38 | I've Never Seen A Rainbow In My Life
Brooklyn, USA | September 10, 2020
Episode Transcript

[INTRO]
[MUSIC: Ambient, glitching]
Sachar:
You're listening to the Brooklyn, USA podcast // an occasional audio love letter from Brooklyn to the world. This week, we're going back -- that is, getting ready -- for school. And while there's still a lot to figure out about exactly how the looks, the wheels on the bus go round and round, all through Brooklyn, USA

[SOUND of TV signal] [Click]

[AD CLIP]
[SOUND of TV tuning] [UPBEAT MUSIC: "Get ready cause here I come"]
VOICEOVER: However you go back, we've got your back. **[HARD CUT]**

[MUSIC BED]
[LEARNING PODS]

[MUSIC: Ambient Electronic]

R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy: One of the things that we have here in New York City is an ongoing scramble to figure out how to open up schools safely, and even in the midst of what is currently a two week delay. We're still finding that schools are woefully underprepared to open for children to be safe, and for the adults who are in those schools, those teachers and staff, to be safe.

[SOUND of radio tuning] [Beep]

Anchor: Breaking news here... A short time ago, Mayor de Blasio, along with Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza, announced schools will begin on September 21st.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: We have all worked together to determine the best way forward for our schools.

School Chancellor Richard A. Carranza: Sometimes that means taking a few extra days to prepare as well, which is what we're announcing here today.

United Federation of Teachers President Michael Mulgrew: This has been a difficult time for our city.

Governor Andrew Cuomo: Opening schools has proven problematic.

United Federation of Teachers President Michael Mulgrew: This has been a difficult time for our city.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: There is nothing more precious than taking care of the children of New York City.

[MUSIC: Ambient reflective electronic]

R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy: It's important that we think about how our individual actions can actually shift the terrain of education and impact far more than our own children.

[Music]

R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy: My name is L'Heureux Lewis McCoy. I'm an associate professor of sociology of education at New York University, and my research largely looks at why schools and communities remain unequal in the 21st century. Even when on their face, things should be getting better. Oftentimes they are maintaining at a gap or getting worse.

[Music, glitchy]

R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy: But whether you're in New York City, whether you're in Dallas, Texas, the question of will schools open and will children be safe? Will teachers be safe? It's still a pretty big question mark, and so in response to this, a lot of families have started to move to this idea of what some people are calling learning pods or pandemic paths, which is simply the idea that a couple of families get together, usually between three and five families. And their goal is to provide some safety, to make sure that their children are protected from COVID, to provide some stability in terms of educational opportunity, but also to hit on some of the social, emotional, developmental needs that they have.

[Nat Sound of Children Playing]

Waine Tam: The people seeking learning pots in this specific case, if you're talking about learning pots, are our kids who do not engage well or cannot engage well with

virtual learning, especially younger students, elementary age or younger ... that's been the primary demographic for pantsula expressed interest in learning pods.

[Phone Ringing]

Waine Tam: My name is Waine Tam and I'm CEO of Selected for Families. Selected for Families is a platform that matches parents with qualified teachers for learning pods.

Waine Tam: Parents just have never been in this position to be teachers or even co-teachers or teaching assistant. We're asking them to take on a brand new role. That's the value of school. That's what school's been around and effective and that's been taken away from them.

[Ambient Sound of Children Playing in the Distance]

Waine Tam: I think remote learning has been characterized as, you know, in the media as broadly a failure. And I think that, you know, because of how poorly supported and frustrated parents have felt. I think that's a little bit of overstatements in that, you know, it's a confluence of events COVID...parents are ill-prepared, schools are ill-prepared. And it happened all of a sudden.

R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy: In this moment, parents are making choices around how to provide for their children, how to create a safe environment. But we also have to recognize that individual choices that parents make also have consequences for other kids who are friends with the family in the school, but even larger choices as well. So in this moment where the conversations I've been seeing happen with parents are, a lot of them are concentrating on what's best for my child, but not thinking about that. Your child is nested in a classroom, is nested in a school, is nested in a community. And so what often happens is those families that have more means or more resources are choosing to create pods that are often racially segregated, economically segregated, linguistically segregated, segregated along class lines, which means those who have more are podding with people who have more and they're going to take off further and faster than other people. So in thinking about their individual choice, they're not always thinking about the collateral consequences that come along, and particularly for families that are more vulnerable, families that don't have the opportunity to pay for private childcare, don't have the opportunity to pay for a private tutor or a private teacher.

[Sound, News Clip]

News Anchor: Twelve million grade schoolers will be learning remotely the school. It's a major source of stress for America's working parents. Some who can afford it are

turning to an option called Learning Pods. A new survey by the Pew Research Center found 43 percent of U.S. adults say they or someone in their household has lost a job or taken a cut in pay due to COVID-19.

