



In collaboration with
ANNE WHITE HAT

Sicangu Lakota Herbalist and Water Protector, Owner of Miss Anne’s Maypop Herb Shop

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Interviewer(s): Amanda Ostuni

00:03 **Amanda Ostuni** **So yeah, anything you don’t wanna answer you don’t have to. And we’ll kinda go through it—your background, personal advocacy experience, and maybe if there’s anything you wanna say about the general environmental justice movement. I don’t know how much—it seems like some people think of it as a larger thing, some people don’t... Well, to start, just introduce yourself and give an overview of who you are and what do you do.**

00:37 **Anne White Hat** **And this is focusing on my work here in south Louisiana?**

00:40 **Amanda Ostuni** **Anything, really. Any environmental justice work that you wanna talk about—I know you’ve done pipelines in different places, right? So, you can speak to all of your work.**

00:52 **Anne White Hat** **Ok, I’ll speak a little bit about what got me here to Louisiana. Hi... (Lakota introduction). My name is Anne White Hat, I am Sicangu Lakota from the Rosebud Sioux tribe¹, located in south central South Dakota. I’ve lived here in Bvlbancha, the city of New Orleans, for 13 years now, with me and my three kids. I moved here just after the Saints won the Super Bowl [in 2010], just like an epic moment.**

01:30 **Amanda Ostuni** **Good time.**

01:38 **Anne White Hat** **Yeah. But let’s see, I really moved here at a time in my life when—we talk about doing activism work or community organizing work; It takes a lot out of you personally to continue to do this work in a really—to be as strong as you can, and also to have the personal strength to do the work. So, at the time when I moved down here, I was very burned out and I needed to just rejuvenate and renew**

¹ The Rosebud Sioux Tribe, more properly known as Sicangu Lakota Oyate, or Burnt Thigh People, are descendants of the Sicangu Oyate of the Tetonwan Division of the Oceti Sakowin or Seven Council Fires.

myself. I had led some—I helped to lead a movement to protect Bear Butte; it was one of the last major campaigns that I worked on in South Dakota. Bear Butte/Mato Paha is one of our sacred sites, and so we were addressing the incursion of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally and the plans to put an amphitheater basically at the base of our sacred site during our high ceremonial season. So, we were addressing that, and as a result and a part of one of the arms of organizing around that, one of the strategies was the political realm. So, one of the county commission seats came up for election and nobody was challenging this particular seat in our area. And these are the folks that make all the land use decisions in Meade County. So, as a strategy, I put my (White)hat in the ring and I ran for County Commissioner in Meade County—It's like one of the biggest counties in the United States, full of farmers and big ranchers, lots of homesteaders who came in and basically homesteaded all of our treaty lands. So that was an amazing campaign with a strategy to run my name and to—'cause we knew that I was not going to win. This was like farmer-ranch community, predominately white, even though it's Indian land; our reservation borders most of the Meade County. So, the idea was really just to get other local farmers and ranchers involved and excited to run in other election spaces. And so, it did work—the following year, we did have a couple of folks from our committee who did run and win some local and state offices. So that was a long strategy, and it was a hoot and I had a really good time learning how to do that work.

So anyway, I was just really burned out after that, and had to move out of South Dakota; it's really difficult up there for natives. And the area where I ran for county commissioner, in the area's called basically the Selma of the North for Native Americans. It's very, very racial—racially divided in a lot of ways, but there's just a lot of oppression. Like it's really heavy, and it's been heavy on us since colonization came through. And it's not—it's something that is being addressed in a lot of ways right now, accountability. But that's the history of the space where I came from, and so when I moved to New Orleans, I basically put away all my—I left my passwords and all my listservs with the folks organizing, and I said 'good luck, don't call me, I gotta go,' and I just left it like that.

And then I lived, I just lived here with my kids, raised my kids. And folks wonder why, 'why did you move to New Orleans, out of all places?' And I tell people, 'it's because, I don't know if you've ever been to New Orleans, but you get here and you feel like you're not in a part of the United States anymore.' Everywhere else is basically, to me, because I have traveled extensively, is basically the same strip

mall city, and I—I don't know, I just needed something really different. So, this is where we settled, to have that different space.

And yeah, I did some—a little bit of community work around here with just some various jobs that I had. But it wasn't until the Dakota Access Pipeline [DAPL] issue came up in 2017, and when I saw the dogs attacking relatives on the line, is when I really got fired up and went back into the organizing mode and organized, helped organize a delegation—there were many delegations that left from this area, and I helped organize one of them. And I took my kids and a whole crew of folks here from New Orleans up to Standing Rock [on the border of the Dakota] to support the line [of protestors], and then I ended up going back again to do some more work there.

And I'm also an herbalist, so when I was there, I was basically just making a ton of medicine for folks, and trying to get involved on that end. But yeah, so that's where, that really spurred my organizing work to come back in. And after that campaign basically ended, and we all know how that ended up there, we just—we learned that the tail end of the Dakota Access Pipeline was going to be coming through south Louisiana [this area's pipeline is called the Bayou Bridge pipeline]. [It] basically zig zags down the country and starts over in Lake Charles on the other side of the state, and it goes like 163 miles across the state and into the Atchafalaya Basin, which is like a beautiful pristine, with the largest swamps in the United States, home to like a bazillion migratory birds and all kinds of wonderful, beautiful wildlife out there. And also, the pipeline, of course those pipelines threaten the water for half a million people, at least, along that line.

