Brooke Newman: Hello, welcome to the humanities research center's meet VCU Authors podcast series. I'm your host Brooke Newman, associate professor of history and associate director of the Humanities Research Center at Virginia Commonwealth University. Today I'll be talking with Dr Myrl Beam an assistant professor of Gender Sexuality and Women's studies at VCU about his new book, Gay Inc, the nonprofitization of queer politics published by the University of Minnesota press in 2018. Dr. Beam specializes in sexuality, social movements, political economy, race, and critical theory. He received his phd in American studies from the University of Minnesota and his Ba from Oberlin College. He came to VCU from Colby College in Maine where he was a visiting assistant professor of American Studies and women's gender and Sexuality Studies. Welcome to the program Dr. Beam. Thank you. So why don't we start by having you tell us some about yourself, your background and your general area of expertise.

Myrl Beam: So I, um, prior to going to graduate school and becoming a teacher, worked in social movements in the areas of domestic violence, um, LGBT activism and in particular around issues of homelessness. I actually went to graduate school to study this very thing which is why does it feel like the work we're doing to make the world a better place, um, is so difficult and painful and certainly I'll talk about that in regards to the book, but it going to graduate school and becoming a teacher sort of also allows me to have conversations with students in general about how we come to think of the status quo as normal and natural. How are our ideas about what the world should look like and who should occupy various places in the world. How do we come to those ideas? Um, and so I get to have great conversations with students about, um, their ideas about the meritocracy for instance, and um, whether or not ideas about gender are natural and what could and should the world look like if it was organized differently.

Myrl Beam: And so I get to have these fantastic conversations with students, which I'm incredibly grateful for. And also do research and have important conversations with students about social movements in particular and how social movements are organized and structured. How could they

be organized and structured to actually achieve social justice? So did you know that you wanted to work on social justice and queer movements when you were an undergraduate or did this develop in Grad school? This developed when I left college and went out to work in nonprofits and I had a sort of stunning realization. I'm in my first job out of college. I was an advocate for LGBT survivors of domestic violence, navigating the criminal and civil court system in Chicago. Um, and I was working for a domestic violence organization, but it was housed in the court house. Um, and despite the fact that domestic violence is pretty consistent across all markers of difference, right?

Myrl Beam: So the same rates of domestic violence happen in straight couples as queer couples in working class and wealthy class in, um, all different kinds of all different races, immigrant citizen, right? It's a pretty standard rates of domestic violence. The court system was probably 98 percent African American. Well, I'm African American and Latino. Right? And so I was recognizing that the way the nonprofit system had. Well, that the way that the domestic violence movement had aligned itself with the state meant that I was participating in the overpolicing of black and brown communities, um, rather than advocating for the end to intimate partner violence, right. It was a pretty terrible job. And, um, it was then that I tried to start thinking about how, why, why does it look this way? Why does something that was a social movement in the sixties, seventies, eighties, that was trying to end intimate partner violence through a recognition that gendered violence is a reflection of broader social systems.

Myrl Beam: Um, how has it ended up criminalized, individualized and medicalized, meaning that the issue is thought of as interpersonal rather than social. That the way to deal with it is through the criminal court system and through individual therapy. How did that come to be? Right? Um, and so I started beginning to look at this. At the same time I, when I left that job, I started working with Queer Queer youth who are experiencing homelessness. And something similar, although not identical with happening in that space. Um, I was working at a LGBT health organization that had homeless youth services, um, but they did not

think of homelessness as, as a systemic political problem. Again, it was an individual problem. And so if you give um, homeless youth underwear and socks and give them classes to get their ged, then all would be well. But of course that's not how homelessness works and that's not why people are homeless.