JPB Gerald: I think that the main problem, like the gist of the problem, is people are being given things that other people can't have because they can't afford it. That's the gist of the problem. Right. The specifics of that will depend on the situation and depend on the school, depend on the parents. But the gist of it is that some people are being given things that other people can't have.

[Music]

JPB Gerald: My name is JPB Gerald. I'm a an adult educator and a doctoral student at CUNY Hunter College. I am focusing my research on language, education, race and whiteness.

JPB Gerald: There are some places where kids are being forced to go to that physical building and people are pulling their kids out of those schools, which means that the only kids who have to go to the buildings are the ones whose parents can't afford to do this.

JPB Gerald: So those kids are not just, you know, not getting the pod, but they're also being more exposed to the disease and so on and so forth. And also, therefore, bring it home to their parents and Selma. So it's not just educational inequity. It's also, you know, a healthy equity issue. Then again, there's some that are worse and some that are better, like the people who are spending like twenty five thousand dollars on this semester to do this and pulling a teacher out of a public school to pay them. That's what, you know, what they all call opportunity hoarding to the extreme.

R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy: The term opportunity hoarding was first used by sociologists around 1998, is named Charles Tilly, and basically said if there's a resource, if there's something that's valuable, people will try to organize to gain access to that resource. But soon they'll they'll create a boundary around it. They'll keep people from getting it. And so I think Tilly was very right that a lot of times what happened today is that you were taught you're told that there's something valuable. You should go for it. Do your best work your hardest. Like, you know, someone's got to make it. It should be you.

[Soundbite, Archival School PSA from the 1950's]

Narrator: Most of us work hard to provide our homes with every possible comfort for our children. We safeguard our young. We strive to set before them. Good examples of morality are manners and deportment. Possibly, we even pamper them. We can not meet the complexities of modern life without modern school system. We must keep our educational standards abreast of the swift moving times in which we live. If we hope to preserve our national heritage and our American way of life the American way.

R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy: But what we don't think about is that the depths of inequity that are present in even the idea of going for the best. And getting the best for your child. So what we often see is that white families, affluent families, families that are well-connected have greater access to opportunity and resources. For me, opportunity hoarding becomes a way to talk about how everyday decisions that people make. Really, the allure of the American dream can actually stratify opportunity and keep us away from a more fuller realization of a of of collective opportunity, collective quality, schooling and collective say, are you going to do good schools will keep America free.

[Music, Soundbite, Archival School PSA from the 1950's]

Narrator: What are you going to do about it?

[Music]

Waine Tam: I mean, learning pods do not address equity. It was very organic. It really came from the frustration of working families trying to figure out the best solution for their children who were struggling at home learning. And families are working the same time, the parents working the same time. It came very organically. It doesn't address equity. It was never you know, it was never meant to.

R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy: One of the dangers of these paths and particularly these private pods is that they're allowing people to create very custom and boutique education. And while they won't last for everyone, this does end up being in many ways a direct pathway towards privatization and private education. Because if you have families with more means who are actually opting out of the collective work of education. Yeah, sure. Some of their tax dollars go there. But without an investment in school, all of the things that come along with them also don't.

JPB Gerald: The whole point of public school is that it's not customized. That's the whole point. The idea. In general is that you go to the school near where you live. And in theory, the schools are supposed to be the same.

JPB Gerald: That is obviously not the case. The answer some people will give you is that, well, it's unprecedented. So I just take care of my kid. Leave me alone.

[Soundbite, Archival School PSA from the 1950's]

Woman: I came here to discuss my child, and all you talk about is right here.

JPB Gerald: As specific as the pandemic is to this time, it's really like the fact that there is an education crisis is not. This crisis is new, but the fact that there is something that is hitting people in, you know, discrepancies is not new. And unfortunately, whenever people are uncomfortable or afraid. A lot of them pull up their stakes and they don't worry as much about other people. At least in this country.

[Music]

R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy: When people are thinking about these pods, sometimes I'm told, well, we'll look, we should just have a hard line and say no pandemic pods. But the truth of the matter is that parents who are thinking about putting are already plotting and they're committed. Right. So that ship has already sailed, so to speak. What I do ask parents who have made the choice to pod is to try to think about equity in their practice. This is also a perfect opportunity to think about how segregation operates in your life. Are the people that you've invited into that personally connected pod? Are they all from the same socio economic background? Are they all college educated? Are they all coming from homes where English is the dominant language? If you see those kind of things up front, you probably need to pause and reconsider what kind of pod you're forming because you're not forming a pod that reflects the diversity of our schools. You're not forming a pod that reflects the diversity of our communities. And you're certainly not forming a pod that suggests to your children. We value people who have different lives than us and we're committed to working in community.

[Music]

Shakira Williams-Thomas: OK. So Ujima is the third principle of Kwanzaa. And it essentially means collective work and responsibility. The broader explanation on that is to build and maintain our community together and make our brothers and sisters problems our problems and to solve them together.

