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## Vaughn-Regan Bledsoe: An Interview by Ethan Dominic

Conducted on November 17, 2023 via Zoom

Vaughn-Regan Bledsoe is a co-president of Duke University's Black Women's Union<sup>1</sup> and an Abele Ambassador at The Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture<sup>2</sup>. She has been greatly dedicated to her work in these spaces since she became a freshman at Duke University in 2021. Vaughn is a Global Health & African and African American Studies co-major and has an interest in health policy and its impact on the Black<sup>3</sup> community. More specifically, she is interested in Black women's health and how Black women are viewed and treated in the contexts of the healthcare system in America. Vaughn has learned throughout her personal experiences that "biases have been created against black women in healthcare." Overall, she has a passion for community building, and all of her work in her personal life and on campus is motivated by her Blackness<sup>4</sup> and the Black community.

Ethan (00:00:01):

Okay, let's begin. So Vaughn, how are you doing?

Vaughn (00:00:05):

I'm good. How are you?

Ethan (00:00:07):

I'm doing good too. Thank you for asking. So thank you so much for taking the time today to share some of your experiences with us. I appreciate it and I am sure that the viewers of this interview are going to be grateful for this as well. And before you get started, I'm going to review some of the ways we will handle the information you share with us. Stop me if you have any questions. I want to make sure you are clear at all times during the interview. And if you have any questions that I can't answer, Wesley, my youth Justice teacher can. And simply put, Vaughn, your interview is yours. So at the end of our time today, I will upload the recording to a safe Dropbox<sup>5</sup> within Duke. I'll transcribe it over the next four weeks and send it back to you to review. Once you get the transcript, I'll ask you to edit it for two things. One, accuracy in case I misspelled a name, got a date wrong, and two, you decide there are parts to interview, you'd like to edit it out. And once we have completed the interview transcription process and I have your permission to upload it, the interview and transcript will be uploaded to the public site at Duke. And I will put that link in the chat right now.

(00:01:15):

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<sup>1</sup> Black Women's Union (BWU): According to this organization's Duke Groups page, "a gathering place that welcomes all black women at Duke, including undergraduate, graduate, and professional students."

<sup>2</sup> Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture: a hub for community-building, learning, exploration, and identity development. Founded in 1983, the Center's mission is to provide a safe and affirming space that supports the diverse needs of Black-identified people at Duke University.

<sup>3</sup> Black: Pertaining to people who identify as belonging to or being part of the African diaspora; may refer to individuals, communities, or cultures.

<sup>4</sup> Blackness: A term that encompasses the identity, culture, and experiences of being Black.

<sup>5</sup> Dropbox: A cloud-based file storage and collaboration platform that allows users to store and share files and folders online.

Yeah, just need a couple of seconds. Okay. I put it in the chat. Are you able to see it?

Vaughn (00:01:21):

Yes, I am. Awesome.

Ethan (00:01:22):

Awesome. Cool. So there will likely be things that you shared today that are very important, but that I don't know enough about yet to form good questions. This is not unusual for all oral historians. Sometimes interviewers need time to think through powerful testimony and circle back. So I like to be able to ask any follow-up questions I may have after the interview via email. Does that sound good with you?

Vaughn (00:01:47):

Yeah, that's okay.

Ethan (00:01:48):

Awesome. Thank you. Yeah, and also as we discussed before recording, you said you were going to send the consent form after the interview. So yeah, it's great. So do you have any other questions before we get started or are you ready to just dive into it?

Vaughn (00:02:03):

Oh no, sorry, I was moving around a little bit. I'm in a center, but that was about it. There should be no more movement.

Ethan (00:02:10):

Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. No worries. No worries. Okay, let's get started then. So I want to begin by asking you questions about your advocacy work for black women, if you don't mind. Yeah. I am aware that you are co-president of Duke's Black Women's Union, a gathering place that welcomes all black women at Duke, including undergraduate, graduate, and professional students according to your organization's Duke Groups page<sup>6</sup>. So I wanted to ask you about what led you to become a part of this organization?

Vaughn (00:02:43):

So in high school I was really involved. And so when I came to Duke, I was trying to kind of find those same passions through groups and organizations on campus. And there was a senior that I was friends with my freshman year and she was president of Black Women's Union at the time. I was attached to her hip. And so I think I just ended up joining one of the committees. I think I was in communications and then I was a freshman liaison and then I really, really loved it. So I was like, okay, I want to do more higher up roles. So then I did co-chief of staff last year and then now, so I kind of got led into it through the community and network of black women on campus that I was around my freshman year.

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<sup>6</sup> Duke Groups page: Refers to a page or platform associated with Duke University where various student groups and organizations are listed.

Ethan (00:03:31):

Oh wow. Oh wow. That's awesome. Yeah. Thank you for sharing. And on the note of you being co-president, how is it taking on this role of co-president in this organization?

Vaughn (00:03:42):

So it's definitely a lot of work. I'm so grateful for my other co-president, Grace<sup>7</sup>. She is amazing. We hold each other up and really work together to make sure that the organization keeps going, but it can feel like a full-time job sometimes. There's just a lot of moving parts. We're expanding and getting bigger so we have more committees, more responsibilities, more programming, just making sure that everything's all set. But it's really fulfilling for me. I absolutely love BWU. I love the work that we do and I wouldn't trade it for anything else. So it's been fulfilling. Lots of work, but fulfilling.

Ethan (00:04:23):

That's awesome. Yeah. Great to hear. Yeah. Thank you. So as a follow-up question, I wanted to ask what led you to down this path of advocating for black women specifically?

Vaughn (00:04:37):

Oh wow. So this might be a longer answer. So I am a global health and a AAAS Co-major. Before I got to Duke, I knew that I wanted to do some sort of advocacy work just in general with whatever I studied. And it started off more broad. I was like, I want to focus on marginalized groups in the US and how their experiences are impacted by legislation that we have and then also just other structures in the US. And then as I started taking more classes, I started taking a lot of AAAS classes and then I stumbled upon health policy specifically, and I was starting to see my experiences as a black woman mirrored within the healthcare space. And it made me realize black women have been through so much historically, currently, all of that. And just taking in and absorbing the information around me and how I'm seeing black women in the community around the world getting treated.

(00:05:45):

And then also just my own experiences. It really made me think there's a lot of work to be done. Specifically for advocacy through Black Women's Union, we deserve safe spaces and community and support on this campus. And so that's one of the biggest parts of it for me is kind of giving that community that was given to me my freshman year, my freshman year first semester was a little rough and I don't think I would've made it through without the black community, but more specifically the black women that I met and who upheld me during that time. And I think that every black woman around the world and then also like more specifically on this campus deserves that support community. So I hope that answered your question. It was just through a lot just experience and observing and talking and being in community that I was like, okay.