Myrl Beam: People aren't homeless because they don't have socks, you know. Um, so as I'm working in this job, I think something like 50,000 units of public housing in Chicago are being literally demolished. I'm with wrecking balls and people are being displaced. Um, and the organization I worked for had nothing to say about that. It was not only, it wasn't just that they were being strategic and not engaging, they literally had nothing to say about it. They did not care. It was not on their radar as potentially contributing to the problem that we were addressing. And so those sort of work experiences, um, put me in conversation with many other people who were asking the same questions and came together around the framework of the nonprofit industrial complex to think about the ways that nonprofit organizations, um, corporate and private philanthropy and the state we're all working together to, um, limit the reach of social movements.

Brooke Newman: So you experienced all of this before you even went to Grad School?

Myrl Beam: Yeah. A lot of people go to Grad school because they want to be teachers and researchers, which I do, and then come to a project when they are in graduate school. I knew that I wanted to work on this and wanted to step back from doing the day to day work of being in it to be able to write and think about it. So I think of myself both as an academic but also as part of this broader community of activists who are all wrestling with the same problem but who are doing it from different kinds of locations. And I'm doing it from the space of the academy where I've got room to read and talk to people and put these ideas together in this particular form. But I knew when I went to graduate school that this was the project I wanted to work on.

Brooke Newman: When you went to Grad school and you had these work experiences and this sort of a germ of an idea, how did you

then translate that into a project? How did you decide what to focus on? Where to find people to interview and how to turn this into an academic study?

Myrl Beam: Yeah, well, in fact, the though I say this was the project I wanted to write that fields in retrospect to be true, but of course when I was writing it, it was not nearly so clear. In fact, the project initially started, it was much more broad. It was about social, the nonprofitization of social movements writ large. Um, and so I wanted to write about the nonprofitization at the domestic violence movement. I wanted to write about the nonprofitization of racial justice movements and of LGBT movements. That sounds like a huge project. Turns out to be an untenably large project.

Myrl Beam: And so letting go of those other pieces was really hard. Um, in fact, wonderful things have been written in the meantime about the nonprofitization of the domestic violence movement. In fact, other people have written amazing stuff about the nonprofitization of the domestic violence movement. Um, and in fact, that's actually where the critique of nonprofitization really originated, was by primarily women of color, feminists who were feeling frustrated about the, um, incorporate incorporation of the domestic violence movement in, in particular the turn towards criminalization that all of these women of color feminist who had been involved in antiviolence activism since the seventies and eighties. We're seeing the organizations that they devoted decades too. I'm doing more harm than good contributing to the over incarceration of black and brown men in particular. Um, and that the state was doing that supposedly to protect survivors of domestic violence, although it was not having any positive impact in reducing rates of domestic violence in any way.

Myrl Beam: We would hope that social movements would actually positively impact the problem that they're intended, that there they're focused on. And that has not been the case with the domestic violence movement. Um, and so they were recognizing nonprofitization as a sort of key engine of, of this rise in mass incarceration. And so as I was writing it, um, I decided to focus on the LGBT movement for a couple reasons. Um, one, the political shift in the, in

the LGBT movement is so startling, right? Um, there's a very clear story to tell about how a movement that was really oppositional anti normative, anti-police anti-state, I'm anti war, it was intersectional. Um, how did that movement become about assimilation, about military service, of all things about marriage. Um, so that's a really compelling story to tell. And also the, the timing works really well. The LGBT movement I'm really takes off in the late sixties at the very same time that nonprofitization really takes off following Johnson's great society program, which really increases funding for community organizations as a sort of model of governance.

Myrl Beam: Um, so that works well. There's also just a strategic reason which is, that was, those were the spaces I was in. So I was active in LGBT movement politics. And so the organizations that I, um, uh, that, that service case studies in the book, um, are compelling on their own, I think, but also I was engaged in all of them. So I had relationships, um, I could do sort of participant observation at one I had contacts to, to be able to do really effective ethnography and oral histories at, at, at each of them. Um, which is of course a great asset when you're trying to write a book. So it was it difficult to convince people to participate in this book and to tell their story. People desperately want to talk about this. And so in that regard, no. But, um, many of them were in precarious institutional situations.

