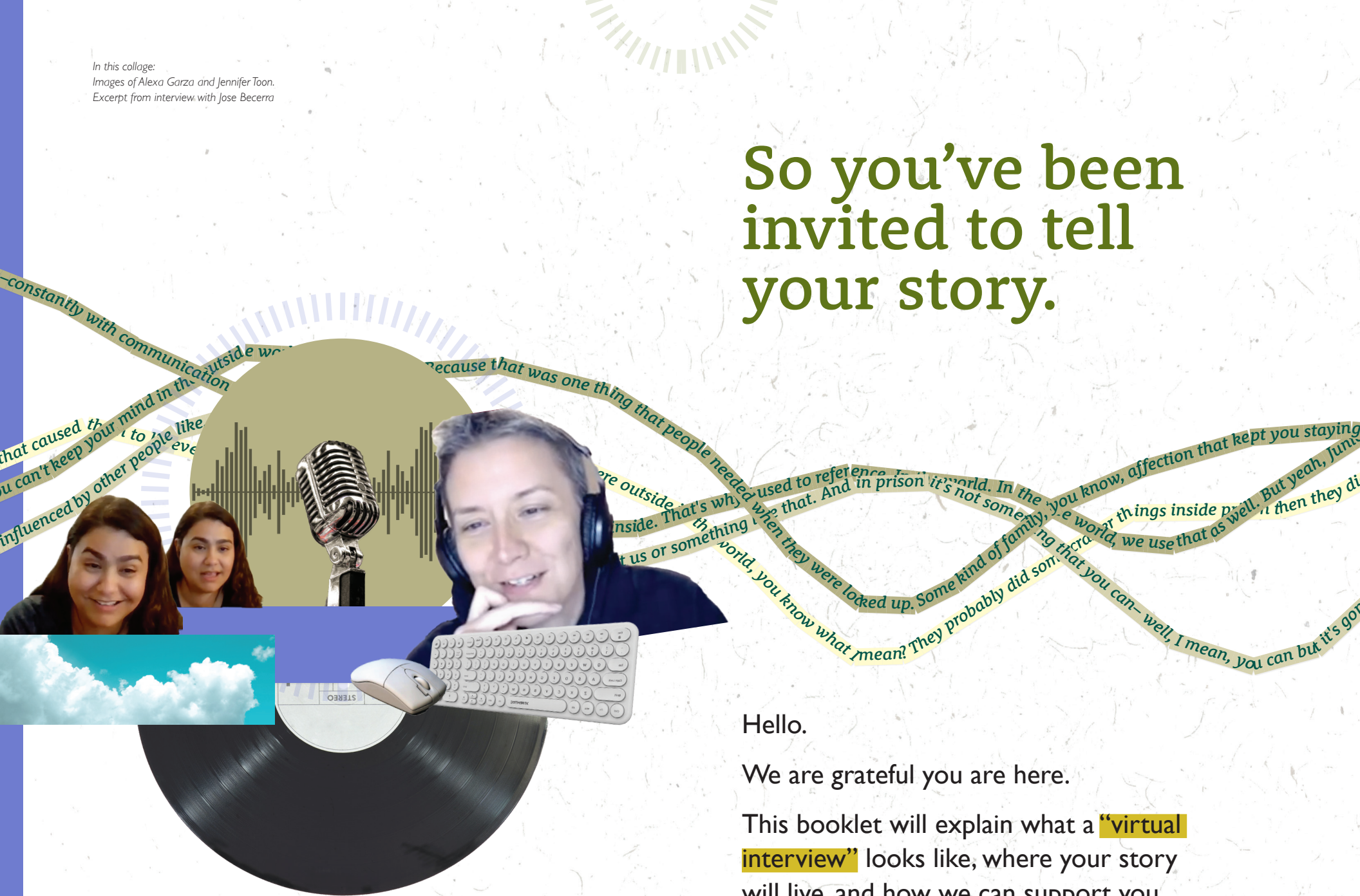


Telling your story

Preparing for your virtual interview



In this collage:
Images of Alexa Garza and Jennifer Toon.
Excerpt from interview with Jose Becerra



So you've been invited to tell your story.