Ethan (00:06:40):

Awesome. Yeah. Well, I'm glad to hear that you had that community to support you throughout your freshman year and beyond. So yeah, thank you for sharing. As a follow-up question, I did

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<sup>7</sup> Williams, Grace: The other co-president of Duke University's Black Women's Union.

find it interesting how you said the history of how black women have been treated has been a factor definitely in you wanting to advocate for a black woman. And also I also found it interesting how you have that community to support you from the black community. So if you don't mind, would you be able to elaborate on some of those personal experiences that may have influenced you to pursue your advocacy work for black women? If you don't mind?

Vaughn (00:07:18):

Yeah. So let me think. When I think more specifically in the healthcare field, like healthcare work and all of that and my specific interests in doing some sort of health policy advocacy or something like that, I think a lot of my experiences within healthcare have not been great because there's just so much history behind, for example, I'm in a BASS connections<sup>8</sup> right now and it's reproductive healthcare post-Roe v Wade. So we talk a lot about OB-GYN<sup>9</sup> care and gynecology<sup>10</sup> and all of that and its roots and the roots of that are really just awful and was built off of the backs of black women by taking their bodily autonomy and doing surgeries and different procedures on them. Also making them play this dual role of being a nurse and then also having children and then also using them as subjects. Just God awful.

(00:08:20):

So, my own personal experiences, just learning about that and then learning how that has been built up to create these biases against black women in healthcare. So there's a lot of misconceptions that black women don't feel as much pain or that they don't feel pain at all. And that's still very prevalent within how black women receive healthcare now. And I feel like I felt that, I felt dismissal when I tried to go and advocate for myself within healthcare spaces and I felt like I wasn't being listened to. And I think just more generally, being a black woman, we are expected to pour into other people's cups and not really have a lot of people pouring into us. And so it's just a lot. Where it's just like there's a lot that as a black woman, a lot of stress and pressure I put on myself, I feel like because of, I think a lot of society expects us to be the strong black woman all of the time, and I think sometimes there is advocacy lacking for us. So with my own experiences, to sum it up, kind of my experiences in healthcare and then also my experiences just being a black woman and having to uphold myself and having those pressures and stuff.

Ethan (00:09:39):

Yeah. Thank you for elaborating on your experiences. I appreciate it. Okay, awesome. So I'm going to transition to our next question. So I see that a big part of Duke's Black Woman's Union is celebrating the experiences of queer<sup>11</sup>, disabled and low income woman and welcoming black, but non-binary or gender non-conforming<sup>12</sup> folks who feel drawn to our space while recognizing that their experiences are fundamentally different than those a black woman. Would you be able

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<sup>8</sup> Bass Connections: a program at Duke University that is intended to “bring together faculty and students to explore pressing societal challenges through interdisciplinary research and education.”

<sup>9</sup> OB-GYN (Obstetrics and Gynecology): A medical specialty that focuses on women's reproductive health, including pregnancy and childbirth.

<sup>10</sup> Gynecology: The branch of medicine that deals with the health and diseases of the female reproductive system.

<sup>11</sup> Queer: An umbrella term used to describe sexual orientations and gender identities that are not exclusively heterosexual or cisgender.

<sup>12</sup> Gender Non-Conforming: Refers to individuals whose gender expression or identity does not conform to traditional societal expectations (i.e. male and female).

to elaborate on any experience or feelings you may have had with accommodating these groups of individuals throughout your time in the Black Women's Union?

Vaughn (00:10:20):

Yeah, of course. So ever since my freshman year, it's been kind of a conversation because I know historically with Black Women's Union, it hasn't necessarily felt like a space that was inclusive and I don't think on purpose, but the title is Black Women's Union and it's not, when somebody reads that, they may read it and be like, okay, this might not be a space for me. And so honestly, we are actively working on that right now to make sure that people know that this is a space for everyone and we want to celebrate our different experiences and all of that. So that's kind of in the works right now because on paper we can put that, but also it needs to be enacted in a better way where people actually know, because historically I feel like that has not been the case because it's such gendered language within the group name. So there is question that people are like, oh, am I welcome? And everybody's welcome, all of our exec, we've had conversation about this. We want everybody to come and celebrate and celebrate themselves and their experiences. It's just when historically it hasn't felt that way, then there's work to be done. So that's actually something that we're currently working on.

Ethan (00:11:41):

Yeah, I understand. Sounds good. And I also wanted to ask, while I understand that you and the other members of Black Women's Union have been working on making the organization more inclusive, have you personally encountered anyone who's, anyone from that group, from any gender nonconforming individuals that you've had to help navigate through the process, if that makes much sense?

Vaughn (00:12:11):

I think so. I'm sorry, can you rephrase? Are you saying as far as making them feel welcome within the space? Or sorry, can you...

Ethan (00:12:25):

Yeah, no worries. No worries. No, no. I apologize. No, what I was asking as have you ever personally encountered any gender non-performing individuals who have wanted to join the organization? But then, because

Vaughn (00:12:42):

No one's come up to me personally, and a lot of the conversations that have been had that I've heard about have been through my co-president or other people in exec. But personally, no one has come up to me, so I don't really have an experience to elaborate on necessarily, but I understand.

Ethan (00:13:08):

Yeah, yeah, that makes sense. Thanks. So in that case, I'll transition to our next question. So I know that you've already kind of touched on this, but given everything that we've discussed so far, what has resonated with you the most regarding the Black Woman's Union? Aside from what we've discussed,

Vaughn (00:13:31):

Sorry, I'm probably going to sound like a broken record, but I really, really, whenever I talk to people about black women, it always comes back to the community aspect for me. I love the community building and just getting to know each other and elaborating on different experiences and uplifting each other. I love that about Black Women's Union. It's my favorite part about it, which is why I love to do the work, love the programming aspect of it and being able to just kind of pay it forward the way, like I said, my freshman year, the way that a lot of black women on this campus did for me. I love being able to do that for other people who are new to campus or even if they are a senior junior, not even new to campus, but they want to be around letting them know that they have a place within our space.

Ethan (00:14:18):

Awesome. Yeah. I also wanted to ask, you talked about how you really like community building. Would you be able to elaborate on whether that has been a short-term interest or long-term interest, and if so, why? What led you to love community building?

Vaughn (00:14:38):

That's a good question. I feel like it's definitely been, I, I've been within large community spaces for a long time, whether it be through a team in high school, in grade school or through actual organizations in high school. And I don't know, I just really love talking to people and kind of connecting with them, and I don't know, that's a good question. As far as what led me to it, I think I just started getting involved in things and I was like, wait, this is really cool. I love meeting people and talking to people. And I think more specifically at Duke, because once you get to college, you kind of have to figure out you can't do everything, even though some people try to, it's not wise to. So it was kind of just finding my spaces and finding where I felt supported. And then like I said, kind of paying it forward and being like, okay, this is a community that has been building for years before me, and so how can I also keep continuing to build it for the people who are after me?

