*Begin transcript:*

ALEX: Can you hear me?

BENTON: I can hear you, yes.

ALEX: Ok there we go. We had a little technical…

BENTON: Just trying to sort that out . . .

ALEX: It’s not quite like walking together is it?

BENTON: Well, you know that's the thing, right? Um, at the end of the day, I think maybe through this pandemic and all that, that is sort of what we miss most. Some sort of human connection and contact.

ALEX: Yes.

BENTON: You know, I have this idea; how good would it be, if we had a new holiday called community day, and on that day, in your neighbourhood, what needs to happen, you need to get out and you need to go walk up and down on the streets, say hello to your neighbours, and get reacquainted with these people.

ALEX: I love it!

BENTON: I think for a lot of us who are older, who remember - depending on where you grew up - when you grew up, and you were a child of a community, where people supported each other. I remember basically in the islands, where if someone went to the farm, and they were coming back, they would take a piece of this for this family and this for – and whenever people had any little thing, they would share with each other.

ALEX: Mmmhhmm

BENTON: I somehow feel that we have lost that as a community, and we need to reinvigorate that and find some other way to reclaim that because at the end of the day, our time on this planet is short. I think everyone needs to decide what it is they need to leave behind, what aspect of their story they want to tell and share it.

ALEX: Yeah. And, you are a documentary maker, is that right?

BENTON: I’ve done some documentary work basically, um –

ALEX: Do you have a project in mind at all at the moment or –

BENTON: I have a project – um – I – Years ago, in Jamaica, in early 1990s, a group of men basically that went to school in the US and also Canada, and when HIV/Aids happened, a lot of them basically just returned to Jamaica; the initial outlook from government and everybody was that was a disease over there, it will never get here. These men understand that most likely, it was already here. And so, these guys basically started an organization called Jamaica Aids Support. This organization was started by gay men wanting to take care of each other. Because of the social situation where one could not be public, a lot of the information was passed from one friend to another friend to another friend, and it was word of mouth initially. Some of these people who were very pivotal to this movement, are no longer here. So, I really want to do a documentary on that or even set up a website in which we can document that and have that as a space for us to see and to acknowledge. So, that is something I have been thinking about for a long time.

ALEX: I really hope you do that.

BENTON: I hope so too. I hope so too. We’ve talked a lot about me – I want to talk about you now.

ALEX: Ok.

BENTON: How are you surviving though this time period?

ALEX: Oh – well, up and down, down and up – um – a lot of you know, time alone, sometimes, I think voices in our head start to creep in. I sometimes also feel, I kind of ask myself why does some of this feel actually very familiar to me, like, lack of access to public space is not something that the pandemic brought forward.

BENTON: Definitely. We talk about going back to an aspect of normal, and I think what this pandemic has taught me is the fact that what we thought was normal, wasn't normal at all - this whole aspect of normal, we cannot go back to that.

ALEX: Yeah – what are the possibilities because, I know they are there, it's just whether we can collectively embrace those possibilities.

BENTON: This pandemic is asking all of us to figure out for ourselves what is our role in this new aspect of change.

ALEX: Benton – you and I have to go back to Riverdale Farm and keep talking.

BENTON: We are going to, definitely.

ALEX: Now my friend, I wondered if you would tell me about something in your home.

BENTON: I really found even through this pandemic for me, whether it’s my journey in Jamaica to now. Music. Music has always been one of the big things that sustains me. I find it incredible that there are moments where you could feel something, and all of a sudden, you hear a song that expresses – that's how I am feeling.

ALEX: Do you have a song in particular that . . .

BENTON: If I really want to feel very much in touch with myself, um, it’s a group called Secret Garden.

ALEX: Okay –

BENTON: – and one of the albums is called White Stone.

ALEX: Yeah.

BENTON: Let me see something –

ALEX: I hear the click click of a computer –

BENTON: – I‘ll be back with you in a second.

ALEX: Ah I hear it . . . That's better.

*(Music plays)*

BENTON: That album basically, if I am feeling that I just need to centre myself in the morning, that album is what I play. It’s somehow – um – and I don't know, you know because it is something that resonates so very, very deep within me – for whatever reason, it may be what connects me in the deepest way – Ok.

ALEX: I will, I am going to find that and listen to it in full, and I just want to say thank you so much.

BENTON: You didn't tell me what yours was . . .

ALEX: What my what was?

BENTON: Your significant . . .

ALEX: You know what? If I had to think of one, I would say, I have a little collection of dog hair from my beautiful guide dog Zeus who I had to retire. Very shortly after I went on those walks with you, he retired two months later, and I took a big clump of his hair and I put it in an envelope and keep it on my mantelpiece, and he was such a big part of my life – now you see I’m going to get emotional.

BENTON: The whole aspect of us and the feeling that we are so superior above everything else – and I can tell you being able to watch so many, whether it’s dog videos or dolphins or whatever, coming to realize that these animals are much more aware than we give them credit for.

ALEX: Mmmmhmmm. That dog – I couldn't get anything past him. Benton, thank you it’s been wonderful to connect with you again, and we are going to go walking again – we are.

BENTON: We’re not going to wait for three years.

ALEX: No, we’re not going to wait for three years, and we are going to talk about your creative project because that's going to happen too.

BENTON: Yes. Exactly.

ALEX: Take care.

BENTON: Take care - we’ll talk soon.

ALEX: Bye bye.

*End of transcript.*