Shakira Williams-Thomas: My name is Shakir Williams Thomas and I am the founder of the Ujima Learning Pod in Crown Heights, Brooklyn.

Shakira Williams-Thomas: During this pandemic, I think the big slogan has been, we're all in this together. It really is that we really have to be in this together. Yes, I am a teacher, but I'm also still a parent. So I understand it from both sides and being able to see what some of the problems that may arise or were going to arise. Being able to have the foresight for that. That's what made me start to jema. I did have a parent ask me why do I need to undergo my child from school? And I'm like, no, we're not asking anybody to unenroll your child from school or anything like that. We are here to offer that supplemental help in your community for the learning that your child is doing and to help enhance the learning that your child is doing and also be a place where your child has a structure to be like, hey, this isn't exactly like regular school, but it's somewhat similar where I get up, I leave my house, I go to a different place. There's other kids here. I go through my work in my school day and think when the word and the term and the buzz of learning pod started, a lot of them can be very cost prohibitive to many people. The research that I've done on getting a tutor is fifty to one hundred fifty dollars per hour with a four hour minimum. There are some learning pods that are anywhere from fifteen hundred to two thousand dollars a month and you still have to provide the space. As we saw during the pandemic, many black and brown people were in that essential worker category where it's like I don't have the ability to work from my house. How am I going to hire a teacher and then have you in my home during the day and I'm gone working somewhere like it…

[Music]

Shakira Williams-Thomas: I think that learning pods, they are important for a number of reasons. One, I think for black and brown children and children of color. I think if you look back to the 60s or 70s, like what the Black Panthers and the Young Lords, when they started the Freedom School, those were essentially kind of like micro schools in a way where they were focusing on black history, Latin history, to help build those kids and students in a way academically that you wouldn't get from your regular mainstream for.

[Soundbite, Archival]

Huey Newton: We want decent education that teaches us the true nature of this racist decadent system education that teaches us about our true history and our role in society and the world today.

[Ambient, Children Singing]

Shakira Williams-Thomas: Do I think that this is to say, burn down the public school system? No. Do I think that we have a lot of things that we can learn and do in change? Yes.

JPB Gerald: There will be people in the community, whether you know them or not. We need support at this time educationally, especially if you're able to just put a pod together for your kids. It is almost imperative that you are a person who does something for the community in general. And that doesn't mean go find one poor kid that you want to support. Right. We dont want to individualize this... It's like what can the community itself benefit from?

R. L'Heureux Lewis-McCoy: Charity doesn't actually equal equity. Charity allows unequal systems to exist. So when we think about learning and we think about equity, we can think about individual parents, we can think about DOE, but we can also think about New York City at large. And this is a place where we can start to think about how we connect up and leverage the resources that exists in our community. So whether it's a local community center or whether it's a program that traditionally runs after school, now would be the time to actually model community learning and education. So in places in California, particularly the Bay Area, they've moved to a learning pod model in which they've identified spaces that are stable, that can be safe, but also made sure that what we call youth workers, people who work with children on education, on social development outside of schools, that they have an opportunity to pitch in to the pot, too. So when these learning hubs are serving thousands of students where kids can go and have stable Internet connection, can have interactions with their friends, but it can also get worked through the curriculum. Unfortunately, New York City hasn't committed to such a model. I think New York City could pilot those things and say, hey, look, there are two or three districts where we want to figure out if these learning hubs will work and how they could. There are ways to use the ties that we already have to create new opportunities and to make sure that we are literally living out the proverb it takes a village to raise a child. We have to be the ones who are willing to sacrifice a bit and to create something different, because if not, we'll continue a cycle of inequity.

[LANGUAGE CORNER: BLENDED LEARNING]
[BEEP]
[Tinny, robot voice]: Blended learning: a noun formed by the unhyphenated combination of “Blended” and “Learning”

[Tinny, robot voice]: Blended: past participle of blend, from the Middle English “bland-en,” akin to the Old English “bland-an.” Blend. Meaning: to mix, to mingle.

[Tinny, robot voice]: To mix or stir up (a liquid); hence sometimes, to render turbid, pollute, spoil, destroy; sometimes, to agitate, trouble: to disturb (joy, peace, beauty, weather).

[Tinny, robot voice]: To pass imperceptibly into each other by assimilation or confusion of contiguous parts, esp. in reference to colour. to blend away: to pass away by blending.

[BEEP]

[Tinny, robot voice]: Learning: from the old English “Leornung.” The action of receiving instruction or acquiring knowledge; specifically in Psychology, a process which leads to the modification of behaviour or the acquisition of new abilities or responses, and which is additional to natural development by growth or maturation; (frequently opposed to insight).