So, folks were organizing down here, and I'm new to the organizing landscape down here, right? I haven't been down here, I hadn't grown up down here or ever organized down here, but I did go to the—I heard about the opening ceremony of the camp of the work. That was a beautiful ceremony, held by an Indigenous Curandero from Mexico who came and blessed the work and had a wonderful ceremony for us to do the work. And so that's where—that's how I got involved at that point. Shortly thereafter, I was asked to become a member of the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council for the L'Eau Est La Vie [the water is the life], the No Bayou Bridge Pipeline resistance camp, here in south Louisiana. And so, I took that role, that role—basically I'm a huge workhorse; once you get into those leadership roles, it's a lot of work, organizing and, of course, and it was a lot of fun. I met some really badass, bravest people of my life—anybody who comes to do this work, it's very difficult. It takes a lot of bravery and courage for folks to step out and to get out there.

And in the places that we were at, in the Atchafalaya, towards the end there, those are some of the most remote places—and I don't know if you were able to see any of that, but some of the most remote places, that there was really nobody to call to for like, to see and witness what was happening, or even, who do we call for help, that kind of thing, so it had to be a very self-reliant campaign.

So that's what I was involved with for a few years here, until the state of Louisiana partnered with the American Legislative Exchange Council, and the lawmakers in Louisiana—and south Louisiana is a huge oil and gas industry, so we were threatening their comfortable seating here with that, and so those three, the triad, pulled together and made amendments to their critical infrastructure bill, basically an anti-protest bill that was crafted, mid—I don't know, I can't remember when—it came out of the pipeline protests around Oklahoma, and up in Standing Rock, and other states have similar laws now. This particular critical infrastructure bill we're challenging, it's the amendments to the bill, which basically took formerly misdemeanor trespass charges on critical easements—critical infrastructure easements [right to be on another's property]—took those from a misdemeanor and ratcheted them up to felony charges with up to five years prison.

10:52 **Amanda Ostuni** **Wow, that's ridiculous.**

10:54 **Anne White Hat** So, we were targeted because of that work. Like our movement was specifically targeted in a legislative effort to quell our voice. And I was—myself along with many other water protectors were arrested and charged with felonies and had those hanging over our heads. I had two counts, up to ten years in prison for the charges hanging over my head for four years. They just dropped them last year.

11:21 **Amanda Ostuni** **Yes, I saw that.**

11:23 **Anne White Hat** So that was—those were some difficult times to navigate. Like what can I say, what can't I say—I don't want... So, that really was, I think it was an effective measure on their part for the temporary, for the four years, which is a long time, but it's actually—I feel like it was just the other day. And then the Center for Constitutional Rights took up the case. And so now, I'm the lead plaintiff in the case challenging the amendments to the critical infrastructure law. And it's called *White Hat versus Landry*. So, there's three of us: myself, a journalist who was also arrested—her name's Karen Savage—and [a Marine Corps] veteran named Ramon Mejia, who was here. We were

all arrested—at the original filing of the case, there were several organizations that were also listed as plaintiffs, but as the case went on, the judge dismissed them, saying that they were impacted, like these amend—these changes did impact their organizations; but they were not directly—they weren't arrested. So that's how it got whittled down to just the three of us. So, it's a landmark case right now, which is in its summary judgment phase, which means the judge has all of the information and so any minute now, like for the last nine months, he's supposed to give a judgment, and then we'll go from there, and see what happens.

13:05 **Amanda Ostuni** **At any random time? That's so funny, and weird.**

13:08 **Anne White Hat** Yeah, that's how the judgements go.

13:10 **Amanda Ostuni** **Ok. I'm just gonna switch something real quick, but that was a good overview, and then we'll kind of break down stuff... So kinda we'll go into a few different parts of what your overview was more specifically, but I want to kind of back up to your childhood. So, you were born and raised in South Dakota?**

13:35 **Anne White Hat** Correct.

13:36 **Amanda Ostuni** **Ok. So, South Dakota and here [Louisiana] is home. Is there anywhere else that you consider home?**

13:43 **Anne White Hat** Wherever I lay my hat [laughs]. No, I'm kidding. I've had a lot of homes. Traveled quite a bit and I've lived all over the country, so I've got a lot of places that have a deep meaning for me. But for us right now, we can just say South Dakota and New Orleans, and many points in between, I suppose.

14:11 **Amanda Ostuni** **When you were growing up, who and what comprised your—who was in your community, like your siblings, extended family, close neighbors, who was your circle, growing up?**

14:27 **Anne White Hat** It depends what you're talking about. With a lot of native families, we have many different circles, so I don't know what context you mean.

14:40 **Amanda Ostuni** **I guess who did you spend the most time with on a day-to-day basis?**