Hello.

We are grateful you are here.

This booklet will explain what a **“virtual interview”** looks like, where your story will live, and how we can support you through the whole journey.

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Excerpt from interview with Andrew Hairston.

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In this collage:
Excerpt from interview with
Jayden Sashimi



Some questions you might have...

Why am I being asked to share my story?

You are someone with a story about how **state violence** has affected you, and your experience matters. State violence is when the government uses its power to cause harm and suffering to groups or individuals. State violence is carried out by forces like the police, and oftentimes results in incarceration, eviction, and other forms of violence aimed at groups with less power, such as Black people or immigrants.

There are so many people who have experienced police violence, prison, and other forms of state violence. Very few of their stories get told. We want to help you share yours.

Why would I want to share my story?

Telling your story might be a way to process your experience. Sometimes, we need to talk about things to really understand them and be able to move forward.

Your story can help others. There are people who are adjusting to life outside of prison, or people who are about to serve time, or who have a loved one serving time. Your story can help them feel less alone and more prepared for what lies ahead.

It can also help influence changes that allow us to build a brighter, more fair future.

How could my story create change?

Stories like yours aren't heard that often. By sharing your story, you can change how someone might think about punishment. While it's impossible to capture the impacts of an interview, TAVP has heard from narrators about its meaning for them personally and for their wider community. Whether it's fighting

to change the narrative around someone's death sentence in Texas that results in a **stay of execution**, or a turning point in the understanding of someone's own experiences, we recognize that the changes that happen, because of an interview, are as individual as the person who shares their story.

What if I'm unsure about sharing my story?

That's totally normal. This is why we (a group of people who have been in your shoes, along with TAVP staff and a design team) have prepared this booklet for you.

This booklet explains our promises to you as someone who is generously sharing their story, what the process looks like, and how you can connect to a community of people just like you who have also gone through this interview process.

It also answers technical questions you might have (like "what is Zoom?") and provides tips and resources to help ease your nerves.

Who would I be telling my story to?

TAVP interviewers are people who have also experienced state violence or who have familiarity working with and supporting people who have. Many interviewers have been interviewed themselves. They have all been trained to treat you and your story with care.

What is a "virtual" interview?

A **virtual interview** happens on a computer or mobile device, through an **Internet connection**. You will use a program called **Zoom** to join a **video call** with your interviewer. For more information on virtual interviews, please see The Interview Process on page 14

You might be wondering why we do virtual interviews at all. Before COVID-19, all our interviews took place in person, across a table from each other. When COVID-19 broke out, we began doing virtual interviews so people could continue to tell their stories without risking anyone's health.

We have continued to do virtual interviews because they make interviewing more accessible. They allow us to connect with people according to their own schedule in places that they feel comfortable.

What if I'm not good with computers?

That's ok! We will help you. See page 16 for more information about all the ways we'll make sure you're set for your interview.

Where will my story live?

Your story will live as a video in the Texas After Violence Project **digital community archive**.

An **archive** is a place that collects, preserves, and shares items that form our collective memory. These items include interview recordings, artwork, letters, and more.

Most archives are owned by universities or are associated with an institution. The Texas After Violence Project is a **community archive** for people in Texas who have experienced state violence. We document our own realities and tell our own stories.

The Texas After Violence Project **digital community archive** makes interview videos and documents like letters, postcards, and artwork accessible to the public through its website, **texasafterviolence.org**.

In this collage:
Images of Lovinah Igbani-Perkins and
Juania Sueños. Excerpt from interview with
Outhmane & Fatiha Dghough.



Our promise to you

We want to handle your story with care. Here is how we will do that:

You are in control of your story.