Ethan (00:15:47):

Yeah. Awesome. Yeah, thank you for sharing. So as a follow-up to that, you did talk about how you were going through that process at Duke when you first arrived to finding in those spaces that kind of suited you. So would you be able to elaborate more on that process? For example, what kinds of spaces were you trying to navigate prior to coming to the Black Women's Union?

Vaughn (00:16:12):

Right. So like I said, my first semester of freshman year was a little rough, and so when I was talking to my mentors and my old cheer coach and all of that from back home, they were like, okay, you need to find what you love. Find those spaces that almost, not really mimic high school, but kind of tap into what you really enjoyed in high school and then see if that can translate here. So the first space that I went in was the Mary Lou, Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture on campus. Unfortunately, we're like, we relocated temporarily because our huge space flooded in the flowers building. So that's where I'm at right now. I'm in the Bryan Center in our temporary space, and that was the first place that I went, and the whole center just felt like a home quite literally and figuratively.



(00:17:04):

It was so comfortable, and the staff was so nice, and just listening, you can meet people. That's how I met a lot of upperclassmen because they would be in there and everyone was just so nice. And that was the first space that was like, oh, this is my home. And then I started working there literally September of my freshman year. So that helped. And then from there, I joined Black Women's Union. I was in BSA<sup>13</sup> for a little while, and then, yeah, so the first space that I really navigated was the Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture, and it still to this day, my home.

Ethan (00:17:44):

Awesome. And then in that case, I wanted to ask how finally finding those first spaces to be in.

Vaughn (00:17:55):

How was it in the moment?

Ethan (00:17:58):

Yeah, how did it feel more specifically? Yeah.

Vaughn (00:18:03):

It felt great. I felt supported and loved, which was so great because it's like I came to Duke, I didn't know anyone. I'm from Chicago, the Chicago area, so nobody from my high school came to Duke with me. Whereas a lot of other colleges that my peers went to, 20 people were going from high school. So there was already unfamiliarity with that. Then on top of that, I had never been in North Carolina. All of a sudden I'm living in North Carolina. I'm used to a city and there's not a large city nearby. So it was a lot of adjustment. Having that on campus in person support is what I was like, okay, look, I'm going to be okay. There's people here who care about me and support me and love me. So I think it was a great relief feeling where it's like, I'm going to be okay. Duke is for me. Yeah.

Ethan (00:19:00):

Nice. And definitely I can partially relate in the sense that I'm actually the only person from my grade from my high school who came to Duke. So I actually didn't know anyone prior to coming who was in my grade. I did know a couple people, but they were grades above me. So I can partially relate in that aspect. However, they're definitely not as tough as you because I actually am from North Carolina. North Carolina. Yeah. I live like 30 minutes out. I love NC, but yeah. Okay. Yeah. But that's awesome that we're still able to pull through. So in that case, I'm going to ask our next questions today, which is what do you hope to do in the future in the Black Women's Union, whether that be anything different or similar to what you're already doing in the organization?

Vaughn (00:19:49):

That's a good question. I definitely want to keep building for sure. We are building exec and just making it a bigger organization with bigger programming, and I just want to continue to

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<sup>13</sup> BSA (Black Student Alliance): A student organization that provides support, resources, and a community for Black students on a college or university campus.

celebrate and be a support for black women on this campus. So yeah, I think as far as what we're doing right now, we have a lot of programming happening in the spring, so it'll be a great time to uplift the community, and I just want to continue to provide a safe space that you can go to an event and be like, for the two hours that you're there, at least you can get food in chat and talk or complain or whatever you need to do, so.

Ethan (00:20:42):

Great. And is there anything in particular that led you to want to build the Black Women's Union space a little more? What is the motivation behind that, if you don't mind me asking?

Vaughn (00:20:57):

Oh. Oh, no, it's okay. What is my, I think, like I said, with the paying it forward, that's a huge part of my motivation. I love being able to return what was given to me so generously and be there as support if I'm needed or just to provide. I think that's a huge motivation for me is the giving back aspect of, I know how it felt to be a freshman or even last year, how to be a sophomore, and the different things that you have to navigate and the people who are there within the community to help me. I think it's just seeing that and meeting so many people who I look up to and me wanting to mirror them and give that.

Ethan (00:21:51):

Awesome, yeah. In that case, would you be able to elaborate more on why you are interested in paying it forward? I think you might've already touched on this by talking about how you wanted Tom of those upperclassmen who are doing the same thing, if I interpreted what you were saying correctly. But yeah, please, would you be able to elaborate on that?

Vaughn (00:22:11):

My motivations for wanting to pay it forward?

Ethan (00:22:13):

Yeah, exactly. Exactly, exactly.

Vaughn (00:22:17):

I just think also in general, I love, love, love, love the black community. I love being black. I love everything that blackness has to offer and my experience, and I'm just genuinely just the happiest when I'm around the black community at Duke. And I honestly think that the people within it are so special and unique that that's just enough for me where this is something that I want to pour into. That is my motivation in itself. The people and the support and all of that are enough for me where it's just like this is something that I love to do and want to support. Being black is a huge part of my identity. And so this community, I feel like that's my motivation. Just the people within it, the amazing people.

Ethan (00:23:05):

Yeah. Well, it's great that you have that community to motivate you. Yeah. I'm glad you do. Yeah. Thank you for sharing. So now I want to transition into questions about your life in

general. So I'm aware that you lived in Maywood, Illinois before you came here to Durham, North Carolina, or the greater Chicago area, Illinois. If you feel comfortable, would you be able to elaborate more on what your childhood was like?

Vaughn (00:23:34):

Yeah, let's see. So yeah, I live about 15 minutes out from Chicago, the city. My parents are divorced, so my mom had full custody of me, and I have an older brother named Isaiah. He's seven years older than me, so it was me, my mom, and my brother for a while, and then we moved in with my grandparents. So then it was since I could really kind of remember my brother, my mom, and my grandparents growing up, I've always gone to Catholic<sup>14</sup> school even though I'm not Catholic, which is kind of funny. So I went to private schools because the area that I live in, the public school system isn't great. So my mom decided to put my brother and I into private school, which is, private schools are pretty common around the Chicago area. There's a lot of them, a lot of high schools and grade schools, mostly Catholic, some Jesuit<sup>15</sup>, some Christian<sup>16</sup>. So yeah, growing up I played basketball. I did cheer, dance, I, yeah, Maywood, since I lived in my grandparents' block, there weren't a lot of kids my age. Sometimes I would play with them, the few that were, but it's mostly an older block now. I don't think there's any kids. There's a neighbor two doors down who's the same age as me, but it's a very, it's kind of quiet.