14:46	Anne White Hat	Well, my immediate family, of course. Ceremonial family, Sun Dance family, later after—after the American Indian Religious Freedom Act was passed in [1978], that’s when we started to really develop our ceremonial circle, which it’s really grown. So that act of Congress basically gave Native Americans the right to practice our religion in this country, where everybody has their right to religious freedom, we did not have that until [1978]. So that’s when a lot of our—our ceremonies were allowed to come out from underground. Prior to [1978], folks were, Native folks were, faced imprisonment for practicing our religion—our “religion,” but it’s really a spirituality. So, our ceremonies and our rites and things like that, that a lot of people do today, sweat lodge ceremonies and things that now are like sort of been—that are now like everywhere, a Lakota ceremony. It wasn’t that long ago, in my lifetime, where our people were, still risked jail time. And it wasn’t even jail time. They would—a lot of our people were lost to—they would put them in mental institutions and they were never seen or heard from again. So that’s where a lot of our medicine men and women, and just regular folks, just pulling out their chanupa and sayin’ a prayer, would be taken. So those are significant things in my lifetime and that wasn’t until [1978]. So I was, I was probably like 9 years old by then, and that’s when the American Indian movement was really strong, and really helped forge a lot of these ways for us now. Yeah, so after that, like our Sun Dance started to come back around, and so the community that I grew up in then expanded substantially, significantly.
16:57	Amanda Ostuni	How would you explain what a—you said it’s a ceremony circle, is that what you... could you just explain what that is?
17:06	Anne White Hat	There’s spiritual circle—just folks that you’re in a prayer with, that you go and practice your spirituality with... And that’s like global, so before our community was like, where I was, like I said, just really with my family, school; Growing up in Rapid City and the Black Hills was really racially charged as well, so it was facing those kinds of situations.
17:39	Amanda Ostuni	What were—how aware were you of those tensions as a child? Is it something that you just immediately know, or are you shielded as a kid for a little?
17:57	Anne White Hat	No, we knew the tensions immediately. They surrounded us all the time. The racial tensions were always right in our face. There were—it’s something that you just could not <i>not</i> see, as growing up. As a Lakota, we always say we were born politicized. And I feel like, as Lakota, we’re also born, and we walk a little bit different in the world of other natives because we are a treaty tribe and we understand that we have land that belongs to us, right? Nothing—it

was stolen and taken, but it's still rightfully ours, and we want it back. We want it back. And we haven't—we're one of the tribes where the Supreme Court said, 'yes, that is your land, that whole Black Hills area, under this treaty we signed with y'all, and we did steal it, and here's 100 million dollars.' Not really an a 'sorry' or—that's like the first land acknowledgment, I would say, these land acknowledgments was like really a...now it's...

I'm really trying to put my thoughts around land acknowledgments in a lot of ways, like what is the real purpose? `Cause for me, Congress acknowledged our land as our treaty land: 'yeah that was yours, we stole it, here's 100 million,' not even an apology. But we still refused the money, so it's still sitting in the bank somewhere. We refuse to accept one dollar, one cent, and our communities are really in the highest poverty, experience the highest poverty rates in the country. It's like fourth-world developing countries, but we are not taking that money.

So, we're very aware growing up, always. We drive through the Black Hills and wish—and dream of the day that this land becomes back to ours; 'When this land comes back to us, we're gonna live here, this, we're gonna be here.' So, we do have that reality, and that is something, I think, that's why I say I think we walk a little bit different as a treaty tribe.

20:14 **Amanda Ostuni** **So, are you not taking the money because—until it comes with an apology, or just never?**

20:23 **Anne White Hat** No. Never. No. We don't want an apology, we want the land back. We don't want the money, we don't want an apology, we don't want no 'land acknowledgement,' we want the land back. We want our treaty land.

So, I've grown up with that. I've grown up in that, as a politicized—but we have that framework growing up. But living in Rapid City, it's almost like living in Apartheid, South Africa in some ways, because I remember living on the west side of Rapid City, where all the rich people of Rapid City and all the really—those folks lived good. But we lived in this little housing project on that side, and they literally put up the walls like this [gestures to our scenery] around the neighbors, all around us. So yeah, that's how it was.

But it wasn't until I left and went to college and started traveling—I even went to South Africa, and I was like this is how it was for us—until I realized, and that it took leaving there and going to, like I went to Evergreen State College, which is one of the really—at the time,

was like top three liberal arts colleges, a real social activist-oriented school.

Anyway, that's where I started realizing how bad it was where I grew up, and the racism, and I actually had—like I learned how to do critical thinking, 'cause we're not taught that in school. We weren't taught that in school. And so, I learned this critical thought process and was able to give voice to how messed up it is for us there growing up and you just—when you live there as a young person and you grow up there, you're like 'this is just how the world is.' But it's like, 'oh no, honey, the world is not like this. The world is not like this. It's just here.' So, that's something that drives me a lot, is just realizing that, and how messed up it is for us, and it's unjust.

22:39 **Amanda Ostuni** **How are you still able to enjoy the land that is there, even—you don't own it right now, but did you still have a lot of interaction; were you out in the Black Hills a lot as a child?**

23:09 **Anne White Hat** Yeah, we'd go out all the time. We grew up at the base of Black Hills, so the public access spaces that everyone has, we enjoyed all of those. We always had fun going through places like some of the national parks—'cause as Natives, we have free access to those places, 'cause we're a treaty tribe, again, and whatever. So, it was always kinda fun for us, a little joke, 'cause we'd be going like 'let's go up and see The Needles and go through the highway and whatever,' and you have to go through the line, and it was always kinda fun being like, 'ah we don't have to pay,' and they were always like, 'yeah, whatever.' So, anyway, it was a little moment all the time, but those are little, small, fleeting moments of what recognition...

23:52 **Amanda Ostuni** **What... I'm definitely gonna come back to what you were saying. But, just you, personally, as a kid, how would others describe you? And what did you think you wanted—did you have an idea of what career you wanted, back then?**

24:17 **Anne White Hat** I always—there were two things; I wanted to be an archeologist. I thought it was really interesting, studying and just learning of that land, until I realized, I don't want to dig up the bones—the actual bones of people. But anyway, so there was that.

But also, I really wanted to go to law school, to study international law, because I knew, again, treaty tribes, I knew our relationship with the government and that we're on a government-to-government relationship with them. So, the state, we don't really need to deal with it. But we need to understand law on an international level in order to have these real dealings with the United States government, even though we are a domestic dependent status. We're still—we recognize ourselves as international tribes.