Myrl Beam: At one point, for one of the organizations that I was interviewing folks that they had gotten a decree from on high, um, that they were not to speak with journalists, that they should know that their email was being monitored. If anyone contacted them for comments, that they should speak with the PR firm that the organization had contacted, contracted with. People were being fired for speaking negatively about the organization. And local press, it was a moment when that organization was experiencing some, a scandal regarding a financial malfeasance, um, and there was just this enormous clamping down of staff speech, um, and that happened to be the moment where I was reaching out to people. Um, and so I tried to do some things in the book to enable people to speak out without making their work world even more precarious. So everybody is a student in the book,

although the organization names are there, their actual names, um, the people themselves have different names, sometimes different social identities.

Myrl Beam: Sometimes I would split one interview into multiple pseudonym personalities, um, to try and protect them. But there's also just the reality of the academic publishing timeline is really different. Right? So the whole staff has turned over at these organizations since I was interviewing people. Oftentimes the higher ups are all different people. I now that it's finally out, it's very unlikely that it, it's, it's impossible actually, that it would have any negative ramifications for people because the players are all different. So ultimately it's telling a story. It's opening a window onto a set of dynamics rather than exposing particular, um, drama.

Brooke Newman: One of the questions I have is why is it that nonprofits are either misunderstood or so little understood by the public? I mean, when you say nonprofit, most people think warm, fuzzy, altruistic, you know, you're talking about state and intervention. You're talking to people turning a blind eye to problems that they know exists and actually addressing something that is not intended to help solve the problem writ large.

Myrl Beam: Both of those things are actually baked into the structure and it, it goes back hundreds of years to, um, the development of the voluntary sector in the U. S which Peter Dobkin Hall, who is a historian of nonprofits, uh, calls, uh, uh, private sector alternative to socialism, right? It emerged at a particular moment in order to stabilize capitalism, basically in order to manage the worst ravages of, of expanding capitalism, to literally keep people from dying, but also to pacify those people and to make them comply in order to receive basic life necessities at the same time as it produced a narrative about their poverty that centralized individual moral fitness rather than a system that required poor people. Right? And that hasn't substantially changed. The other thing that the voluntary sector does is that it sort of, um, launders the image of capitalism, right? It makes, I love that line. It's not mine, it's Janet popping docs, um, who writes a book, who wrote a book about emergency food relief and asks why is it that

the problem of hunger has gotten worse when the charitable responses to it have multiplied?

Myrl Beam: And so she's looking at something similar. Um, and one of the things that she says is that the voluntary sector at writ large is intended to make people to sort of naturalized poverty, um, to make it seem like a normal thing. And also make people feel as if the sort of actions that are being taken are substantial, right? Um, and again, to make it seem as if corporations are, are helping rather than hurting, right? That, you know, the sort of like corporate worker or a food drive or the monthly giving, you know, I'm gonna give my, I'm going to pass the hat in my office and we're going to give to the, um, to the united way or whatever, that, um, that our businesses are, are helping people rather than actually the source of distress to begin with. Um, this is in many ways baked into to the what Luke would, can't cost the charitable state, right?

Myrl Beam: We don't have a centralized welfare state or um, substantial social safety net. We have this sort of patchwork of charity and it's intended to sort of keep people running around in order to meet their basic needs. Um, and also intended to make that feel normal to those of us who don't have to do it right. And to make it seem as though people who choose not to access those services are choosing to remain in poverty. To remain marginalized and that the people who are accessing those services but still can't get ahead, um, that they, you know, just start doing it right, that they don't have the right, you know, life skills. Um, and if only they had life skills, they would be able to get ahead, which is of course any, any study that talks about the class mobility will tell us that there is no class mobility in the US.

