Make Me Smart August 12, 2021 transcript

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Meghan McCarty Carino: I am rolling.

Kimberly Adams: I am not. Oh, there we go.

Meghan McCarty Carino: We're here.

Kimberly Adams: Hey everyone, I'm Kimberly--I know we're here, we're here--and I'm Kimberly Adams, welcome back to Make Me Smart where we make today make sense.

Meghan McCarty Carino: And I'm Meghan McCarty Carino, thank you so much for joining us. It is hollowed out shell Thursday.

Kimberly Adams: And this is like your area of expertise.

Meghan McCarty Carino: I was sort of told that I hollowed everyone's shells out like for two Thursday's worth last week. So I am making an effort this week to hollow in the shells a little bit.

Kimberly Adams: What is your state of hollowness at the moment?

Meghan McCarty Carino: Um, I'd say it's like half hollow. I, you know, things are things are getting to me in the world. But I think I'm starting, I think I'm starting to process and move through. How's your, what's your state of hollow, how's your shell?

Kimberly Adams: Um, I am sort of riding high off of a DIY project that I did this week where I painted an accent wall. And I just have like this real sense of accomplishment.

Meghan McCarty Carino: That is extremely earned.

Kimberly Adams: Thank you. And so I'm feeling pretty good about it and not so hollow. And I am determined that even though my news fix is, you know, got some news that could be viewed as not great about it, it's also not terrible. And I'm determined to find like, happier outcomes for everything. So why don't you go first so if you do fully hollow us out, I can bring us back.

Meghan McCarty Carino: I don't think I'm gonna fully hollow us out at all. I purposely, even though it's hollowed out Thursday, I decided to take the high road and look for some positive news. So I was very interested in a story that was in the LA Times today. This is a data point

that's kind of been out there a little bit for a couple months, but it's kind of becoming more clear that Native Americans have the highest vaccination rate of any racial or ethnic group. It's a little bit hard to like, parse through the data, since not everyone gives their race or ethnicity when they get vaccinated. But according to the data that we do have collected by the CDC, Native Americans, according to this article, are 24% more likely than whites to be fully vaccinated, 31% more likely than Latinos, 64% more likely than African Americans, and 11% more likely than Asian Americans. And I wanted to bring this up. First of all, hat tip to that community for getting vaccinated, vaccinated doing their, their part to you know, contribute to, to the pandemic. But also because, you know, many experts had been concerned, this is a population that faces a lot of structural barriers to vaccination. And so looking at some of the ways that, you know, it's those barriers have been overcome in this community, I think could be, could be helpful as we look at what is a very heterogenous, you know, kind of group of unvaccinated folks that we hope to move into the vaccinated column.

Kimberly Adams: So what did they do differently from everyone else?

Meghan McCarty Carino: Yeah. Um, so one of the things is, I guess, a huge portion of the Native American population in the US, they're served by the federal Indian Health Service, which is like a very centralized kind of care provider. So even though many, I think, Native American communities are not necessarily like, they may be far from health care in their communities, they are served by this kind of centralized federal entity that keeps track and was given a lot of leeway to kind of determine, you know, which groups went first. They really focused on sort of tribal elders and tribal leaders. And, and tribal leaders also, you know, really got involved in like local media, local social media, and influencing the community. Of course, you know, as in many communities with, with, you know, greater rates of diabetes, and, you know, hypertension, and all of the sort of challenges that that community faced, there was two and a half times more Native Americans killed by COVID than white Americans. So it was a very big priority for, you know, tribal leaders to, to really get as many people vaccinated as, as possible. So I think part of it was sort of the central healthcare thing, having, you know, leaders in the community kind of speaking to the community, and, and a health system that was, that is geared toward that community with people who are a part of the community, I think were really, really big parts of it. And they did some sort of interesting things with how they prioritized folks to get the vaccine. One of the, one of the groups, they put native language speakers ahead in the line.