25:14	Amanda Ostuni	What was the first form of activism—did you do any sort of subtle activism as a child growing up, or did you see a lot of activism in your community?
25:32	Anne White Hat	No, I wouldn't frame it as activism. I would frame it as the resistance of the racial targeting, and that was—I witnessed my mom doing that all the time, to protect us from folks doing that to us. In our everyday lives, just going through the store, we're being followed by somebody, in JCPenney's, all the time. And so, she would do things to confront the person, or we would play little games and have them chasing us around. But it was really, she was really calling them out. So that's how I witnessed that—just those little interactions.
26:12	Amanda Ostuni	Do you think that kind of inspires what you are doing now?
26:15	Anne White Hat	Oh completely. Yeah, totally. My mom didn't put up with that shit. It wasn't just. But she had her way—she wasn't a community organizer, but she was doing that to show us, also, you don't have to put up with this. You have dignity and respect. There was also the American Indian movement which was happening not far from us, so that was huge. The Yellow Thunder Camp ² wasn't too far from us. We didn't participate in the movement, but we knew that that was happening, so that was significant.
26:57	Amanda Ostuni	Was there any reason that you weren't involved in that?
27:03	Anne White Hat	My mom was busy raising a bunch of kids in Rapid City by herself by then, so there was no support for her, or for us, for that matter.
27:14	Amanda Ostuni	You had how many siblings? I wrote it somewhere but how many siblings do you have?
27:24	Anne White Hat	I have a lot of siblings.
27:26	Amanda Ostuni	A lot of siblings? Where are you in the age order?
27:31	Anne White Hat	It depends on where you start. I have a ton of half sisters and stepsisters and brothers, so it totals out to like, let's see, how did I do that count last time...5, 9 of us...1-2-3-4-5—I think there's 10 of us girls, and three boys, all through the different marriages, and

² A base of the movement.

		remarriages, and second families. And I'm kind of—I'm right in the middle on one spectrum, and then on the other spectrum, I'm the oldest. So, I'm the oldest daughter on one spectrum, and then on the other one, I'm right smack dab in the middle of everyone.
28:18	Amanda Ostuni	Wow. How do you think having so many siblings has shaped you, if at all? Do you think it influenced your...
28:29	Anne White Hat	Oh yeah. I mean, we had so much fun. That's all I know, is we had a lot of fun. Always had folks to be with, somebody always to go bud around with, but yeah, absolutely. I really don't even know how to answer that question, because I don't—sometimes I would meet people, when I was in college, and they'd be like, 'yeah I have one cousin,' and I was like, 'what?! How is that possible? I have like 13 siblings!'
29:04	Amanda Ostuni	Yeah, I have a big extended family—
29:06	Anne White Hat	I have like 100 first cousins or...
29:09	Amanda Ostuni	Yeah, I have 30 cousins on my mom's side, and my dad's side is a little less—but he just didn't have as many siblings as my mom did. And you meet people and they're like 'what?' and we're not even the biggest!
29:24	Anne White Hat	[It's like] 'how do you live?! How did you guys even live?'
29:28	Amanda Ostuni	It's so funny. So, then you decided to go to—Evergreen [State College, which] is where?
29:34	Anne White Hat	It's in Olympia, Washington.
29:36	Amanda Ostuni	Oh, ok. How did you decide on that?
29:38	Anne White Hat	Well, it was basically this—three choices: stay on the reservation and have a bunch of kids, be on welfare; or join the military; or go to college. So, I almost joined the military. I was <i>this</i> close to joining the Marines, and was not about to stay on the reservation and have kids and be on welfare. And I hate—I did not like school, 'cause school was really terrible for us, and so, but we went to the Indian college, got started there, and then I got going to college at Evergreen State College—ok, it's raining...

30:24	Amanda Ostuni	So, you went to Evergreen. What was your choice not to do the military? Why'd you choose [college] over the military?
30:37	Anne White Hat	Because, well to be honest, I smoked too much pot. And I was like I'm gonna get thrown in Army jail, or military jail, 'cause I smoked too much weed, and they're gonna tell me what to do all the time, and I hate that, and blah, blah, blah, and so I left and went to college. I went to the hippie school. So yeah, that's what happened.
30:59	Amanda Ostuni	My dad always jokes I should've done that, and I said, 'I don't like listening to authority.' And he was like, 'that's why you should go.' I'm like, 'you think that's gonna work out? I'll be arrested the first day.'
31:09	Anne White Hat	I know! They're gonna throw me in jail!
31:14	Amanda Ostuni	Did you declare a major right away [at Evergreen]?
31:19	Anne White Hat	I went into the political science general, whatever, and so I was still thinking, 'well, I wanna go to law school, I wanna see what's happening, get prepared.'
31:30	Amanda Ostuni	And then what did you end up doing as your first job after [undergrad]?
31:35	Anne White Hat	I did internships after that. I went to—I did an internship with the Mashantucket Pequot tribe ³ in D.C., their D.C., what do they call it—their D.C. legal office. And you know, the Mashantuckets are the big tribe that challenged Trump for the casino business up there. So, they're huge. And so, I thought this was gonna be like a really cool internship. [Instead], it totally turned me away from going to law school. 'Cause we would go—I mean it's D.C. legal stuff. Like going to Senate Select [Committee] hearings and things like this—I don't know, it just was not my world.
32:19	Amanda Ostuni	Really?
32:21	Anne White Hat	No, no. It just turned me the other way quickly. And then as soon as it was over, I left and I went to, let me think... I think I went to Cuba immediately after that and did some studying with Indigenous cultures of the Caribbean down there, and we worked with the Indigenous Cuban communities on the eastern side of Cuba, the island. And that's where I started to really get interested in herbal

³ The Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation is a federally recognized Indigenous tribe in the state of Connecticut.