(00:25:02):

Maywood is Maywood. It's not the best area. I wish that they would build it up more and pour more into it, but they aren't. So that's unfortunate. But yeah, that was kind of a spark note, I guess, of me growing up.

Ethan (00:25:18):

Yeah, I appreciate you sharing that. Yeah, thank you. So under our next question, so I see that you were formally a student of Fenwick High School, and forgive me if I pronounced that wrong by anyway.

Vaughn (00:25:32)

Oh no, you're good.

Ethan (00:25:34)

Awesome, awesome. Thanks. Where you were named an LINK<sup>17</sup> unlimited class of 2021, QuestBridge Match Scholar<sup>18</sup>. And from what I understand, it is very difficult to become an

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<sup>14</sup> Catholic: Relating to the Catholic Church (the largest Christian church) or its doctrines, teachings, and traditions.

<sup>15</sup> Jesuit: Pertaining to the Society of Jesus, a Roman Catholic religious order known for its educational and missionary work.

<sup>16</sup> Christian: Relating to the religion based on the teachings of Jesus Christ.

<sup>17</sup> LINK: A nonprofit organization based in Chicago, Illinois, that focuses on providing educational opportunities and support to African American high school students.

<sup>18</sup> QuestBridge Match Scholar: A student who has been matched with a college or university through the QuestBridge National College Match program, which connects high-achieving, low-income students with partner colleges.

LINK unlimited QuestBridge Match Scholar. So would you be able to elaborate on how you navigated the competitive process of becoming one of these scholars and more on the motions you felt once you had become one?

Vaughn (00:25:58):

Yeah, so LINK unlimited those, so they're two separate. So QuestBridge was for college and Link was for high school because the high school that I attended was \$19,000 a year. I think it's 19,000 or something right now. And me personally, with a single mom, low income, we cannot afford that. So for me to get in, I got that scholarship and they helped pay for it. So yeah, LINK, since I was in eighth grade, I don't really remember, because at the time I didn't really understand the importance of it at all. I just knew that I went to an interview, and then I got in and it was pretty cool, but they were very helpful, especially towards the tail end of my high school career. You get a mentor. I still kind of talk to my mentor every now and again, but LINK themselves and my one specific mentor at LINK, I don't think I would've made it through and been where I am in my college process if it weren't for her.

(00:26:57):

So I'm very grateful for LINK for being able to connect me with her. And I still kind of touch base with her every so often now. But QuestBridge, I don't know how I got through my junior year, junior year, I was grinding all the time, and I remember that QuestBridge process was a lot because it is very competitive. I think there was only 1,000 of us that got matched and 18,000 people applied. So I had applied to be a college prep scholar, which is something you applied for, I think your sophomore year, and I got it. So I was like, okay, that's cool. And I knew that I had to get into college. I knew I didn't have anybody to help me pay for it. So I was like, okay, let me just do QuestBridge. I did some other bigger scholarships too, and I honestly was not expecting to get QuestBridge at all.

(00:27:44):

I also didn't, I'm first generation, I didn't know what I was looking for in a college. I just knew that, okay, I have really good grades. I can get into a top college. Let me just do that and see where I go from there. I got really lucky with Duke and I'm glad it worked out. I really didn't know anything about Duke. I was just like, this looks like a cool school. I'm going to rank it number one. And then they wanted me, and I was crying. I was like, I opened it. I was not expecting to get QuestBridge at all. I was like, nah, I'm not going to get it. And then I did. So yes, it was a lot. I was writing essays all the time, revising them, reading them, having people listen to me read them to them five times. It was a lot. It was months and months of work, but I was done. I knew where I was going to college by. I think they told us December 1st, so I was early decision basically. So that was nice. So I was done for the rest of the year.

Ethan (00:28:40):

Well, that's nice. Yeah. Yeah, it's really nice that you're able to pull through despite the long, hard process. But yeah. Yeah, it's great that you still managed to come out on time, so that's great. I also know that at your high school, you were a Friars' cheerleading team captain and Black Student Union president. So I wanted to ask you one, what did you find most special about these activities?

Vaughn (00:29:05):

So I really, really loved cheer, cheer. I miss it sometimes. It was really fun. I still kind of talk to my coach sometimes, my old coach, so I kind of keep up with them. But cheer was something that, funny enough, I was going to quit. I didn't think I was good at it. So the fact that I even became a captain really showed growth, because when I first started, it was my first time. A lot of girls had already done cheer for years prior, and I just did not feel like I was good at it, but I kept pushing and persevering, and then it ended up being something, I made a lot of bonds, and I loved performing and going to practice and doing stunts and going to tumbling and all of that.

(00:29:51):

So that was just special in itself because of the bonds I was able to make, I feel like. And then for Black Student Union, Black Student Union was just, I think it was my first kind of taste of what I've experienced here at Duke where it was just like we would meet after school and just be laughing and just sharing, because I think, I don't know what the percentages are now at Fenwick, but me personally, in my grade, I think it was maybe 250 of us, there was five black kids. So this was a PWI<sup>19</sup> very predominantly white. And so when we were able to come together in that space, that's what made it special because there were not many of us. I think I was the second black girl on the cheer team by the time I joined. And then finally some more black girls joined with me. So it was just really important to have that space for us because we were a minority, for sure.

Ethan (00:30:52):

Yeah. Yeah. Great. Thank you for sharing. And also, I just wanted to follow up on that. Yeah. How was it being such a minority in that environment where you grew up in?

Vaughn (00:31:05):

I think it became hard, especially because there were obviously a lot of microaggressions that were happening, a lot of just blatant racism. I mean, Fenwick is a very wealthy school in a very wealthy town, and I think just a lot of people, some of their first times seeing non-white people and interacting with them was at Fenwick. So it was hard when you have people like that, when you are the first non-white person that they're really interacting with, there can be a lot of ignorance and it can be really hard. And so navigating that was hard for sure. And I definitely do think back on high school sometimes, and I'm just like, wow, that was wild. A lot of the things that I experienced, and that in the moment you kind of just let go because it's like you are a minority, and it's like, okay, these are my friends.

(00:32:03):

But it's like, that's not how friends are supposed to treat you. So me personally, I don't even really talk to a lot of people from my high school anymore. The people that I talk to are my best friends. I have two best friends from high school that I still talk to, and that's it. Everybody else got cut off respectfully. It was just coming to a point where it's just like once I got to Duke and started to realize, okay, some of these friendships are not genuine, that's when I was like, okay, this is enough. So it was hard navigating, and I think, like I said, looking back, me and my

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<sup>19</sup> PWI (Predominantly White Institution): A term used to describe educational institutions where the majority of the student body is White.

friends, because the two friends that I mentioned who I still talk to are both people of color. And so we'll be talking sometimes and be like, oh, that was a wild experience that we had that we never really actually dived into. So yeah.