You are in the driver's seat for your interview. There will be no surprises, traps, or unwelcome questions or topics.

Before the interview, you'll have a chance to chat with your interviewer (see page 16 for more details about your interview preparations). You can speak with them as many times as you'd like.

In these conversations, your interviewer will ask what kinds of things you'd like to talk about, and what kinds of things you'd rather not be asked about. They will also share what they are curious to learn about your story.

You will have the final say about what the interview looks like.

You can change your mind at any time.

We call this "ongoing consent." This means that:

- You will know exactly what you'll talk about in the interview and how the interview will happen.
- You can make any changes to the interview based on what you want, feel, or need.
- You can change your mind at any point about being interviewed or having your interview published.

Even if you want to take down your interview after it is finished and published online, TAVP will do so within two weeks of the request.

Although we can't control if someone has already viewed, saved, or shared your interview during the time it's been available online, we will always honor your wishes.

For us, consent doesn't end when you sign a consent form.

We'll work to meet your needs.

Do you want to share your story but you're worried that someone could use it against you? Are you concerned that it might bring up a lot of painful memories for you? Or maybe you just don't have a lot of free time.

Please let us know about anything that might make it harder for you to be interviewed. TAVP will try to support you in whatever way we can. That might look like connecting you with emotional support resources, working around your schedule, etc.

She and I had both been incarcerated...I felt like I could talk to her openly because I felt like she understood, she actually did time on the same unit that I was on... it was really cool to be able to have somebody...that understood...what I was talking about from a physical standpoint...

— Katelyn Smith on sharing her story with TAVP fellow Lovinah Igbari-Perkins

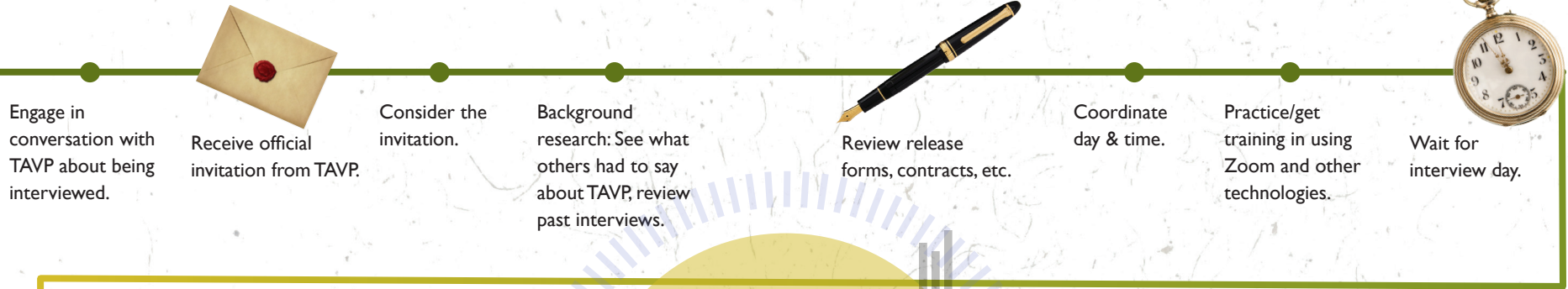
In this collage:
Excerpt from interview with
Andrew Hairston.