Kimberly Adams: Oh, right, because so many of those languages are at risk of, you know, the people who can actually speak them and understand them fluently are getting older. So and that's the risk population for that, for COVID, of course, the highest risk population is older people. Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. And I imagine that also, you know, set a good example for the community to see, you know, tribal leaders getting vaccinated early, their elders, like you said, getting vaccinated early. So I wonder how much learning is actually going to be done here. Because, you know, there's like, will the rest of the medical community look at this and say, what can we learn from the tribes? And, you know, replicate that elsewhere? So that's really cool. Yeah. Go ahead.

Meghan McCarty Carino: Oh, no, um, do you want to jump in with, with your news fix?

Kimberly Adams: Sure. Yes, yes, yes. Okay. So two census-related news fixes. So yes, everyone was paying attention today to the numbers that came out that are going to be the foundation for redistricting. And that's going to be a big political battle. And we learned a lot of things about, you know, how the population of the United States has changed. We're more diverse, we live more in cities, apparently a lot of us aren't really having many kids. And so our, you know, we're, our population is starting to skew older, which has a big influence for the labor force. One thing I thought was interesting was kind of down in the announcement, but the census, in the 2020 census, they changed the way that they asked questions about race and ethnicity. And I'm gonna just read little bits and pieces of this. The 2020 census used the--required two separate questions, one for Hispanic or Latino origin and one for race, to collect the races and ethnicities of the US population. So what happened is they came, they did all this research and found from both within the census and outside researchers, that the way they were asking questions about how people identify was missing big chunks of the population and didn't capture people's actual racial identities. So yes, these numbers showed the country is more diverse. But according to this, we are confident that the differences in the overall racial distributions are largely due to improvements in the design of the two separate questions for race data collection and processing, as well as some demographic changes over the past 10 years. So even though the headline numbers are like, oh, we're becoming way more diverse, it seems like what they're actually saying is we've been more diverse than we thought that we were. Now we just know we're giving people the space to talk about themselves in a more way that is relevant to them, and we're getting to be more demographically and racially diverse. So that was interesting. The other interesting census thing which is a little more hollowed out shell-y is another bit of census information. So since roughly the--very early in the pandemic, the census has been doing these weekly pulse surveys, where they survey a bunch of peoples to see how they're doing economically, personally, whatever, as a result of the crisis that is the pandemic. This most recent household poll survey showed that LGBT adults--and the census uses LGBT as opposed to LGBTQ or IA or plus or anything--LGBT adults were more likely to report living in households with food and economic insecurity than non-LGBT respondents. In fact, let me scroll down, overall, about 13.1% of LGBT adults lived in a household that experienced food insecurity in the past seven days, compared to 7.2% of non-LGBT adults. It's, you know, close to double. So some of the other numbers are bad, unemployment is higher, difficulty paying for household expenses is almost 10%, higher. So these are bad numbers. However, the reason we have these numbers is because for the first time, the census asked the question about sexual orientation and gender identity in the survey, which is a huge shift. And I have interviewed a lot of economists who focus on LGBTQ community, communities, and one of the common complaints is we just don't have the data. And now there's effort to get the data. So these are bad numbers. But we have because we're getting the data.

Meghan McCarty Carino: Yeah, having data is a good first step. I know I did, I did some reporting when the Supreme Court decision came down last summer about, you know, job discrimination and, you know, sexual orientation and tried to sort of quantify some of the actual

economic effects of discrimination. And that is something that came out of just, you know, it's it's really hard to quantify how discrimination plays out in our economy without having that kind of data. It's so valuable.

Kimberly Adams: Yeah. Okay. Another valuable thing is?

Meghan McCarty Carino: Smiling.