Myrl Beam: That wealth is intergenerational and it's largely not about effort or merit. So this ties into of my next question about emotion. So your book addresses the importance of the feelings built into the nonprofit structure, including shame, fear, hope, isolation, and the ways that these feelings inform queer politics. You write that a key intervention of the book quote is centralizing aspect, the political economy of feelings and understanding the nonprofitization of queer social movements. Can you talk

more about the role of emotions both in this book but also in your work generally general? Yeah. Maybe a place to start is with an example. I think that really illustrates the necessity of thinking about emotion. When we think about social movements, so one of the main fundraisers for basically any nonprofit is the gala, the gala fundraiser, right? A fancy dinner. You pay your $150 ticket, um, you go and your fancy outfit, it's catered.

Myrl Beam: Um, there might be a silent auction or a live auction you buy you, you bid on things that you probably don't really even need, but it feels like, you know, you're doing a good service for the organization. Um, and then there will be a set of speakers. So in my years working at homeless youth organizations and talking with people, I'm the, one of the features of this is the client narrative, right? A young person who is, who is in the shelter, who will be brought over by a staff person, um, who gets up and tells their story. I arrived at the shelter with nothing but the clothes on my back and I was given a laundry hamper full of clothes and sheets and it was the most I'd ever had in my whole life. And it's because of you, right? And there's an expectation that they tell the story to make the people who are in the room feel good about themselves.

Myrl Beam: They've done a good, a good work, right? And, and when the right emotions are triggered, people's pocket books open. Right? Right. And because it feels good to be able to help someone that is not. I'm not, I'm not at all suggesting that that feeling is a bad feeling. It's not a substitute for, for social change. However, um, which is how we have approached it, right? So the young person is imagined to be grateful and has to perform that gratefulness, um, in order to sort of lubricate the wallets of the wealthy individuals who are paying them $150 or whose, whose corporate employers have bought a table and they're coming as, as part of their, you know, like by corporation is so good. Look at the things that it supports and it's pedagogical and a whole bunch of ways, right? Um, the, the people who are there are, are learning to feel better than our learning to feel like they have done they, they've run their lives correctly, right?

Myrl Beam: They're in a position to help and it's because have made wise choices. Um, and so you know, they have something to offer. They have something to teach people whose lives are not working out like their lives, but also the young person is, is that the system is structured to teach them to be grateful. Right? And if they're not grateful, I'm. The system tells us that they did as their moral failure, right? If their lack of gratefulness that is keeping them locked in poverty, right? It also does something for the staff who are there, right? It teaches them about how, how these sort of relationships of power are supposed to be structured. Right? The staff can't actually afford to attend the event either. Right? Nobody who works at a far as a frontline worker at a shelter can afford $150 dinner that's not in their reach.

Myrl Beam: And when I was a 28 year old, 26 year old, I'm case worker I could not afford. And the way it works, funnily enough, is that a wealthy donor is asked by the organization to buy staff tickets and then they're handed out to the staff, right? If you're lucky enough to be able to attend, um, and work the event basically. And again, your job is to communicate the gratefulness of the young people to the donors and to make them feel good. Right? Without you, we really wouldn't be able to do this work. And it's so important, you know, let me tell you a story of so and so who, because of our ged class is now able to apply for college and Blah, blah, blah, right?

Myrl Beam: Baked in at every level are a series of emotional transactions, right? That the organization converts into financial transactions, but it's feelings that move those dollars. And that's particular to the way we've organized social care in the U. S right? We could just tax people, it could just be that if you have wealth beyond a certain level, you pay taxes on it and that money is redistributed. But that's not the way that we have organized, um, care in the US. And that system is naturalized through feelings again, right? We, um, imagine that people who have wealth have it because of their merit and their hard work. And, um, the idea of taxing them is, is devalued through, again, a set of effective postures, right? That, um, it's class warfare, it's supporting the lazy. It's, um, you know, welfare Queens taking advantage, right? All of those kinds

of narratives about, about wealth and poverty that are fundamentally about, about feeling.