The interview process

The interview process at a glance

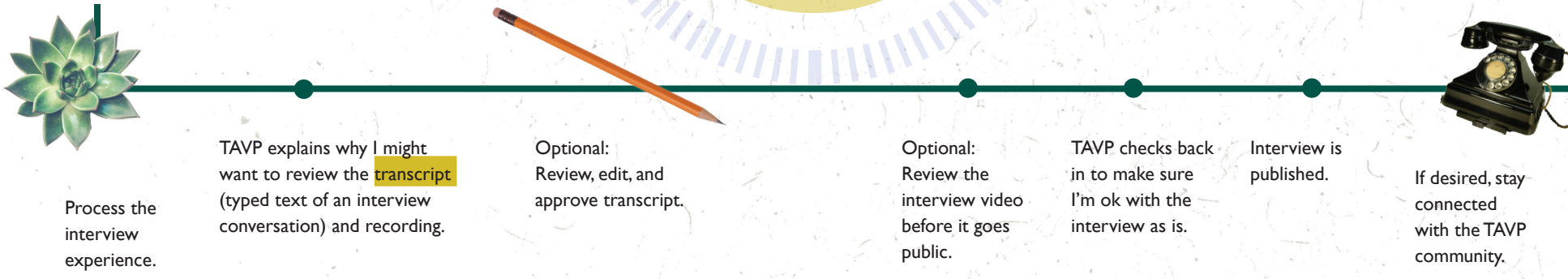
BEFORE YOUR INTERVIEW



DURING YOUR INTERVIEW



AFTER YOUR INTERVIEW



What happens before your interview

Usually between 2 weeks and 2 months

The time before the interview is about getting you ready for the experience. This looks like:

- Getting comfortable with your interviewer by meeting as many times as you'd like
- Getting to know TAVP better by meeting someone from the TAVP team
- Deciding what kinds of interview questions and topics are okay and not okay
- Knowing what you're agreeing to, and knowing that you can change your mind. This will involve reading, discussing, and signing an interview consent form.
- Getting ready for any hard emotions that may come up through this process. That may involve making a "care plan" for yourself (see an example on page 20)
- Walking you through the computer setup and all the technical details

What happens during your interview

Usually 1–2 hours

On the day of your interview, you and your interviewer will join the Zoom link. The interview will begin once you let them know you are ready for them to begin recording. It will start with an opening question, and it will flow naturally from there.

Here are some things to know that might be helpful:

- You can join the interview from whatever space feels best for you. It could be your bedroom, your kitchen table, or a friend's living room.
- There will be no "gotchas" or surprise questions or conversation topics.
- You can always take a break during the interview.
- You can always stop the interview at any point.
- If you have created a "care plan," you will have time to make sure you have everything you need ready. That could include having food or water nearby, or pre-scheduled breaks.

Every interview is different. For us, there is no wrong interview — except for the one where you feel unsafe.

Interviews create their own journeys! You are the leader, and we follow.

The review and publication process

Usually 4 weeks to 4 months

A week or two after your interview, your interviewer or someone from the TAVP team will contact you. They will ask how you're doing and ask if you'd like to proceed with the process.

If you want to continue, here are the next steps (and you can stop the process at any time):

1. You'll be sent a **transcript** of your interview and/or the video of your interview, depending on the preference you chose when signing the consent form.

After reviewing, you can then let TAVP or your interviewer know which sections or statements you want to remove from your interview (if any). You can also let them know if there is any more information you want to add to your story.

2. The interview video will be edited based on your feedback to add to your story. The interview video will be edited based on your feedback about the transcript.
3. You'll be sent a final edited version of the video to watch. At this point, you can let TAVP know if there are still parts you want to remove or anything you want to add back in.
4. The interview will be published online.

After you interview, whether it's immediately after or ten years after, you always have a right to ask for your interview to be taken down once it is published. That is exactly what ongoing consent means for us.

Staying connected with the community after your interview

For many years, we hope!

When you share your story with TAVP, you'll be joining a large and growing community of people who have spoken up about their experiences with **state violence**. Here are some ways that we keep everyone connected to us and to each other:

- Connect you with more collaboration opportunities with TAVP and other organizations working to end **state violence**
- Reach out to you to make sure that you always have the option to add to your story, remove it, or discuss opportunities to further share it!

I believe that...when you're out there trying to change policy, you're also changing hearts and minds...in order to begin to change those hearts and minds what better way to frame it than your own personal experience? We can give them data, I can tell people...that rehabilitation or advocacy and criminal justice reform make safer communities, but until I give them something personal to hold on to and to connect to, numbers are numbers, and numbers aren't sexy and numbers don't invoke emotion, but stories do.