Ethan (00:32:59):

Yeah. Well, thank you for talking more on that. And on that note, would you be able to elaborate more on your relationship with your best friends and perhaps how you've navigated the process of finding those true friends? I do realize you said that some of those friendships that you were making throughout your life are kind of ingenuine. So how were you able to navigate that?

Vaughn (00:33:22):

Yeah, so I think something that's really important is another thing that actually really has helped me get through Duke is my friendships here specifically, there's a group, so I have best friends at home, but then I also have my best friends here. There's four of us. And they have shown me what genuine friendship looks like, and they have shown me what friendly love, love, and friendship really looks like, and being genuine. And I think the problem with a lot of people from home, from high school is they were pushing boundaries a lot and not really thinking about me as a person, how I felt and things like that. And I think once I got here and I met my core friend group here, they taught me and showed me, okay, this is how genuine friendships look like. And then also, of course, my best friends from home, they were also showing me that as well.

(00:34:20):

But when you're in an environment and you're still around those people, because my best friends from home, they're a year older than me, so they graduated. So I was still left at Fenwick, so I was still, you know what I'm saying, navigating those other friendships. So I think it really, a lot of my life experiences that I've had in the past few years have happened because I left Chicago, and I really appreciate it. I appreciate that I didn't stay, and I appreciate that I didn't go to a school where everybody from my high school went just because it was comfortable, because I feel like I wouldn't have been able to grow into the person that I am today or have any growth if I didn't leave and be in North Carolina and meet new people and get new viewpoints.

Ethan (00:35:06):

Yeah. Well, I'm glad that you were able to make those kinds of strong relationships. Yeah. So thank you. So I wanted to touch on the fact that, yeah, I'm aware that as you've already mentioned, that your high school was a Catholic college preparatory high school. So how does the fact that your high school education may have been influenced by Catholicism ultimately influence you as a person as well as your advocacy work, if at all?

Vaughn (00:35:38):

Yeah, so this is interesting. I always tell people, so I was very fortunate enough to be able to grow up and see different religions and how they interact with each other. My grandparents are Baptist. My mom and I would go to a non-denominational church. And then obviously I grew up around Catholicism. So I know a lot about Catholicism. I've been learning about it since I was in kindergarten. And then just seeing Baptist churches and stuff like that, and going to them sometimes with my dad and my grandparents, I'm not really sure that Catholicism has really

influenced me a lot. Interestingly enough, I'm not really sure how I even made that distinction growing up. I think it was something I learned about and that I know a lot about.

(00:36:32):

But yeah, I feel like it hasn't really, or maybe it has subconsciously, and I just don't know. But me personally, for example, in my beliefs, for example, generally abortion<sup>20</sup> is not really accepted or whatever, but me, I'm literally in a Bass Connections [project] that advocates for abortion. So stuff like that, I feel like my views have still kind of not really changed because we did have to take theology<sup>21</sup> classes and things like that, so we would be learning about the different teachings and what was right and acceptable. But I think also the people that I was around, if there were things that I didn't quite agree with, we were able to talk about that and flesh that out rather than just being like, no, you need to believe this because X, Y, Z. So I feel like I was fortunate enough to be able to have conversations where we talk about what we were learning and be like, wait, I don't really agree with that. I know a lot of people aren't fortunate enough to have that.

Ethan (00:37:35):

I understand. And then would you be able to elaborate on the more on that, just the fact that sometimes you found that some of the Catholic beliefs weren't necessarily things that you agreed with, because I do understand that you going to a Catholic high school may have encountered people who may have been predominantly Christian or Catholic. So yeah, would you be able to talk more on that, please?

Vaughn (00:37:59):

Yeah,

(00:38:03):

I guess I can get, because I also don't want to at the end of the day generalize because I know that there are some people who are Catholic who do not share beliefs. And I've also been out of it for quite a decent amount of time, but let me think. I do know my senior year, that was one theology class where a lot of people were asking why questions? And it was very controversial during my senior year, but as far as the people I can speak on, the specific people that I encountered, and I'm sorry, can you ask the question one more time? I just wanted to set that framework. I'm going to speak on the people that I encountered more than Catholicism as a whole. Like I said, I don't want to generalize and say that all Catholics believe a certain thing, but what was the question?

Ethan (00:38:58):

Oh, yeah, sure, sure, sure. Yeah, yeah, I can definitely repeat that. Yeah. So what I wanted to ask was how, I was just going to ask if you would be able to elaborate more on how you navigated that process of, oh, well, even though these are the Catholic beliefs that are being taught, I don't necessarily agree. And the fact that the people around you may have been predominantly Catholic or Christian, how is it just knowing that, Hey, I have views that don't necessarily agree with that, but yet I'm still surrounded by those kinds of people, if that makes sense?

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<sup>20</sup> Abortion: The termination or ending of a pregnancy, typically before the fetus is viable outside the womb.

<sup>21</sup> Theology: The study of the nature of the divine, religious beliefs, and the practice of religion.

Vaughn (00:39:35):

Yeah. So like I said, my senior year, one of my friends in class when something would come up and we were like, wait, that doesn't really make sense, or we don't really agree with that. We would just bring it up in class and be like, can you elaborate more? As far as being around people, I feel like there was nobody that I knew personally that I was interacting with all the time, who was super-duper Catholic. I feel like we had theology class, we went to mass, but I think the biggest kind of difference that there was is the, we had a pro-life club, and that was interesting. So conversations surrounding that would be interesting. But yeah, I feel like I could give you more stories on personal beliefs that I've heard that don't really pertain to Catholicism, but just more of ignorance to different communities in the world than specifically pertaining to Catholicism in itself, if you would like to hear that. But yeah.

Ethan (00:40:42):

Oh yes, please.

Vaughn (00:40:45):

Yeah, so like I said, I went to a PWI. A lot of people were high income, so there was just sometimes conversations in classes if we would be having a conversation about those who are poor or low income, lots of ignorance around that, or very much like, oh, get a job, stop being lazy. Those attitudes that would be coming out quite often. And then, unfortunately, I think it was just hard being black in 2020 when everything was happening with George Floyd<sup>22</sup> and all of that. That was kind of my turning point in high school where I was seeing the people around me and the hate that they were spewing against black people. And I was like, oh, you're not my friend, and you don't really like black people. You have a lot of hate in your heart. And that was a huge thing for me my junior year where I would be speaking against some of my classmates.