Brooke Newman: That's fascinating. So did this lead you to develop your four major themes in your book: compassion, community, capital, and crisis and how you see emotions playing a role in all with all of these different themes?

Myrl Beam: Yeah, it was initially just um, compassion, community and capital. Um, and as I was working with the final organization, the sort of reflection of crisis operating on a whole bunch of levels, a number of things were happening at the same time as I was working on the final organization. Many of the spaces that I had already been working at, we're in crisis, right? And that crisis was a reflection of and an amplification of the broader social crisis that everyone I'm involved in the organization, but most especially young people were experiencing. What timeframe was this when you were doing this? Ethnographic research?

Myrl Beam: 2008 through 2012, primarily. Okay. So during President Obama's first term, which is fascinating because you would think that that would be a moment of, um, ease, right? A moment where people's lives are getting better, but it wasn't, um, because that's not how neo liberalism works. Neo Liberalism doesn't get better under Democrats. There was also another piece happening that's worth mentioning, which is that maybe perhaps one of the things we'll talk about is, um, the fight for marriage equality. One of the unintended, perhaps consequences of marriage equality is that it took a lot of money from other kinds of queer organizing. So a lot of queer organizations who didn't do marriage equality advocacy, we're experiencing a lot of financial distress in that same period because many of their donors were evaporating because they were moving their money to different things. So the organizations were experiencing crisis.

Myrl Beam: The people who access the organizations who are experiencing crisis, the staff at all the organizations were in crisis. So that piece was added later. It wasn't, it didn't come from my sort of theoretical understanding of how nonprofits work at came from what is happening on the

ground. Yeah. The other pieces I think are, we're sort of ideas that I wanted to explore in these spaces, right? Compassion is, I think, the most readily apparent affective posture in the voluntary sector. Right. Anybody who has ever worked at a nonprofit will have someone say, especially like their older family members, you were doing such good work. Right? And that's the way we think about nonprofits. The sort of benevolent, fuzzy, you know, good works. It comes from a sort of Christian, um, idea of good works. It's the idea of compassion. It's the idea of, um, sort of kindness to strangers, strangers, but, but there's a power dynamic that's implied, right?

Myrl Beam: It's not just strangers, it's, um, it's about your, like moral lessors almost, you know, like we will have compassion to those who need to be to be pulled up, right? Um, and that, that language is used, you know, we're gonna to raise people up through these organizations. Um, so compassion community, which is an interesting one because we think of community as, as a actually a good part of social movements, right? But community in and of itself has to be a sort of policing gesture because anytime you create an us, you are, are creating them. And so I was interested in looking at the way community functions within nonprofit spaces to expose those who were deemed outside of it to all sorts of forms of policing. Um, and to think about how community Soo Kwan, who wrote a fantastic book called uncivil youth talks about community as a sort of affirmative governmentality, a sort of positive identification that underscores, enables invites, even the policing of those who fall outside.

Myrl Beam: Capital is not something that we often think of as a feeling, right? We think of it as, as a thing, as a system. Um, but of course capitalism and capital itself works through feeling it. It doesn't work without feeling. Um, and so I wanted to think about how nonprofits, especially as they are pushed towards becoming more and more corporate in order to access donor funds. Um, what sets of feelings does that invite? So, speaking of feelings, so how have feelings changed and the Lgtbq community since 2015 and the Supreme Court decision that legalize same sex marriage and the election of president trump and his explicitly anti queer policies? That's a great question. Um, so as I was

finishing this book, um, marriage was legalized through the obergefell versus Hodges Supreme Court decision and many people within the queer movement thought that this was a moment of profound success, right? Um, and I had felt for a long time like it was sort of an inevitability and not wanting to feel,