—Lauren Byrd-Moreno on sharing her story with Murphy Anne Carter and TAVP

Tips for sharing your story

Sharing your story isn't always easy. There could be some hard moments in this process. Here are some tips from other people who have been interviewed for TAVP in the past.

Take your time.

We are on your timeline. You can take as much time as you need throughout this process.

That might look like:

- Asking for multiple pre-interview meetings to get comfortable with the technology and interview topics
- Taking breaks during your interview
- Responding slowly to questions and taking time to process what you want to say
- Taking your time to read over your transcript and/or your video edit.

It doesn't have to be done all in one meeting. The line of communication is open any time for retraction or any addition.

— Juania Sueños

Reach out to us and let us know what you need.

We are here to support you. You know best what you need, so let us know, and we will do our best. Sometimes, people just need some space.

Even if you ultimately decide not to do an interview, we are here for you. There are many ways we can still be in community together.

Think about creating a care plan with us.

For some people, a care plan is a really helpful tool for the interview process. It looks different for each person. The following actions may be helpful to consider:

- Finding a comfortable place, gathering a blanket or pillow to feel safe in your body
- Deep breathing
- Having someone you can call before or after the interview to discuss any feelings
- Making sure you have snacks and beverages, a special tea or a particularly comforting or nutritious snack
- Taking a break

In this collage:
Excerpt from interview with
Jayden Sashimi



About this booklet

This booklet was created to support people through the TAVP virtual interview process.

It was created through a collaborative design process with TAVP, And Also Too, and a team of co-designers made up of people who have been interviewed for the project, “Virtual Belonging: Assessing the Affective Impact of Digital Records Creation in Community Archives”. The goal of this work is to improve services for community members—particularly those from underrepresented communities—who create records for community-based archives. The project also has a significant impact for libraries, museums, and archives interested in practicing an ethics of care that center the needs, agency, and dignity of donors, users, and record creators in order to mitigate potential harms or risks to the communities we serve, especially in the context of violence, trauma, and grief. If you are interested in learning more, visit texasafterviolence.org/imls-grant-enables-new-collaboration/

Booklet co-designers: Margarita Luna, Jennifer Toon, Lovinah Igbani-Perkins, Alexa Garza, Juania Sueños



Scan this code with your phone to visit TAVP's website and learn more about these interviews!



Screenshot from co-design session. From left to right: Lovinah Igbani-Perkins, Adriana Warner, Margarita Luna, Una Lee, Jennifer Toon, Alexa Garza, Hannah Whelan, Murphy Anne Carter, Juania Sueños

Man, I can't remember where it was at but I teared up over...reliving different parts of my life where I kind of just pushed it down and I don't really talk about some stuff...of the different times violence did play a big part of my life and where it stemmed from. So, there was a lot of emotion in the interview...she gave me time to kind of just get my thoughts together, but it was it was as much for me as for anybody else. Truly, it does help you. It cleanses you every time.

— James Figueroa on sharing his story with TAVP fellow Lovinah Igbani-Perkins

Glossary

A **virtual interview** is a conversation between you and an interviewer about your experience. It happens through a video call.

State violence is when the government uses its power to cause harm and suffering to groups or individuals. State violence is carried out by forces like the police, and oftentimes results in incarceration, eviction, and other forms of violence aimed at groups with less power, such as Black people or immigrants.

A **stay of execution** is a delay in the state carrying out an execution.

An **archive** is a place that collects, preserves, and shares items that form our collective memory. These items include interview recordings, artwork, letters, and more.

A **community archive** is a collection of these shared items that have been gathered by members of our community.

A **digital community archive** makes interview videos and documents like letters, photographs, and artwork available to the public through a digital space like a website.

A **care plan** is a set of activities you can plan in advance for when you need to care for yourself during or after your interview. These activities can be fun, calming, energizing, or creative. They might also include a list of people to call if you need to talk to someone. Care is personal and for your brain, heart, and body.