(00:41:41):

I was kind of known for speaking against them. And I think that's when a lot of people, they didn't necessarily not like me, but they were just like, oh, kind of standoffish, because I was like, what you're saying is really hateful and incorrect. Also, a lot of kids always wanting to say the N-word<sup>23</sup> or saying it or texting it to me or reporting to me and saying that, oh, this person said the N-word, and then saying it to me to report about this person saying it and expecting me to do something about it. And then also me just being kind of the token black friend, especially going through my college process, A lot of people were doubting the amount of work that I had put into getting into Duke because I was black, and they said, affirmative action<sup>24</sup>. Or they would say, you're black and smart, so you'll get in anywhere. So just things like that, like I said, totally unrelated to Catholicism, but have really shaped, those were some of the things where it was just like that's what I was dealing with more than anything where it's just the microaggressions, the blatant racism, things like that.

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<sup>22</sup> George Floyd: An African American man whose death in police custody in 2020 sparked widespread protests against police brutality and racial injustice.

<sup>23</sup> N-word: A racial slur historically used to demean and dehumanize Black people; its use is widely considered offensive.

<sup>24</sup> Affirmative Action: A set of policies and initiatives aimed at promoting equal opportunities for underrepresented groups, typically in areas such as employment and education, to address historical and systemic inequalities.



Ethan (00:42:53):

But even though it's not directly related to Catholicism, that does sound really important. So yeah, I appreciate you talking more on that. And on that note, how did you navigate that? Would you be able to elaborate more on how you navigated that hatred? Yeah, because I'm sorry that that happened to you, but how were you able to overcome it eventually, if at all? Yeah,

Vaughn (00:43:18):

I'm trying to think. I know that a lot was going down on social media, so if somebody was posting something, I would slide up and be like, this is just factually incorrect, or this is racist. There would be a lot of back and forth with that. People would be sending me think pieces and stuff like that. What else? I think it came to a point where I was just like, I'm standing firm, and I think another time when the community around me was so important and my friends and the black community at Fenwick was important, navigating that because at a certain point it just became a little ridiculous. And I think I was okay with, you don't have to be everybody's friend. You really don't. And I was okay with that. If somebody had a problem, they could come to me, but half the time they wouldn't.

(00:44:10):

It would just be me hearing hearsay with the whole Duke thing. Some girl posted in her private story, me and another black girl in my grade, she got into an Ivy League<sup>25</sup>, and as soon as they found out about both of us, one girl posted and said, I didn't get into these schools, but I know I have a better GPA<sup>26</sup> than some of these people. They read my name and they put my application down. So, it was like, I feel like at a certain point, I just came to the point where I was like, I have my friends. I have my community, and if you don't like me, then so be it. And that's how I still am. Even when I go home for breaks and stuff like that, I run into some people from my high school. They keep it cute and keep it cordial, but I just kind of really disaffiliated from my high school. Like I said, I still kind of talk to my cheer coach sometimes. I've visited for some cheer things, but as far as any other thing, I don't purposely stay connected to anyone. There's some people I'll be like, oh, happy birthday, and they'll say Happy birthday to me, but that's about it. So that was kind of the navigation. It was kind of happening on the way out. And then also COVID<sup>27</sup> happened my senior year, so we weren't even really seeing a lot of people. Anyway, A lot of stuff was on social media.

Ethan (00:45:22):

I understand. Well, I'm glad that you were able to find that way to navigate through all that paid and whatnot. So yeah, I'm happy for you. Yeah, thank you for sharing.

(00:45:33):

Yeah. Oh yeah. And I apologize. Yeah, I think I skipped over a question I wanted to ask you. Yeah, thanks. So I wanted to ask how did your activities, it could be what we've already discussed with your cheerleading and you being part of the Black student union or just anything

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<sup>25</sup> Ivy League: A group of private institutions of higher education in the northeastern United States known for their academic excellence and selective admissions.

<sup>26</sup> GPA (Grade Point Average): A numerical representation of a student's academic performance, calculated based on their grades in courses.

<sup>27</sup> COVID: An abbreviation for coronavirus disease, referring to the illness caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

from your high school experience at all. I think what I mean to ask is would you be able to elaborate more on how your extracurricular activities and high school experience overall may have impacted your advocacy work for black women today, aside from what we've already may have touched on?

Vaughn (00:46:19):

I guess just to get back into, I think I wrote about this also in my college essays. I kind of touched on it a little bit. My junior year was a huge turning point for me. That's when the wheels started turning in my head where I was like, there's a lot of things going on around me that are not okay, and this is an issue, and why is it an issue? Why structurally are we having these issues? What are the systems put into place that are allowing these cycles to continue? And then even to the smaller levels of what I was telling you, which wasn't even really small, but if we're looking at a worldview and then umbrella, what was going on, the mindsets that were happening within the students at my school, why do they think that's okay to think that or say those things?

(00:47:07):

And so that's when my wheel started turning, and that's when I think at the beginning of the interview, I said, when I first got into Duke, I was like, okay, overall I want to talk and learn about marginalized communities and things like that. And then I said, I think I started to narrow it down more, and I still care about other communities, and I am still learning about them and want to learn about them. But I think I just started narrowing it down more to specifically the black community, because that's where a lot of my work is, and that's who I'm around. But yeah, I think, I hope that answered the question. Sorry, that starts my junior year of high school where I was like, okay. And I think that has greatly impacted how I've ended up, because I was like, okay, when I go to college, I want to learn about these things.

Ethan (00:47:59):

Yeah, it's awesome that had an impact and ultimately what you do today. So yeah, glad to hear it. Yeah, thanks. Okay, so finally, I would like for us to transition into questions that relate to academic career and future career aspirations. I know that we kind of already touched on this a little bit through our discussion with Bass connections, but nonetheless, I have learned that you are currently an undergraduate who's in Duke's class of 2025, and that you were pursuing a global health major and AAA studies major, in other words like African and African-American studies major. Would you be able to elaborate more on why you chose to pursue these specific academic programs? Yeah. Again, I know we kind of already touched, you may have already touched on this, but yeah, please.

Vaughn (00:48:46):

Yeah. So let's see. So like I said, when I first got to Duke and I'm first generation, I had no clue what I wanted to do. I knew I didn't want to do STEM<sup>28</sup> or engineering, so that kind of cuts something out. So I just stumbled into humanities. And when it came time for finding a major, I was really nervous because coming from a first-generation background, a lot of people at home are like, you major is really important. And they're like, what are you going to do with that

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<sup>28</sup> STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics): An acronym representing academic and professional disciplines in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

major? Are you going to be able to get a job, make money with certain majors? So I felt a lot of pressure from that where I was like, I need to pick a major that's going to make me money that's going to get me a good job. And the major that I was stumbling upon was public policy, but I kind of realized that I didn't feel excited about it. Also, sorry to take a pause, but I need to blow my nose.