Myrl Beam: not only to, not feel excited about, but to feel a sort of sense of loss around that, um, all, all of ways of imagining queer life were being foreclosed. I'm in this moment of inclusion into a system that many of us had no desire to be included into, um, and then of course to follow so quickly on the heels of that seeming success, the election of someone who, um, whose party very explicitly does not understand queer families as families and does not believe that queer people are fully human, right? Um, to then have these new found, um, uh, qualities, so clearly under threat, um, is doing something that I think is, is particularly dangerous. It's, it's causing queer movement organizations to sort of double down on these various simulationist a goals instead of the broader goals of social change. Right? So in many ways, I think the, because the movement became so mainstream, focused on such a narrow political goals, we gave up building a massive, a mass mobilization for progressive social change.

Myrl Beam: And I think in many ways it's that application that allowed the rise of sort of fascist populism in the form of trump. And then to double down on these narrow political goals, which I understand the, the, the feeling of procarity that people have when they are not sure that they will be able to be the legal parents to their children. That's a precarious feeling. I understand wanting to focus on that, but the broader goal of fighting fascism and, and building a progressive mass mobilization that can actually ensure safety for, um, a, a broad swath of queer people for whom marriage is not, that's not the thing that's gonna make them safer. The thing that's going to make them safer is, um, housing is, um, an end to police violence is immigration and an end to the sort of intensity of policing, of undocumented people. For instance, if those things are at the center of the movement, I think other kinds of protections will follow, but not the other way around.

Myrl Beam: If you put the, the narrow political goals at the center, the broad mobilization doesn't happen. But if you do a broad mass mobilization around, um, those most marginalized than the specific protections will happen because of the narrow goals become enough. I mean, they become basically tokens, have you've gotten something and gotten something that's all you need and, and some people that is true, right? But those people were already doing fine. Right? Like I have enough resources that I will be, I will be fine likely, right. Um, but other folks are not fine right now and queer movements need to be focused on those folks.

Brooke Newman: Has this issue come up in your classes recently since the election of president trump? Do you see a lot of concern among your students?

Yes. Um, in particular, um, my undocumented students in my international students, right? It's, it's students who immediately, right after his election, it was students, international students who were from the seven countries who, um, their families potentially wouldn't, they would not be able to see their families.

Myrl Beam: Right. If they left the country, they couldn't come back there. They would not be able to see their families. They might be deported. Right. And then the question of undocumented students who attend VCU, um, under the deferred action for childhood arrivals, they're sort of precarious situation. And then it's broadened even more since then. Right. That we have just in general, students of color are experiencing profound procarity right now. Um, and so it's the queer students of color that I think are our most under siege. So in terms of your academic research and teaching how, I mean since we're talking about teaching, how is your work as an activist and as someone who has worked in all of these nonprofit organizations, how does that influence both the way you teach but also the way you think about your research and the connections between these different segments of your life?

Myrl Beam: Yeah, so as I said, I came to this work right away when I graduated college because I was a sort of radical student activist in college and I imagined going to work for the

movement and I ended up at this kind of crappy job as a domestic violence advocate in the courthouse. And, um, I am really grateful to be able to work with students to think about the structure of social movements so that as they go out into duke to do social movement work, likely in the space of nonprofits, they can think critically about the constraints that they're organizations face, that it's less of a betrayal, I think then they're informed, yeah. Then what I experienced and that they can recognize that organizations are not movements, right? Movements rely on organizations, but they also need to be broader than organizations, right? The united way is not going to usher in a more egalitarian world, right?

Myrl Beam: The united way is intended to keep people alive who are being killed by capitalism. And so when we go out and do that work, that's necessary work. It allows people to survive the systems as they are now. But it doesn't do anything to change the systems, to imagine a better world, to usher in a better world. Um, that has to be different work. And so I think in my teaching, I teach a service learning course called the activism practicum that pairs students with local progressive social change organizations. Like the Virginia Anti Violence Project side by side Virginia Center for inclusive communities. Um, the peace education center, a number of local fantastic, um, social justice nonprofits and students intern at those organizations for the semester and they approached their organizations both as interns and volunteers, but also as an ethnography years who are doing participant observation and alongside their work in the organization, the relationship building that they're doing this sort of on the ground work with, with clients.

