. For me, restorative justice is, as I was alluding to earlier, a process of accountability. It's not a punitive perception of justice of just trying to punish someone. It's thinking about how we can restore the humanity of the person that was harmed so centering their experience so centering it on what they have lost and what they have gone through. Also, thinking of ways to restore the humanity of the person that did the harm. Thinking about ways they can heal from the incident. Thinking about ways they can learn and grow and eventually become a better contributing member of our society. I think restorative justice is all about accountability and making sure whatever is done is resolved in a way that allows everyone to grow from the experience, not to downplay the survivor's or the victim's experience, and also not to just write off the person that did the thing, to make sure that both people are able to reach a status of safety again. Like I was saying, that state where you feel like you have that equitable access to resources, the ability to express yourself freely. Those types of things.

KOYA: I'm glad that you talked about that, especially not downplaying or writing off what the victim went through and also reaching a state where both people can feel the satisfaction of being safe again.

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely because sometimes people think justice is just throwing someone behind bars and it's like you're not even thinking about what the survivor went through. You're not thinking about the resources they need to get back to where they want to be. Obviously, a lot of these instances involve a lot of trauma. So we're thinking about trauma as well for the survivor.

KOYA: Building off of that, you don't have to talk about this at all if you feel uncomfortable, but like how did your experience with the UNC lockdown change your experience or perspective as an activist specifically in the space of like gun violence?

SCARBOROUGH: Yea. First of all, I think during the first incident I was in a classroom with about 20 other students, and we were there for a good three to four hours. We were not as close as some other students were to the shooting, but we were close enough to hear the helicopters flying by and the police sirens. All those things. I think what it gave me was that it gave me like grounded reality. Sometimes activists come into spaces without necessarily experiencing things, and that's not to knock people who aren't going through things, but what it did do is it definitely grounded me. It gave me a more empathetic look into not only the experiences that other students have had across the country, across our state with lockdowns and gun violence, but also community members as well. Within the realm of gun violence, one of things that has happened is that school shootings has been elevated over suicides and community instances of gun violence. It also helped me think about those ways in a deeper sense as well. Even though I was thinking about those things before, it gave me a more personalized experience to empathize with people that are survivors or family members of those we've lost.

KOYA: Yea. Before we continue, I am very sorry that happened. That must have been a horrible and terrifying experience for you and everyone who was there.

SCARBOROUGH: Thank you, thank you.

KOYA: I guess another thing is that sometimes when things are changing the way that you want them to, how do you battle any feelings of hopelessness? Or how do you deal with cynics who don't think that what you're doing is going to change anything?

SCARBOROUGH: That's a great question. I think one of the things is when we think about hope, I think about hope not as a feeling or emotion but as a discipline. I think hope is something that you develop. It's almost like, when I say discipline, it's something that you have to teach yourself and that you teach other people. One of the things I'm reminded of is from my ancestors, those who were enslaved, those who were growing up in Jim Crow, my grandmother, they didn't just wake up one day and say that I feel hopeful today that we're going to get rights. No, it was something they had to cultivate. It was something to embed in their mind whether it was through spiritual practices or through learning. Those were things they had to generate themselves. When I think about cynics, I don't really allow the cynics to control what I think

because of the way I develop hope as a discipline. Because I know even if I don't see it today or don't see it in my lifetime, the work I am doing can inspire someone else to continue this work in the future and eventually get to that point that we all want to reach to. Whenever I think of hopelessness or cynics, I always go back to thinking about hope as a discipline and it's something that I am cultivating for a greater end, a greater goal.

KOYA: Right. That's an amazing way to think about hope because I don't really think I ever really thought about it in such a way as a discipline as something that you work towards every day. Is there anything that you want to touch on that I haven't asked you about?

SCARBOROUGH: I can't think of anything in particular. I think the main thing I wanted to say is thank you for doing this work.

KOYA: Yes, of course!

SCARBOROUGH: I also wanted to say whoever your professor is, whoever made the class, thank you for having this class because I think it's important for a lot of us, especially as young people, to kind of cultivate an appreciation for youth activism while we're growing up. Once we become the old people making decisions, we don't want to recreate the same harm that our elders are doing right now. So thank you.

KOYA: Exactly. Thank you for sharing! I think that it's so important because learning from youth activists also makes it so much more tangible in the sense that it feels so much more real where change can happen and is happening right now. Are there any questions for me about anything at all?

SCARBOROUGH: What have you enjoyed most about the class?

KOYA: One of the things that we've been doing, actually I'll tell you two things. First of all, we've been watching and reading the transcripts of past interviews and just hearing the amazing things that people have been doing has been really, I guess it relates to how hope is a discipline, has been teaching me hope every day. It is possible. People are doing so much important work every day. The fact that a lot of the people, they're our age, or in the same age area. Also, one of the interviews that we read/listened to in class was from someone in the Global South and getting a perspective on that and the ways that they're excluded from conversations, and the way that climate change and other issues affect them disproportionately was really important as a class to not only engage with, but also discuss and talk about. I think that as a class when something is not in agreement, that's such a good learning opportunity for everyone. The second thing that we've learned is deep listening exercises. When we're talking to people, making sure that we're actually listening and maybe not listening to the background of our own voices and making sure that we're being someone that helps them say what they want and kind of delving deeper.

SCARBOROUGH: Absolutely. That deep listening, that active listening part is just as important as it is in the classroom space as it is to activism. You got to know what the community wants to fight for (to actually fight for it). That's an important skill, and I'm glad y'all are going over it in class.

KOYA: Yea, if you don't have anything else, I'm going to respect your time and say goodbye.