		<p>medicine, `cause I had been sort of dabbling around before then. And then when I saw what Cuba was doing with their herbal medicines and how they incorporated them into their national health care system, I was like, ‘woah, this is amazing, and I totally love this and I wanna do this.’ So that’s when I really shifted my work from—and my focus was from going to international, studying international law to studying plants and working with the plant medicines, instead. And then I ended up traveling down to support the Zapatista movement [a fight for Indigenous rights in Mexico]. I traveled down there a few times... so yeah, we traveled down on some delegations down to Chiapas and had some really amazing adventures with the Zapatista movement.</p>
33:50	Amanda Ostuni	I’m not familiar, I will admit. But, that’s in Cuba?
33:56	Anne White Hat	That’s in Chiapas, Mexico, southern Chiapas, Mexico. Huge—it’s one of the biggest movements for Indigenous rights of the Indigenous tribal folks in Mexico, it’s huge. You need to study that!
34:11	Amanda Ostuni	I will. I’ll look it up.
34:12	Anne White Hat	Yeah. It’s something that— and so we, I traveled with several delegations taking humanitarian aid. I went with one that was just all Indigenous folks to support... So yeah, I’ve just been doing that kind of work after that.
34:29	Amanda Ostuni	So, what do you consider the start of your activism? I think you mighta said in the overview, but what would you say is your first kind of step? I mean it sounds like that would be, right?
34:44	Anne White Hat	It was when my mom was in JCPenney’s and we were—I will always remember those moments. Yeah, totally.
34:55	Amanda Ostuni	And, what is the—or what was the first form of <i>environmental</i> activism, specifically, `cause you’ve done [different kinds of activism]?
35:05	Anne White Hat	I remember one time we did a tree sitting, in Olympia, Washington, and it was around—they were spraying all the poisonous chemicals around the mosquitos, and we didn’t want those around our neighborhood, and so a bunch of us would do a tree sitting. That was one of the local things.
		<p>And then [I] helped organize a big—an environmental justice conference at Evergreen State College in my last year of school. So, we brought a lot of environmental justice movement leaders to the college to just have a discussion, what’s going on up there, wanna</p>

		meet people, want people to meet each other, and have these strategic discussions about the movement at that time. So, it was very eye-opening, just the depth of some of the movement leaders and their stories, that we brought their reality to this college setting of young environmental, seeding activists, or whatever. [It] was [a] very profound experience.
36:14	Amanda Ostuni	That’s incredible... How did you feel about that first conference, as a success? Was the school supportive? Were you pleased with how engaged people were?
36:36	Anne White Hat	It was amazing. We brought so many people together. It was an amazing organizing event. We were able to—of course, the school supported it through all their student organizations. There’s a ton of money in these schools for organizing events, and so we were able to capitalize on that to help support how big this conference had gotten.
36:59	Amanda Ostuni	That’s great. Are they still doing it?
37:02	Anne White Hat	No, it was just the one time. We just did that and then we were off to adventures.
37:10	Amanda Ostuni	Ok... So, you’re also a water protector. Can you just explain what that is and how long you’ve had that as a formal role?
37:22	Anne White Hat	I don’t know if it’s a formal role, per se. I think it’s a label, really. Water protector, pipeline fighter—all those are synonymous in this moment with really challenging the oil and gas industry. So, I mean...I think water protectors are really—it got popularized after the Dakota Access Pipeline [DAPL] movement.
38:00	Amanda Ostuni	Okay. And you were not at Standing Rock but you treated those who were harmed—is that right?
38:10	Anne White Hat	I was there. We traveled there and we stayed there, yeah, like many folks. We traveled, we stayed for a couple of weeks, and then we went back and stayed again. But I didn’t live there long—I didn’t live at the camp for longer than a couple of weeks.
38:26	Amanda Ostuni	Okay... the Louisiana pipeline was after Standing Rock, right?
38:48	Anne White Hat	Correct.

38:49	Amanda Ostuni	Okay... so with the Standing Rock experience, how—what was the most difficult part about that and what kept you going through that?
39:11	Anne White Hat	I think the most difficult parts was of seeing our relatives being brutalized, being brutalized and not being able to help from so far away, and our friends that we went with that stayed—especially on that bridge that night, when they were getting the shit beat out of them on... That was horrific, yeah that was horrific.
39:38	Amanda Ostuni	When you then went to fight the Louisiana pipeline, were there things that you had learned from folks at Standing Rock that kind of helped with that fight or—I guess how do you kind of connect or compare those experiences?
40:07	Anne White Hat	It was a continuation of that Black Snake—fighting the Black Snake, in particular, the same company, right? It was a continuation of that fight, that struggle, because we were there and many of the folks that came to support the work were at Standing Rock, as well, and so it was, like I say, a continuation of that, for sure.
<i>Video break for side chatter...</i>		
40:32	Amanda Ostuni	Where are those two projects—where do they stand right now?
40:39	Anne White Hat	Which projects?
40:40	Amanda Ostuni	The pipelines. I forget where—how those [ended up].
40:45	Anne White Hat	The Bayou [Bridge pipeline and DAPL in the Dakotas]—they’ve both been completed.
40:49	Amanda Ostuni	They are? Okay... When, if you don’t mind talking about when you were arrested [during the Louisiana pipeline fight], what was going through your mind? Did you go into that scenario knowing that was a possibility?
41:10	Anne White Hat	I went into that scenario knowing that I was not an arrestable person, that I was there and I had rights to be there. The pipeliners, the construction company was in the wrong—they were trespassing, we were not. And so, when they were arresting me, I knew that they were wrong the whole time, and that even going into this movement work here, I always, it was like, I can’t—when they were like ‘misdemeanor trespassing for stopping construction,’ and we’d go in and pay a fine or whatever, that was fine, we did that for a couple

years, stopping construction. But once it ratcheted up to a felony charges, I was not gonna get arrested, there was no way, `cause I have kids. So, they targeted us specifically for that—yeah, they targeted us specifically, so I was pretty pissed off, still pretty mad about that.