A **transcript** is a written version of what was said during a conversation.

A **cut** is a portion of a video or film that has been edited.

Zoom is a computer program. It is like a virtual meeting room. Meetings that happen in Zoom are called video calls or virtual meetings.

An **internet connection** is like a phone line that connects you to websites, social media, and video calling.

Virtual/ Online refers to connections and conversations that happen through websites, social media, and video calling rather than in person.

A **video call** is a call made using a mobile phone or computer with a camera and a screen.

YOUR INTERVIEW DETAILS.

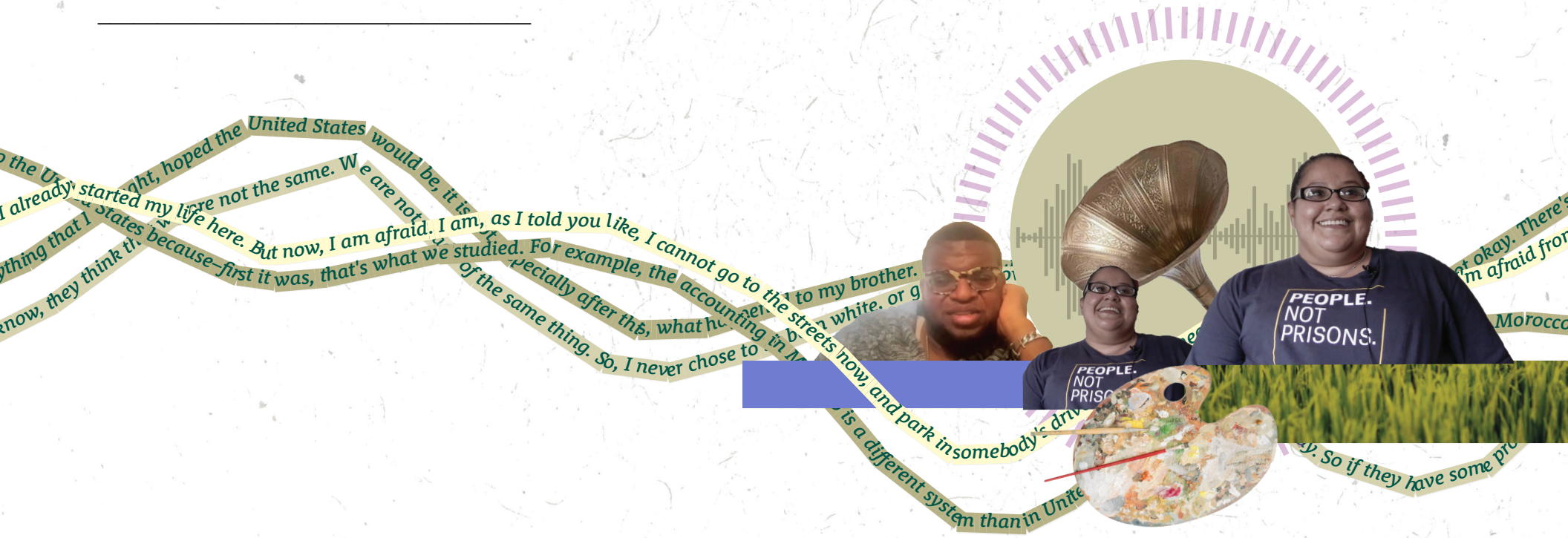
Interview Date:

Interview Time:

Virtual interview link:

Interviewer:

In this collage:
Images of Andrew Hairston and
Margarita Luna. Excerpt from
interview with Outhmane &
Fatiha Dghough.



*It's liberating,
of course, to tell
your story.*

— Michael Cevallos on sharing
their story with Visions After Violence
Fellow Lovinah Igbani-Perkins



TEXAS
AFTER
VIOLENCE
PROJECT

texasafterviolence.org