Ethan (00:49:48):

No worries, no worries. Go ahead. Go ahead. No, that's perfectly fine with me.

Vaughn (00:50:07):

Okay. I'm super sorry. No, thanks so much. I just didn't want that to keep distracting me.

Ethan (00:50:19):

Yeah, no worries. No worries, no worries. It's all good.

Vaughn (00:50:22):

Okay. So yeah, I did feel a lot of pressure just to find something that would make me a lot of money. And then public policy, I didn't really know much about it, but it just didn't seem like something I wanted to do. When I would talk to people about it, they'd be like, oh, what major are you thinking about? And I'm like, public policy, unfortunately, that's crazy. So I started talking to people around Duke and I went to the academic resource center and I started talking to a DAE. I literally forget what that stands for, but he was talking to me and we were just talking about classes I had taken what I'm interested in, and I did really want to do AAAS, but I was like, I'm scared. I don't know if that's appealing and things like that. And he was telling me how I could get so many skills still out of AAAS and how also at the end of the day, some people get degrees in biology and they end up literally working in student affairs.

(00:51:16):

What I'm saying at the end of the day, majors don't really matter is basically what they were telling me, just do what you're interested in. And so that's kind of how I fell on AAAS. I started off as a AAAS major and a sociology, and what was my second one was I sociology and Global Health double minor. I think that those were my two minors. And then this past summer, I just still didn't feel complete. I did Story+<sup>29</sup>. And I was like, I really do love health policy, and I did take a global health class, and I was like, I kind of want more out of global health. So then this past semester, at the beginning of the semester, I transitioned to the AAAS and Global Health co-major, and I just recently applied for the health policy certificate.

(00:52:07):

So that's how my journey came to be. I didn't change my major as much as I thought I was going to, because knowing me, I was like, oh, I'm probably going to change my major a million times. And I had been interested in Global Health, but I thought at that point in time when I was declaring that it was too late to do it because Global Health does have a lot of requirements, but I really had to advocate for myself and what I wanted. So during the summer, I was meeting with

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<sup>29</sup> Story+: A 6-week paid summer research experience for Duke students—undergraduates and graduates—interested in exploring interdisciplinary arts, interpretive social sciences, and humanities research topics and methodologies.

my dean, my academic advisor, all of them, and I was really, we made it work, and now after next semester, I'm going to be done with all my global health requirements. I'm just going to need to take my senior capstone<sup>30</sup>.

Ethan (00:52:44):

Yeah, that's awesome. Yeah. Yeah, it's kind of an interesting journey that you have. So I'm glad that I was able to learn about that. Yeah, so thank you for sharing more of that. Awesome. Yeah. So on the note of story, even Bass Connections, I've learned that you are currently an undergraduate researcher as part of Duke University's Bass Connections program and the Story+ program. Would you be able to walk me through what you found most significant about your vast connections and story plus experience?

Vaughn (00:53:14):

Yeah. So I forget how I even, so I know my best friend, she did Bass Connections last year, and I had no clue what Bass Connections was, but I was like, let me look into this, get some research under my belt, get some experience. And then I saw the women's reproductive healthcare post *Roe v. Wade*<sup>31</sup>. I was like, I would love to do this. So I applied. I got in, and then when the summer rolled around last summer, I was like, okay, Story+ seems really interesting. It was the same project with the same person with Wes. And so doing that, I learned so much just about abortion care, about legislation and how that affects healthcare and health outcomes. And it's really just opened my mind. And that's what kind of pushed me into, okay, I want to do the Global Health co-major. That is something that I'm really liking. So it's been a great experience. I love all that I'm learning and learning about the history, like I said, of gynecology and it's work that's happening in real time because abortion legislation in the past few months, and even now, it's just currently in rapidly changing some states trying to fully ban it. Some states trying to restrict the weeks of the abortion bans. It's just crazy. So it's been a really interesting project to be a part of, for sure.

Ethan (00:54:34):

Awesome. Yeah. And on that note, given that this process of some states becoming fully banning abortion, some states not knowing that, if I'm not mistaken, you said that you support abortion, right?

Vaughn (00:54:54):

Yeah.

Ethan (00:54:55):

So what are your thoughts on that and how it has this process of, oh, some states fully banning in some states now, it kind of affected you, if at all?

Vaughn (00:55:06):

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<sup>30</sup> Senior capstone: A culminating project or experience typically undertaken by students in their final year of study, demonstrating their knowledge and skills in a particular field.

<sup>31</sup> *Roe v. Wade*: A landmark legal case in the United States that established a woman's legal right to have an abortion.

Yeah, I think it's just so upsetting and unfortunate. I just don't really understand. I just don't understand even banning it, or even legislators thinking that they have the right, I'm so sorry. It's actually very upsetting because there's just so many moving parts to it and so many moving parts that legislators and people who are against abortion haven't even thought about because there's so many reasons that somebody could seek out an abortion. And then also, we've been talking about how this bleeds into other parts of health and how providers can provide care for their pregnant and even their not pregnant patients. And it's just, yeah, it's really hard. People are having to travel to get abortions. Some people can't travel to get abortions, so then they have to keep a child that they don't want. And I feel like that just is a whole other conversation because that just creates so many situations where it's just really unfortunate.

(00:56:19):

And I also think that when we talk about a lot of legislators who are making these bans, they don't know anything about abortion or they don't know anything about how people with uteruses, how their bodies function, just, I don't know. A lot of people still think that you can get full-term abortions and people are waiting until nine months to get abortion, and that's just not true. People think that people use abortion just for contraceptive purposes. That's not true. I just think it's absolutely wild to police and put legislation over these very personal decisions. And I think on top of that, what really kills me about these bans is our maternal mortality in the US is God awful, so bad, especially for women of color, especially for black women. And the states that have more bans and restrictions are the ones whose maternal mortality isn't getting any better.

(00:57:21):

So for me personally, if you're going to start making people carry pregnancies to full term, then you need to input legislation and put money into making these systems better and improving them, but that's not being done. And then on top of that, we already know, I'm sure you've been hearing, and me and my friends joke about it, the economy sucks, but it's so true. Literally, you're paying \$3,000 to live in an apartment by yourself. It's ridiculous. And it's like there's nothing being put into place to help. You're making a person carry a birth to term. Now they have a baby that they probably sometimes can't support, but it's like, but there's no aid. There's no more aid. Then it's impossible to get into some government assistance programs. It's hard to get information about them. It takes a long time. And that's what really gets to me because it's like, okay, you're saying that people need to carry pregnancies the full term, but then there's no action being taken to make everything else better, to either support a child or make it so somebody doesn't die or live with morbidity after having a child. It's just crazy. That was a lot, but it's just, it's absolutely wild. And like I said, abortion care and restriction and bans on it can bleed and is bleeding into other forms of healthcare for everyone and everyone with uteruses and stuff like that. It goes so much deeper than just abortion.