42:06	Amanda Ostuni	And you said the case is still going on?
42:11	Anne White Hat	Correct.
42:12	Amanda Ostuni	Ok. What do you consider—obviously the pipeline did not go the way that everyone hoped; Is there something that you have fought for that <i>has</i> worked out, that <i>has</i> gone your way? Whether it's environment or other things—what do you consider one of your biggest victories?
42:34	Anne White Hat	One of our biggest victories...let me think... I don't know. I've been involved in so many, so many movements. Like the Zapatista work was amazing, but that was <i>their</i> movement, and supporting...I don't know, I'll have to really think about that. There were a lot.
43:14	Amanda Ostuni	And where does the Zapatista movement stand?
43:17	Anne White Hat	They're still going strong and organizing their communities down there. They're like a pillar, in a lot of ways, of movement organizing work.
43:26	Amanda Ostuni	How do you see—`cause you have traveled everywhere, and you said that was kind of something that made you see the racism in South Dakota wasn't necessarily everywhere—how do you see the differences in terms of why things are the way they are in South Dakota and here [in the U.S.], versus maybe some of the places that have seen more progress? What do you attribute that to?
43:55	Anne White Hat	Deep-seated colonization, white supremacy, as [the U.S. being] a white supremacy stronghold, really.
44:08	Amanda Ostuni	Mhm... the Cuba—the element of the herbal medicine in Cuba, in their healthcare system, is that something that you would like to see here? Do you think that's realistic to ever be a little more integrated?
44:28	Anne White Hat	I think we're doing it in small pockets; I own the herb shop down here, so it's happening in small ways, which I'm really happy to be a part of, but I also feel like it's more realistic to be able to do that work within our reservation communities, rather than, I don't see that happening in the large-scale U.S. health care system. I don't think

it's possible—too many regulations, the drug companies have too much of a stronghold. And we're not facing an embargo—like there's not a need for it.

44:58	Amanda Ostuni	Ok, I see, mhm... But speaking of the shop, how—what made you want to do that? What made you want to take over it?
45:09	Anne White Hat	It's been a dream of mine, since like I said, since I went to Cuba and I saw what they were doing, and I was like 'I want this, I can do this.' And so, I've been working towards this for 25 years, right? I've been trained. And during the pandemic, we did big bulk medicine-making for mutual aid efforts. So, we'd send COVID care packages to Indigenous-led mutual aid efforts across the country—which we would produce here in this big kitchen and space. So, we produced about 100,000 dollars that last year we were doing—100,000 dollars-worth of medicine, that we sent out.
45:46	Amanda Ostuni	And how's the shop itself been going?
45:52	Anne White Hat	The shop is going great! It's been a year, so I'm looking to—we just rebranded, got a new website up, got some new products on the shelves. So, it's going the way it's going, and it's nice, and I'm excited to be able to provide access to tribal communities. I'm looking forward to being able to doing more of that this summer—hit the road.
46:17	Amanda Ostuni	Do you also get customers who are not tribe members?
46:22	Anne White Hat	Yeah, it's everybody.
46:25	Amanda Ostuni	Yeah, it's everybody? Do you think there's more of an interest in it here than there would be in South Dakota or elsewhere?
46:32	Anne White Hat	They just don't have access—we never had access in South Dakota.
46:36	Amanda Ostuni	To the medicine, at all?
46:37	Anne White Hat	Correct. I mean it was incredibly difficult. So, for me, it's important to get the tribes—tribal access, 'cause the reality, at the time, and it still is, is to basically drive two and a half, three hours to Rapid City, to go to the local herb shop there, which is not as extensive as mine. My herb shop is awesome, and big. We just have a lot of bulk

medicines that we can do a lot with. But anyway, so you get to the herb shop, then you pay really expensive prices for medicine, and you don't really know who made the medicine, there are companies you don't know, how people harvested, did they give thanks? Those kinds of things that are really culturally relevant for us to work with plant medicines. So, I feel like I can help provide that, and that's what I wanna do. That's what I'm doing.

47:32	Amanda Ostuni	Great. There's just not the resources to have it within the community there? Is that right? Like there's just no one who can afford to—
47:40	Anne White Hat	There aren't any herbalists.
47:42	Amanda Ostuni	Oh, okay. There's just no—oh—
47:44	Anne White Hat	There aren't any practicing herbalists. And then there is a severe lack of funding to set up an herb shop. It's like an incredible amount of money. So, I was able to leverage that funding here, and I feel like that's probably one of the reasons why I am here, my path brought me here.
48:03	Amanda Ostuni	And how is it here in terms of the diversity and the racial demo—dynamic compared to where you grew up? Do you see a very, very different world here, in terms of that, or no?
48:19	Anne White Hat	It's a mixed world. I can see it—I can relate to this place because I feel the same social dynamics as back home. So, I can relate to it in that way. And I don't know if—I've had one other Native person come in and tell me the exact same thing, so I know I'm on the right track. I was like, 'oh my God, OK, I feel so validated, 'cause I know I'm not the only one.' That was a native person who lives here, who actually said the—and was pretty much the verbatim word that I'm saying. So, it's interesting, even down to the government—city hall, tribal council—it's pretty wild. Anyway...
48:58	Amanda Ostuni	It seems like with all of the different things that you've done and are doing—do you feel like you wear a lot of different hats, or that it all is intertwined very much together?
49:15	Anne White Hat	It's all intertwined. It has to be. It's hard to separate the work, really. It's all a blend. It's all a big gumbo, as they say in Louisiana.
49:27	Amanda Ostuni	Yeah... So [are] there certain fights on the horizon that you are planning to get engaged in, or are you gonna focus on the herbal, alone?