[BEEP]

[Tinny, robot voice]: Blended learning is an educational model that combines face-to-face, classroom lessons with lessons that use computer technology and may be given over the internet. The concepts behind blended learning first developed in the 1960s with the introduction of technology-based training on mainframes and minicomputers as an alternative to face-to-face, instructor-led classes. The formal terminology to describe Blended learning didn’t exist until the late 1990s.

[BEEP BEEP BEEP]

The City’s proposed blended learning approach -- which would rotate in-class learning 2-3 days a week -- has advocates and parents concerned that it doesn’t put children and working families first.

[DIAL TONE]

[KHYRIEL’S FAMILY GOES BACK TO SCHOOL]

Khyriel: Prior to sitting down and having this conversation with my mother and younger siblings, I kind of thought of the whole COVID school situation as a get out of jail free car for kids, you know? But in the midst of these conversations, I started realizing how much this is really going to affect them and their futures. We talked about everything:

from academic drawbacks where, in a world so sensitive around technology, kids still feel like they're disengaged from learning, and even down to the positives of bully kids being given the opportunity to learn without scrutiny. These conversations illuminated two sides of a coin in which COVID means socially distancing from others, but often close-quarters for families. With the home now functioning as a school and office, the return of in-person schooling offers a reprieve for those willing to take the risk of sending their vulnerables into a pandemic. This brings us to a candid conversation between my family. One of the many who are facing the challenges of this upcoming semester.

Mavis Palmer: *So with school about to start again, how do you feel about going back to school?*

Kiren: *I like that we're going back to school because it gives me a chance to actually go back to my daily routine before the coronavirus.*

Camille: *I'm a little nervous about going back to high school because I know everything is going to be different. I'm not very flexible when it comes to change. However, I'm very excited to see how they're gonna, like, do remote learning and also school learning. So that's kind of interesting.*

Mavis Palmer: *What about you, Kyla?*

Kyla: *Since school started, I'm already, kind of, like, dreading continuing this semester. Because all my classes are completely 100% online and I'm not going to be going in-person, which kind of sucks because I really wanted to get that hands on lab experience or, you know, go into a hospital or a nursing home and actually work with people and patients. And that's what I would be doing in the future. But as of now, everything is kind of on hold. My advisers are basically having us just run around, do drug tests, order uniforms, buy supplies that were 9 times out of 10, not even gonna be using this semester. So I'm a little upset about that.*

Kyla: *My name was Kyla Primus. I'm a sophomore at the New York City College of Technology and I'm a nursing major.*

Camille: *My name is Camille. I'm in 11th grade and I go to John Dewey High School.*

Kiren: *My name is Kiren Primus, and I'm in eighth grade. My school is PS 288.*

Mavis Palmer: Hi, my name is Mavis Palmer. I am the mom of a sophomore in college, a 11th grader and an eighth grader. The last school semester, it was real real hard on the family because I attracted the COVID in the beginning of it, and I didn't get rid of it until June. So I really didn't even have a chance to really do the home schooling stuff. My older children, they had to hold it down for me, playing principal, lunch lady, making sure that the younger ones was up in the morning. So, I really didn't even have a chance to really engage with them. So, I don't know how it's gonna be this semester because I chose blended. Blended is the option where your child can go to school every other Monday and two days out of a week.

Mavis Palmer: The main reason that I chose blended is because my son has Apara. He needs occupational therapy. He needs speech therapy. And he also gets some type of counseling. You can't get that online. We tried it last semester. It wasn't working out at all. Certain things you cannot just do virtually online.

Mavis Palmer: For my 11th grader, that she definitely needed to go to school. Even though she did OK. I can't say she did bad. She did OK. Last year, everybody was just passed. The 11th grade is very important. She also get services because of the fact that she'll be trying to go to college. I need her to be in school, hands on, so that I know for sure her grades are going to be where they need to be for her next year. I just feel, with her, being back in a social setting is better. Because I don't want her to be shut down in the house and not be able to at least have some type of social life being among her peers. That's going to alleviate a lot of stress inside the house also. Because you know how teenagers are.

Mavis Palmer: Before school start, my plan is to let the children get a COVID test to make sure that they're good on that part. Just in case the school requires it. And just to keep that on hand.

Mavis Palmer: What I did so far is I had my little talk with the kids and tell them that, you know, safety is first. You know, you gotta wear your mask, have your hand sanitizer, stay away from somebody up on you. You know, keep that six feet apart distance.I just send them in like that. I mean, there's nothing else that I can do, but just just do that.