Ethan (00:58:57):

Yeah. Well, I appreciate you sharing your perspective on this. Yeah, thank you. And on that note, I know that you talked about how frustrating it is for those lawmakers not really being willing to understand the reasons for individuals seeking an abortion and perhaps the difficulty of going through that process. So if you don't mind me asking, how do you believe that we can better inform lawmakers and make them more willing to put in those legislation that you were kind of talking about to make the process better, so to speak? And—

Vaughn (00:59:37):

I'm sorry, for the first part, are you talking about make the process better for receiving government assistance or forgetting aid or forgetting abortion? Sorry, I didn't catch the first part of what you said.

Ethan (00:59:48):

No worries. That's perfectly fine. How do you believe we can get aid in both areas, if that makes sense? I hope that makes sense.

Vaughn (01:00:02):

Okay. Yeah. I'm thinking about conversations I've had over the summer about when we talk about legislators. I think sometimes it's really hard because when you read about and listen to some interviews with certain politicians and legislators when it comes to abortion, they're very just rooted in their beliefs. And even, I think one huge thing is there's just so much misinformation with everything, but more specifically with abortion, what it is and who gets abortions. And that was a huge thing over the summer that we were trying to target, was misinformation and myths, because there are just so many things that are common knowledge that are just wrong. And I think a lot of that, the legislators who are making these laws and bans and all of that are feeding into whether that be willingly or not. So I think one place to start with just the public and even with the legislators, is kind of tackling that misinformation. Because at the end of the day, I feel like even if the public is more informed about abortion, and you get some people to change their viewpoint, that could be impactful for who's getting voted into office. You know what I'm saying? Somebody who's running for a position or a politician, if the general public who's voting doesn't agree with them, that could affect—so I think just really tackling legislation, I mean, misinformation is so important.

(01:01:50):

Yes. I hope that answered your question. Sorry, I feel like I'm...

Ethan (01:01:55):

No worries. Everything you're saying is great. Yeah, this interview is about you. So anything you say is awesome. So, yeah. Yeah. No, seriously. It's all good. Yeah, thanks. And on that note of clearing up that misinformation, have you found any instances in your life, whether that be, I dunno, navigating that process of clearing up those misconceptions regarding black women in your personal life? Would you be able to elaborate on some of those ways in which tackling misinformation right to you?

Vaughn (01:02:38):

Okay. Well, I think more specifically on the abortion side, actually, because me personally, I love talking about what I'm learning. Over the summer, I was so excited about everything that I was learning about abortion and abortion care and all of that. So I was talking to people, I'm not nervous to talk to people about these topics and bring up like, Hey, did you know that over 60% of people who get abortions are already parents or things like that? And I was kind of sharing that with people that I know. And when it comes up in conversation, I try to bring in what I've learned. I also just think that even with my close friends, when we have conversations about

certain things, I bring in fun facts that I know, because I feel that's helpful for common knowledge because I think we all do have a perception in our heads, specifically with abortion who gets abortion.

(01:03:43):

And half the time that is wrong just because of how it's portrayed on TV and TV and media. It's always like a teenager who got pregnant is getting abortion. Also, the different types of abortion. I know when I first learned about them, I was telling my friends about it. And I think that's just an easy way to just inform people. So then if they're having conversations with somebody and somebody is spewing misinformation to them, they can be like, well, no, that's not true. And I feel like that's a great domino effect. As far as with black women in general, I don't think so because especially at Duke, I'm generally surrounded by the black community. I feel like maybe in some classes I've probably had to be like, wait, that line of thinking is not the greatest. But I don't really have a specific black woman experience I can think of right now specific to that misinformation or mindsets and things like that.

Ethan (01:04:52):

Yeah, I understand. Yeah, that is perfectly okay. But thank you for sharing everything that you got. Yeah. So transitioning back to our conversation about your career, so to speak, given everything we've discussed so far regarding your wife, academic career and advocacy work, what do you hope to pursue as a career after college?

Vaughn (01:05:14):

Yeah, that's a great question, I'm still asking myself. I think I'm a very, I'm not even go with the flow, but when it comes to things like this, I can get very anxious. So to keep myself from being anxious, I'm like, you're going to put in the work and do what you can right now in this moment and kind of see where that takes you. So right now, I am considering a master's of public health degree. So maybe, probably most definitely, I'll be at somebody's graduate school, either a year after I graduate or right after I graduate. This summer, I'm really hoping, I have a lot of things I'm applying for this summer, so I'm manifesting them for myself. And I'm really hoping that those programs give me insight into where I want to be and what I want to do to, the programs I'm looking at are like public health.

(01:06:06):

They're focused and they are very professional development oriented and give you an internship and stuff like that. So I'm really hoping that that can guide me and see where am I going, what do I want to do? If that is health policy or if that is working somewhere in administration. We'll see. I think I'm also at the point of my life where I'm like life can take me anywhere and I'm willing to be taken. So I know I was thinking about law school for a while. It's not completely off the table. When I talk to people about it, I say it's dangling off of the table. It's about to fall off, but I'm still open to it. If that is what I moved to do some sort of health law, that would be cool too. So I'm kind just, I think after this summer, I'm really going to take this summer and as a way to learn and figure out where I'm going.

Ethan (01:07:01):

I see. And I hope you're successful in figuring out figuring that out. Yeah. Yeah, definitely. Good luck. Awesome. Yeah. Well, all right. That is all I had in terms of questions that I personally wanted to ask before we end our interview today, is there anything that we did not touch on that you hope to discuss today?

Vaughn (01:07:24):

No, I don't think so. This was great. You had really great questions when I was reading over them when you sent them to me, I was like, those are good questions.

Ethan (01:07:34):

Awesome. Yeah, I'm glad to hear that. Yeah. Thanks a lot. Well, thank you very much, Vaughn, for all of the information you shared regarding yourself and your work to advocate for black women, but especially the information you shared about yourself and your own life experience. And yeah. Before we end off, do you have any other questions that you personally wanted to ask me?

Vaughn (01:07:53):

No, I don't think so. If I do, I'll just email you.

Ethan (01:07:57):

Yeah, yeah, it sounds good. Well, alright. Yeah. Awesome. Thank you again Vaughn. And if I have any questions, I'll be sure to email you. Yeah, thanks again. Yeah, bye. Oh, sorry. Go ahead.

Vaughn (01:08:07):

Bye. Oh, no, I was say have a great break and I'll send you the consent form right now.

Ethan (01:08:14):

Awesome. Yeah, sounds good. Yeah.