49:39	Anne White Hat	I have to focus on my herb shop, and doing the work that I've always wanted to do with the plants and the medicine, and getting those out to folks. Mutual aid, lots of mutual aid. But yeah, that's where I'm focusing my work.
		And also, this lawsuit, this state that's still an extension of the pipeline fight. So that's still going on, it's just in the courts now, so I don't know how that's gonna end or when, but I'm engaged.
50:14	Amanda Ostuni	If you win, what is the—is it a money, a compensation thing or... what is the end game, I guess?
50:24	Anne White Hat	If we win, then that's a huge win. That's a huge win. That means nobody is going to prison for trespassing on critical infrastructure in the state of Louisiana, which has like 125,000 miles of pipeline infrastructure crisscrossing the state, so at any given moment, somebody is on an easement. Do you understand? An easement is 75-foot wide, with a pipeline running through it. And so, it's going through someone's back yard, someone's horse pasture, something, you're crossing it over the river, or something—and so it's a very dangerous, dangerous law to have, because they can do what they did to us, which is to target people and movements, using local law enforcement.
51:15	Amanda Ostuni	Ok, so basically, it could nullify that law?
51:18	Anne White Hat	Exactly. So then none of us are in danger of being targeted anymore... And then there are other ramifications across the country, as well, that I'm not versed on to speak well right now. My attorneys are, but I mean there are a lot of eyes watching to see what happens with this lawsuit.
51:44	Amanda Ostuni	I was gonna say how's it relate to any other pipeline fights that are going on, 'cause you—?
51:48	Anne White Hat	I think that it sets a precedent for those other states, and so that their movements might be able to also get the other states to drop them, or to change that law, so it's significant.
52:00	Amanda Ostuni	Would you say that pipelines—or what would you say is the biggest environmental threat that needs to be addressed, whether in general or for the Indigenous population? Is it pipeline still, or do you think there's a lot of other things that are just as critical right now?
52:22	Anne White Hat	There are a lot of critical pieces, yeah. There's a lot. You can't really name just one. All the communities are facing some kind of—it's not just pipeline. There are lots of threats to our water, by mines, a lot of mining projects, so yeah, it's not just green echo. Some communities are facing the back—the ramifications of green energy, say like

		solar, or wind farms. Everyone thinks that—not everyone, but folks think that that’s a solution, but—
53:06	Amanda Ostuni	You don’t think so?
53:08	Anne White Hat	Ask the Indigenous communities in Oaxaca ⁴ that have been destroyed by the wind farms, and it’s not a solution. So yeah...
53:17	Amanda Ostuni	How do you feel—from the time you started that environmental justice conference in your college, to now, how do you feel about where the environmental justice movement is? Do you think that there’s been hopeful progress, or is it upsetting at the lack of it?
53:38	Anne White Hat	No, I think it’s steady progress. I mean it’s always going to be there, in some form or another. The movement is always going to be, just because of, our worlds are changing so fast, situations are changing, pandemic—boom, that changed everything real quick. So, we have to be light on our feet and ready to just change strategies quickly, as quickly as we can. But I think the movement is still, is really—I think Standing Rock really lit a fire, lit a fire.
54:23	Amanda Ostuni	Is there something that you wanna see, particularly, in the movement? Like people that you want to be more involved, or, is there just kind of a main goal that you have for the immediate future of the environmental justice movement?
54:48	Anne White Hat	It’s hard to say... What I would like to see for the movement in general is that there’s a lot of—that the folks that are actually in the movement are taken care of, that we’re taking care of our people in the movement, beyond the action. `Cause it’s really hard work, and there’s a lot of trauma that comes out of this work, `cause a lot of it is very violent. It’s violent, it’s hard to witness, just the actual destruction and then the actual fight to save—it’s very violent sometimes. And so, I would like to see intentional care for the frontline folks. I think the frontliners get...how do you say... I don’t know—there’s just a lot of care that needs to happen.
56:02	Amanda Ostuni	What do you think is the thing in you that enables—that has made you such a good activist, personally, personality-wise? What do you think has—I mean, you’ve been a leader, really, so what do you attribute that to?
56:21	Anne White Hat	I don’t know. There’s nobody else in my family who’s like this. I just feel like—I just feel like I come from a warrior tradition. I come from families of warriors, I come from our culture, a warrior tradition, and I embrace it. I think it’s radical and awesome, and I totally embrace all of it. I love it.

⁴ Oaxaca de Juárez, or simply Oaxaca, is the capital and largest city of the eponymous Mexican state of Oaxaca.

56:46	Amanda Ostuni	None of your immediate family has done things like you? Direct activism?
56:49	Anne White Hat	No.
56:50	Amanda Ostuni	Oh, wow. How do they feel about it?
56:53	Anne White Hat	I guess they're proud. They're just like, 'that's what Anne does.' Everybody has their—my brother's a nurse, my sister's a medic—everyone's got their role and what they do, and so this is, 'here comes our sister Anne, she's the activist of the family,' and I'm like, 'yeah, let's go get those kids out of jail, out of the border jails,' and what we gotta do, there's always something.
57:21	Amanda Ostuni	How about your kids? Are they—
57:23	Anne White Hat	They're very proud.
57:24	Amanda Ostuni	Are they activists at all?
57:25	Anne White Hat	No.
57:26	Amanda Ostuni	Do you want them to be? Or would you be afraid—?
57:28	Anne White Hat	Whatever they wanna be.
57:30	Amanda Ostuni	They're from, they're all—how old are they?
<i>Break for side chatter</i>		
57:48	Amanda Ostuni	Do they live here?