Mavis Palmer: *Are you afraid or anything like that? Do you have any fears about school? I know you know that you're going to have to wear your mask. How do you feel about that? Wearing your mask all day long?*

Kiren: *I'm kinda neutral on that. If I gotta have my mask on, that's how it's gonna be. So I'm just gonna accept it.*

Mavis Palmer: *So what happened if somebody cough on you, what do you think you would do?*

Kiren: *Leave? That's it. Leave. When I get back in school, I'm going to stay away from everybody as much as possible. And follow the instructions the teachers are teaching in class.*

Mavis Palmer: *OK, what about you Camille?*

Camille: *It's uncomfortable for me to, like, wear a mask, but like, if it's between getting sick and, like, putting everybody else at risk, of course I'm going to wear a mask. Schools aren't really gonna, like, leave the option open for students to be around other students as much. So hopefully I can have time in the bathroom to take a breather, you know.* **[Laughter]** *Is that bad? Is that bad? I don't know. Maybe. So, I'm neutral. Ima do what I have to do.*

Kyla: *I mean, I understand what Camille was like, just talking about about, um, just having to stay away from, like other students, other people. And it's kind of like what I'm going through right now, because the whole program is kind of, like, finding your buddy or or finding that engagement. The study group you want to set up, like getting to know your cohorts and going through this experience together. And that's, for me, kind of been simplified down to group chats on my phone, which once again is like upsetting for me because I want to get to know the people I'm gonna be going, like, through a two-year program with. And that's kind of impossible at that point. You know, thinking about, like, if I had to go through that when I was in high school. I don't know what I've done. Just in high school, your whole thing is like your friends. You want to be surrounded by your friends, you want to talk to your friends, and I'm pretty sure a lot of people haven't been able to meet up this summer. You're kind of going into it, in a way, like, touch-starved, away from, like, the people that you're experiencing this like whole step of your life with.*

Camille: *So, Mom, how do you feel about us going back to school?*

Mavis Palmer: *Certain things you cannot just do virtually online. Far as the transportation, I'm kind of scared about that. But, I mean, it is what it is. You can't hide from it. So, I was totally against it in the beginning, I guess, because of the fact that I got*

the COVID, I been watching the news, and I don't think the school is really ready to accept children right now. So, with that being said, there's certain areas that you need help with.

Mavis Palmer: *We already know that we both decided blending. And you had to talk me into it.*

Camille: *Yeah, I really did.*

Mavis Palmer: *From my understanding, the schools are being pushed back because the teachers, they are not ready. I believe the school is not ready or so to open back up. But, I mean, it is going to be what it is. And we're supposed to start on the 10th and the 16th, this pushed back to the 21st. Personally, I think probably gonna be pushed back again. But the first sign of anybody getting the coronavirus, you know you're outta there, right?*

Camille: *Period.*

Kiren: *Yup.*

Mavis Palmer: *OK, so that's the agreement that we have.*

Mavis Palmer: *I'm definitely kind of biased with it. I want you all both to be able to go out and socialize. I know you've been locked up in the house and everything like that. We just gonna have to take it step by step, day by day.*

Camille: *Yeah.*

Mavis Palmer: *Because I've been hearing that is not even a lot of children that are even going to school, which is kind of safe. So, that's why I'm like, well, all right, maybe that might be a good thing.*

Camille: *Every group goes for two days of the week. So there's group A, B and Group C, and I'm in group B.*

Mavis Palmer: *Well, let's hope Group B doesn't get [laughter] uh, the coronavirus.*

Camille: *Yeah.*

Mavis Palmer: *Yeah, just hope that group never gets it. That's why you're a group B instead of group C.*

[Laughter]

Mavis Palmer: *So Kyla with your first year of college, I know this probably suck. You know, half of it is online and you're in a nursing field. I've been in a nursing field, so I know how it is. You really got to socialize. And clinical is a big part of the nursing field, like, how is it for you?*

Kyla: *I literally only spent a semester and half of college in person, so I'm not getting the experience. I'm not getting the experience I was told I was going to have when I went to college, but that's OK. I think, you know, going into this semester everybody has been a lot more understanding of the fact that we really need to be in this as, like, a group in order for us to have this successful learning experience. So, like, what I was talking about with, like, the group chats -- it's kind of like second nature now, "Hey, guys, what's your number?" So we can talk outside of this. "Hey, guys, what's your number?" So that we can, like, if anybody needs help, we as students ourselves, we can just like, reach out to one another, check up on one another. And kind of, like, to the most, like, to the greatest extent, get to know each other. Since, you know, everybody's kind of anticipating going back and being in person and being able to meet up. Even though we're not sure if that's certain.*

Kyla: *But like, as far as you're talking about, like, the nursing program, I really just been trying to stay like up to date on like, how is this gonna, in the long run, like, affect my graduation? Because, you know, clinical hours, like you said, are needed in order to graduate. Is New York gonna loosen up on that? Are we gonna really just be able to go into a job and show my resume and say, "Oh, well, I did clinicals or a virtual simulation lab?*

[Crosstalk]

Mavis Palmer: *I think they're gonna, I think they're going to just pass everybody.*