Kimberly Adams: Yes, smiling! So I want to go first because mine starts out a little hollow, but it's gonna go better. And so as just about everybody knows at this point, Jeopardy chose a host, two new hosts, Mike Richards and Mayim Bialik, to be the new hosts of Jeopardy after a very long drawn out and what seems to be performative search to fill the position in order to give the job to somebody already on the inside who, you know, seems to be very qualified. A lot of the Jeopardy folks really like him. Mayim Bialik is, you know, a scientist and really fun, from Blossom and Big Bang Theory people love her. Um, but, you know, having this big, long search process, supposedly being super inclusive and actually taking into consideration the opinions and insight of, you know, fans and things, you know, a lot of people were less than thrilled with the outcome and have been very publicly saying so. Leaving that aside—

Meghan McCarty Carino: Are you gonna make me smile, Kimberly? When is the smile coming?

Kimberly Adams: The smile is coming because among the people who seem to have been upset that the host was not LeVar Burton was Ava DuVernay, and she tweeted: "Me trying to create a show right in this moment for LeVar Burton to host and make an international hit." And in the replies, LeVar Burton says "check your DMs."

Meghan McCarty Carino: Oh, yes! Magic in the making.

Kimberly Adams: Magic in the making. And look, and look, I don't watch Jeopardy, I didn't watch anybody's trials, I have not too much incentive to start watching Jeopardy at this particular moment. And you know, maybe the existing fan base will be very, very happy with this this outcome and you know, wish everybody the best in their new roles. However, what I'm really excited about is the LeVar Burton Ava DuVernay show.

Meghan McCarty Carino: The world needs that.

Kimberly Adams: The world needs it.

Meghan McCarty Carino: Okay, so, so my smile, I want to preface it with saying that I do understand that what I'm about to talk about may not be the best for the bear who is the central character because it's probably not good for bears to be desensitized enough that they walk through human grocery stores, which is what happened in an LA grocery store last weekend. So it happened on Saturday, but kind of the videos are starting to like make their way onto the

internet. And how you know that it was an LA grocery store--okay, granted, it was sort of in the outer reaches of the San Fernando Valley so it's not like it was like in Downtown LA. But still, this was in LA and how you know it was LA was because one of the videos was taken by the actress Tisha Campbell of Martin. Who on her Instagram, yes. Yeah. So she saw the bear, the bear just sauntered into this Ralphs in this, this place called Porter Ranch, which is in the San Fernando Valley. You know, I mean, it is, it's, it's not like a super urban area. But I live in an area of LA where we often have coyotes. We had a bear that was in a tree a couple years ago, that was just down the street, and it just kind of it, I just find it a little bit magical that even in this kind of urban environment that we still live among these beautiful, majestic creatures, and sometimes they make their way into our grocery stores. Pretty special.

Kimberly Adams: Yeah, it's special. You're right. Not great for the bear. But you know, urban wildland interface. And man, California, you all, you have earthquakes and bears, and, you know, traffic. I mean, although I am in Washington, DC, we have our own set of problems. But anyway, no, that's great. And I actually went and watched the video and her reaction is, I think, quite appropriate to seeing a bear in a grocery store.

Meghan McCarty Carino: I think I would do the same. There's a lot of swearing and some alarm. I mean, it is a small bear. It's an adolescent bear. So not like, it's not the scariest bear and it is quite a beautiful bear, I must say. But that's it for us today. We'll be back tomorrow for economics on tap, and the YouTube Live Stream that's at 3:30 Pacific time, 6:30 Eastern time. In the meantime, please keep sending your questions, we're at makemesmart@marketplace.org or leave us a voicemail. Our number is 508-827-6278, also known as 508-UB-SMART.

Kimberly Adams: Such a nice bear, except it's still a bear.

Meghan McCarty Carino: I don't know if he took any groceries, but yeah. Make Me Smart is produced by Marissa Cabrera. Today's episode was engineered by Drew Jostad. Tony Wagner is the digital producer. This week's newsletter was written by Marketplace's Janet Nguyen.

Kimberly Adams: Yay Janet! The senior producer is Bridget Bodnar. Sitara Nieves is the executive director of on demand.