57:50	Anne White Hat	Yeah.
57:51	Amanda Ostuni	What's the youngest—how old are they—
57:55	Anne White Hat	I don't really like to talk too much about my kids, to get them involved in things. There's just a lot of safety issues.
57:59	Amanda Ostuni	Ok, understand. No problem. Ok... I guess, yeah, just anything else that you wanna say about your personal goals or achievements, or kind of what you think is really important for people to know about you or what you want?
58:27	Anne White Hat	Oh gosh, I don't know.
58:34	Amanda Ostuni	Oh, Congress! I wanted to ask about that experience ⁵ , real quick, and then we'll do one last wrap-up and be done. But how was that?
58:43	Anne White Hat	That was—that was really quite an experience. It was a really rushed—it was rushed, I wasn't expecting that. So, it was like a 'hey, come to Congress and testify in two weeks,' right? And you're like, 'oh shit, ok. Ok, we're gonna be on the record forever, let's do this.' It was a proud moment. I feel like, I hope that my voice was strong enough to relay the message on behalf of our people, right, on behalf of the people and our movement. That's what I hope—
59:26	Amanda Ostuni	Just for the camera, what were you testifying about?
59:29	Anne White Hat	I was testifying about—I was at the Senate Select Committee on...Civil Rights and SLAPP Suits [strategic lawsuit against public participation], I think that's what it was called. And it was right during the same times that they were doing all the hearings on the insurrections. So, there was a lot going on, and some of the folks couldn't come to the hearing 'cause they had to be at the other one. So anyway, it's all politics and things happening there. But I was glad to get in there and say what I had to say on behalf of our movement, and then, also just bearing witness to—and also, and being the focus of a verbal attack by one of our local [Louisiana] senators here, Clay Higgins, and not being able to directly respond to him was really frustrating, but that's just the nature of doing testimony, I guess. So, we'll delve into that at some point. I'm

⁵ Testifying before Congress about collusion between the oil and gas industry and lawmakers in activity that violates Indigenous rights and interests.

working on a podcast, a radio program and a podcast, so I can really delve into this issue about the case, now that the charges have been dropped. So, I'm looking forward to doing that and then being able to really pull together a response to Clay Higgins, during that—a public response to him.

01:00:56	Amanda Ostuni	Why is it important for you to tell that story, in a podcast—and to have testified?
1:01:03	Anne White Hat	It's important because one, it's in the public record, but it affects our movement in such a way that—it validates the brutality and also, it sends us to prison for standing up for just the basic, the rights of Mother Earth, the right to clean water. Nobody should have to go to prison for that.
1:01:30	Amanda Ostuni	Mhm... Are you still on the Women's—the Indigenous Women's Advisory Council?
1:01:38	Anne White Hat	We're sort of disbanded because the camp has been disbanded so...
1:01:43	Amanda Ostuni	Oh, that's right, [it stopped with the completion of the pipeline project]. And you're a grant writer?
1:01:48	Anne White Hat	Correct.
1:01:49	Amanda Ostuni	Ok. Is that for the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance?
1:01:53	Anne White Hat	That was, for them. That was one of my jobs.
1:01:55	Amanda Ostuni	But you don't [do that] anymore?
1:01:57	Anne White Hat	No. I write grants for myself, now.
1:01:59	Amanda Ostuni	Oh, well, that makes sense. That's for your herbal—
1:02:02	Anne White Hat	For my herb project. For that, and then for my herb project here. The mutual aid medicine-making work. That's that project. So, I do grants—write grants on that.

1:02:09	Amanda Ostuni	Ok, yeah, is that the Solidarity Medicine-Making Collective ⁶ , in New Orleans?
1:02:17	Anne White Hat	Mhm.
1:02:17	Amanda Ostuni	Ok. And that's—can you just say what that is real quick?
1:02:22	Anne White Hat	That's—I was telling you, how we did medicine-making, the mutual aid medicine making for covid care packages.
1:02:28	Amanda Ostuni	So that's that. Ok.
1:02:29	Anne White Hat	Yes. And now we've changed directions, and shifted, and now we're doing outreach and education, just basic skill shares for some of our community—we started after the last hurricane, participating in a group here, a mutual aid roundup group. And one—part of our work, was skill-shares, was to do a medic training for tribal communities along the Gulf Coast who are first impacted by a hurricane. So, what do you do when you don't have access to a hospital? Because the reality down there is you gotta get on a boat and then go to someone's house on a houseboat or their elevated house, and get them from whatever emergency health situation, load them in the boat, take them back to the dock, then load them, get `em out of the boat onto the dock, and drive them up to the highway, and hopefully the ambulance is waiting there. And then load—they load him into the ambulance, and then you still gotta go another 40 miles to the hospital. So, it's important to share basic health aid, first aid, almost medic training. So that's what we're doing.
1:03:45	Amanda Ostuni	Incredible. Anything else, when you're not being a hero?
1:03:51	Anne White Hat	Nooo.
1:03:52		Do you play tennis or something?
1:03:54		I wish. Nope, I just focus on making medicine. That's my thing, that's what I do now, all I do.

⁶ [The Delta Rootz – Solidarity Herbal Medicine Making Project](#)

1:04:04

Well, thank you so much. I think that is great.