Kyla: *I hope not, Mommy.*

Mavis Palmer: *Because they just passed everybody that last year.*

Kyla: *I-I hope not, if you in a nursing program*

[Laughter] [Crosstalk]

Mavis Palmer: *The school's educators told me, "Don't worry, they don't even have a grade. They'll just pass. Because." If this is how it's gonna be for the next four years, I shoulda went back to college. [laughter] I teach y'all not to walk in fear, so, schools gonna open, how do you really feel about it? I mean, you think you're gonna be able to deal with going on a bus, masking up every day?*

Camille: *It's gonna be a lot. You know, I'm I'm definitely gonna have to take the precautions and, uh, make sure everybody around me as well as that as myself, that I'm safe. So, you know, it's gonna be a lot. But, in order to get the proper education that I need, I'm just gonna have to deal with it. How do you guys feel?*

Kiren: *I feel that, it's a step in the right direction. But, at the same time, one thing I really liked for online learning is the fact that kids that was getting bullied, don't anymore because the bullies on not in those -- in those classes.*

Mavis Palmer: *OK, so you think online was easier for you?*

Kyla: *Like in a whole, as like, in general, like completely experience?*

Kiren: *Yes.*

Kyla: *OK.*

Mavis Palmer: *Oh, OK.*

Kiren: *But I still like going to school, normally. That's why I really like the bus or going on those trips from home to school.*

Mavis Palmer: *From the meetings I've heard, you're not even going to be leaving the classroom to go to get lunch or anything. Every 30 minutes, somebody's supposed to be in there wiping down everywhere and stuff like that -- it's-it's no more normal. It's not going to ever be normal again no time soon.*

Camille: *School not only is, like, a educational place that kids go, but also a very social place, a place where kids go to build their social skills. And because of remote learning, for a lot of kids, especially me, who doesn't have, like a lot of friends, has taken a toll on*

the social part of my life. And I feel like, going into school now, like, it might not be as social, it's still like worth it. And hopefully, like, they can incorporate that social part as well as the safe part. So, yeah.

Kyla: *They were telling me in my program, if they come out with a coronavirus vaccine, that it's mandatory I get it. Like, there's no getting out of that. So how do you feel about me in the future like, definitely getting it when they do get it?*

Mavis Palmer: *I'm against it all the way. If they gonna to require me to vaccinate any of you guys before you have to go back in the school, you're just not going to go, because it take 18 months for any type of vaccine to be approved. So we don't know the the longevity of the situation. You got to be very mindful with what you inject inside your body just for a job.*

Kiren: *Mother, I fully agree with you on that.*

Mavis Palmer: *Good.*

Kiren: *And I'm going to add something, I'm gonna bring some hand sanitizer with me. Good.*

Mavis Palmer: *Mmhmm.*

Kiren: *And I'm going to be six feet away from everyone --*

Mavis Palmer: *As you should.*

Kiren: *And just be safe.*

Mavis Palmer: *Right. That's what you supposed to do.*

Kyla: *But you were talking about, not walking in fear. How do you feel you balance him having that -- like, having to going in, um, to school with that mindset of "I have to stay away from everybody. I gotta keep, like, my vicinity clear" versus, like, being like confident and comfortable in the environment, and not having that fear?*

Mavis Palmer: *Well, this is the new normal. The new normal's you gotta put on a mask when you go out the house.*

Camille: *I feel like there's a difference between walking in fear, and being cautious and safe. You know, you have to take the precautions not only for yourself but for others. Wear your mask. Wash your hands. Do all the extra stuff. And I feel like that's being cautious. Walking in fear, it's just like borderline --*

Mavis Palmer: *Because you got to also remember, a lot of people do not think like you. And a lot of people are not going to be cautious like you. Because, not everybody thinks like you. Not everybody mom and dad is going to sit them down and say, "Listen, when you go to school, you're going to have to make sure that you don't cough on people, you don't sneeze, you keep your mask on." It's going to be that one child that's gonna be like, "**[cough, cough]** I've got to coronavirus." It's gonna happen.*

Camille: *My generation has a way of turning bad situations into dark comedy. So, I know there's always gonna be kids like that.*

Ms. Palmer: *So you're gonna have to make yourself aware, cause there's one of them bad little kids that's has not been taught that this is what they're going to do. They might have it for real. And guess what's gonna happen? School gonna get shut all the way down. And you know what's going to happen then? You're gonna be home?*

Kyla: *That doesn't sound fearful to you, Mommy? That doesn't that like --*

[Crosstalk]

Mavis Palmer: *No, that's not fearful.* I'm putting you in an environment where I'm trying to create a new normal. Because, if I don't tell you what you're gonna walk into when it happened, you won't know what to do. I want you to be prepared. If you don't be prepared at home, you're not going to be prepared anywhere. It starts here.