Myrl Beam: Sometimes they get to shadow board meetings. Oftentimes they get to help do these gala fundraisers. We're also reading in the class about the history of the voluntary sector, the contemporary critiques of, of the nonprofit industrial complex. And it's great they get to think about, you know, why is it that organizations working, for instance, in the east end in Richmond, um, we're working with communities of color, low income communities of color who are experiencing all these adverse health outcomes. Why might that organization be

funded by Altria, which is Philip Morris rebranded, right? A corporation that creates these social problems with one hand and then funds the nonprofits that are trying to address them with the other. Right. So we get to have great conversations about how these broad sort of theoretical themes are playing out in their very communities, which is excellent. And then in terms of how my teaching informs my activism or how my sort of activist work informs my research.

Myrl Beam: I think one of the things that's happening post-marriage is that many of these same organizations that we're working on marriage, there's now this sort of massive infrastructure that built up over the last 20 years organizations but primarily money, right? Funders. What are these funders doing now? Post-Marriage. And so one of the things that my, where my work is going right now is looking at what I'm calling the marriage machine after marriage. And interestingly the, the issue that appears to be coming to the fore is trans issues. And I'll be interested to see how this infrastructure frames articulates, mobilizes trans individuals, trans narratives in order to, um, to fight for what they might imagine trans equality to be or inclusion.

Brooke Newman: I was going to ask you about your next project, but also could you talk a little bit more about the marriage machine?

Yeah. So nonprofits, so social movements are largely operate through the nonprofit system, right? This is a sort of massive infrastructure of people, organization, staff members, donor databases, um, a funders, funder, collaboratives, I'm funds within funds, right? Um, and this is a infrastructure on the scale of, of billions of dollars. So

Myrl Beam: all of this by, by 2015 to a large extent, this was solely focused on marriage equality that rose to be the issue that, especially the big national organizations and the high end funders were focused on where, what, what are they doing now? Right? This mobilization that became so focused on, um, electoral and judicial wins, they became very narrowly focused, is it, um, capacious and flexible enough to do other things and in particular to do more,

um, intersectional things, things that would help more people. And, and now that, that now that we're living in this particular political context, that'll be an even more interesting question.

Brooke Newman: How do you see yourself doing the research for this next project? This project?

Myrl Beam: I think because it's focused on more national organizations is going to be largely interview based.

Myrl Beam: It'll be relational in the way that my work always is. Um, in terms of who's doing the work in this area, put me in contact with the person you work with at this organization. Who are your main funders for that? Reach out to those funders, you know, what, what led you to this area of funding? Who are the major players you know, how to, how are they all fitting together? Um, but it also, because it's national, it's not pr. I think gonna be ethnographic in the same way. It won't be. I won't be in the organizations that I, that I'll be writing about. It'll be interview based as I, as I try and work with the people who are doing the work in the many spaces that, that work is being done.

Brooke Newman: That sounds like an interesting project and I it just imagine you writing this project and interviewing people as we get closer to the next presidential election and how things might change between starting this project and wrapping it up in the near future.

Myrl Beam: Yes, and as we are having to, as organizations are choosing to double down on fighting for the protections that many of us on the queer left were resistant to in the first place.

Myrl Beam: Trans access to the military is a great example of something that most trans people thought was a stupid goal to begin with. But now of course all of these major national organizations are fighting for it again because, um, of the, of the Trans military ban under trump. Right? And so we have to double down and have fights that potentially are not worth having, but are being sort of brought to these organizations.

Brooke Newman: Thank you for speaking with me today, Dr. Beam and thank you for listening to the humanities research center's meet VCU Authors podcast series.