Kyla: *Mmhmm.*

Mavis Palmer: *But I'm sure you'll be fine. All of y'all.*

Mavis Palmer: Well, they got a saying, "Too much of anything isn't good. I can't wait till the kids get out the house and go back to school [laughter] cause it's just too much at times. Bathroom time, TV time, argue time, you can't even imagine what this house feels like majority of the time.

Mavis Palmer: So, I'm kinda glad that the school's is opening up, but then in a way, I'm kind of cautious, so I'm kind of biased. But, it's a lot of drama, a lot of stress, all these different personalities, it's a lot! And there's no place for anybody to have they little private time. At least when you was in school, and everybody's at work -- you know, such such get home this time, such such is at school this time -- you, at least, can have that hour or two to yourself. There is no alone time whatsoever unless you're sleeping. And people have different sleeping patterns now. Some stay up all night, some sleep all day. So with that being said, I'm glad school is going to give us a little bit of structure, at least six days a month.

[AD CLIP]
[SOUND of TV tuning] [UPBEAT MUSIC: "Smile, Smile"] VOICEOVER: Check everything off the list with supplies from 50 cents. Get ready for school at Target. **[HARD CUT]**

[BROOKLYN, USA TEAM MEETING CLIP: RAINBOW]
Mayumi: Last week, I was walking in Bay Ridge, my neighbor, for like walking exercise, as usual. I did by the water. And, at the beginning, that was a fine. But just in only few minutes, it suddenly changed everything. And then, we got like a very very hard raining. And that was like, "Oh, my God." There was almost no time to hide at all. So I was totally wet. Completely. Because nowhere to hide, right? Then, right after, there was rainbow.

Sachar: Aw.

Charlie: Hmm.

Mayumi: I saw a rainbow, you know, in my life a couple of times before, but that was my first time to see whole thing. That was amazing. That was amazing.

Emily: That's beautiful.

Shirin: I've never seen a rainbow in my life. It makes me really sad.

Sachar: Never?

Shirin: I've never seen a rainbow.

Mayumi: Really?

Shirin: I've seen -- I've seen it, um, like in pictures and in videos. But I haven't seen it, like, before my eyes.

Khyriel: You gotta get caught in the rain.

Sachar: Let's make that happen.

Charlie: Yeah they happen.

Emily: We definitely can.

Charlie: You just got to go outside right after the rain.

Khyriel: Mmhmm.

Shirin: I have done that many, many times. Every time it rains, I've gone outside. I've wistfully pinned my eyes onto the sky, and nothing. I think, like, [laughter] it just hasn't happened. Has everyone here seen a rainbow before?

Sachar: Yeah.

Khyriel: Yes.

Emily: Yeah.

Shirin: Like a real one?

Charlie: Yeah.

Sachar: Yeah.

Charlie: Yeah, I saw one recently, it might have been same one Mayumi saw, but I saw a big, whole one.

Sachar: Yeah, that huge one was sick.

Charlie: Yeah.

Mayumi: That was huge.

Shirin: When I'm back, can you like --

Sachar: Shirin, if you're ever by a playground with a sprikler, just like go near the sprinkler, just work the angles until you see a rainbow. One will appear if you just keep doing laps around the kids playing in the sprinkler.

Emily: Circle. **[laughter]**

Sachar: You will eventually come across a rainbow.

Shirin: Will do.

Sachar: If that's worth it to you

[Laughter]

Charlie: But yeah, when you're back, Shirin, we'll definitely, like, we'll all --

Emily: Yeah.

Charlie: If we ever see one, we'll alert you.

Sachar: Yeah.

Emily: Definitely

Shirin: Yeah, I will -- I will run over, you know? **[laughter]**

Charlie: You could also just go to -- if you ever made it to Hawaii, it's like impossible to not see rainbows. It's like, everyday.

Mayumi: Oh! Oh my God. That's a dream.

Sachar: That's amazing.

Emily: That's amazing.

Sachar: That's the way solution than waiting for one of us to text you.

Emily: Definitely.

Shirin: Go to Hawaii? Yeah.

Sachar: My version of that is, um, knock wood, I've never been stung by a bee. And like, I feel like I'm missing something about life, having never been stung by a bee.

[Crosstalk]

Khyriel: Well, I'm with you on that one.

Emily: Yeah, same.

Sachar: None of you have ever been stung either? Oh, great!

Emily: Never

Sachar: OK.

[Crosstalk]

Sachar: Oh, great.

Charlie: Am I the only one who's been stung by a bee?

Sachar: Great, so you're the weirdo. Charlie is the weirdo. We're normal.

[Laughter]

Emily: Yeah, Charlie **[laughter]** get out.

Sachar: Mayumi, have you ever been stung by a bee?

Mayumi: What's?

Sachar: Have you ever had a bee sting? Been stung by a bee? You know, they like land on you and put their little device into you?

[Crosstalk]

Mayumi: I think you would know if you'd had been stung by a bee.

Charlie: Yeah.

Sachar: So I'm gonna I'm to air on the side of you have not been.

Mayumi: Oh my God, no!

Shirin: I've not been stung by Bee.

[Crosstalk]

Shirin: I thought this was like a rite of passage that everyone in life...

Emily: Like, as a child…

[Crosstalk]

Charlie: I can still like see, when I was little, I can still picture it, one stung me, like, right here.

Sachar: Ugh.

Mayumi: But how? How's that possible?

Charlie: I was, like, playing, like in our bushes and stuff and I must have just, you know, stumbled upon it.

Mayumi. Wow.

Charlie: Yeah.

[Crosstalk]

Mayumi: Really? What happened after that?

[Crosstalk]

Charlie: I probably cried. It was -- I was like five.

Mayumi: Of course.

Charlie: And um, yeah and then, uh, it just hurts for a while. And swells up. And some people are allergic.

Khyriel: Yeah, my friend's allergic.

Shirin: Chris Raditz was allergic.

Mayumi: Wow, could be dangerous, right? Right. Some people might --.

Khyriel: Yeah, if they get stung with the allergy, they could die from it.

[Crosstalk]

Charlie: Yeah, I think I got stung by a wasp last summer.

Sachar: Ugh.

Khyriel: Those are scary now.

Charlie: They were like -- they had a little nest, like on my friend's fire escape. And I just, like, put my hand on -- like, on what I thought was the fire escape, and then I looked and I was basically like holding on to the wasps nest.

Sachar: Jesus.

Shirin: Oh.

[Laughter]

Khyriel: You lived to tell the story!

Charlie: Yeah, it wasn't so bad. I, like, freaked out immediately. I've got some wasps living on my fire escape now, so if anybody wants to, you know, get stung by something, too, that's like -- you can just come over.

[JR. REPORTER, GRIFF CITY GOES BACK TO SCHOOL]
[MUSIC: Playful, tuned percussion]
Griffin: Hey, everybody. It's Griff's City saying that I am going to be doing one, maybe two, maybe three different things this week.

Griffin: First things first, I'm gonna not be the junior meteorologist, I'm going to be junior reporter for four BRIC Radio.

Griffin: The next thing is that I really missed recording. I really missed it.

Griffin: And the third thing is, well, I hope I have fun doing this, which I usually always do.

Griffin: It's been a little hard in the times right now. I'm going back to school, which I hope is going to be fun for me. I'm gonna see all my friends again. *[00:42:36][8.8]*

Griffin: My school year, maybe a little weird for me and some other kids that are out there listening to this may say the same thing. But, we're going to pull through. We're gonna do this. We're gonna get through this.

Griffin: I think that third grade is going to be great for me. Hope everyone that's going into third grade, fourth grade, or going into kindergarten, first, second has a great year... or even middle school!

Griffin: Oh! And one more thing, I just wanted to say, I'm a little scared that I may catch some -- a disease or something, but I'm going to do this. I'm gonna be virtual a lot, but I'm usually going to be in school. Listen to BRIC Radio for more, I may do a few different things, but... let's do this! Bye, and thanks for listenin'!

[HARD CUT MUSIC]

[AD CLIP]
[SOUND of TV tuning] [UPBEAT MUSIC: "Mr. Sun is shining on me..."]
VOICEOVER: For everyone going back to school, we've got your back with low prices. Wal-Mart, save money, live better. **[SOUND of TV white noise]**

[CREDITS]

[MUSIC: Marimba, snapping]

Sachar: Brooklyn, USA is produced by me, Sachar Mathias
Emily Boghossian: And me, Emily Boghossian
Shirin Barghi: And me, Shirin Barghi
Charlie Hoxie: And me, Charlie Hoxie
Khyriel Palmer: And me, Khyriel Palmer
Ross Tuttle: And me, Ross Tuttle
Sriyanka Ray: And me, Sriyanka Ray
Mayumi Sato: And me, Mayumi Sato

Sachar: *with help this week from Thyra Heder, BRIC Radio Junior Meteorologist Griff City, Taylor Cook and Lauren Germain.*

If you wanna share your story, check the show notes for a link to our handy guide on how to record and send us a voice memo, and if you like what you hear, comment, like, share and subscribe, and follow at BRIC TV on twitter and instagram, for updates.

For more information on this and all BRIC Radio podcasts, visit www.bricartsmedia.org/radio.

[POST-CREDIT ROLL]
Adult: Can you introduce yourself to me as if you've never met me before? And tell me your name.

Zane: Zane **[last name mumbled]**, but i've already met you before. **[laughter]** A million times.

[Laughter]

Adult: Yeah, but it's for radio, so you have to just introduce yourself to people. You can--

Zane: Who's radio?