

KATE RAMSEYER: Hello, my name is Kate Ramseyer and this is the *Vox Insider*. Today, I'll be talking to Vox writers Katie Grawitch and Tyler White about the process behind writing their stories. Katie wrote about the Columbia safe haven ordinance, which protects LGBTQ plus people from statewide or federal legislation that may try to strip them of their rights. Tyler talked about Dark Room Records, a recording studio that gives high schoolers a chance to learn how to produce music. Take a listen.

RAMSEYER: So could you guys both tell me about the stories that we're going to be talking about today on your role in these stories?

KATIE GRAWITCH: Yeah, so I did an FAQ on Columbia's safe haven ordinance. That ordinance protects LGBTQ plus people from statewide or federal legislation that may try to strip them of their rights, including gender affirming care and restroom laws and drag performances. I was the person who pitched this story and reported it and wrote all of the drafts, but I had four editors, Ava Orr, Olivia, Maillet, Heather Isherwood and Jennifer Rowe help me with this.

TYLER WHITE: Yeah. And I did a story on darkroom records, which is essentially a free recording studio for any Columbia Public School student. It's there's two different studios. One is in Hickman, the other is at battle. And the whole program is essentially just allowing students to have hands on opportunities with recording music and getting involved with audio production stuff like that. They've also started a class pretty recently as well regarded just audio and music production and stuff like that. And so I found it because I was looking at Vox stories, saw that there was a story on this back in 2016 at Q and A 2018 I was like, man, it's been a while. Might as well try and see if there's been anything else. And so I just kind of talked with the two teachers who run it, and talked with a couple of the students who are in bands who have worked there. So yeah.

RAMSEYER: So what made you, both of you, want to cover these kinds of stories. Well, when I was researching story ideas for this semester, I became fixated on the safe haven ordinance because I did not understand how you could enforce a safe haven. It seemed like such a nebulous idea to me, and so I decided to pursue this to clarify what the heck even is an ordinance. How do you enforce that at a city level? And then how could that be complicated by state level and federal level laws? And for me, I just kind of focused on, like I said at the beginning, I focused on everything music. I always love looking at music. And interestingly, my stories this semester have primarily focused on music accessibility. And so I was kind of rolling with that.

WHITE: And for me, I got into it just because music accessibility is a huge thing for me as a musician myself. I mean, the hardest thing is to get access to music. It's expensive, or it's just hard to find places to be. And so that was kind of the reason why I found the story in the first place. Was just this idea of, like, music accessibility and how it worked for the younger generation.

RAMSEYER: Was there anything that really surprised you when you started interviewing people?

GRAWITCH: I think the biggest thing that surprised me was that I came into this story looking for answers, and I just came out with more questions.

I was surprised at how little precedence there was for an ordinance like this. Typically, with other safe haven ordinances around the country, they've been struck down as like whole pieces if they've been struck down, whereas this ordinance is severable, which means that if one part is struck down, then the other parts still get to stay intact. So I think the biggest question for me going forward is just, how is this going to play out with the legislature, with Missouri State Legislature, and we just don't know how that's going to look until it gets there.

RAMSEYER: Tyler, same thing for you. Did you have any expectations about like, how you thought the process would go, or how you thought that dark room would impact like high schoolers and stuff before you went in. And was there anything that surprised you?

WHITE: Yeah, so obviously, like I said, there was a story back in 2016 and a Q and A in 2018 and so I was kind of rolling off of those with the information, and at the time that was relatively recent in terms of dark room opening in 2016 that was just like a year or two after it opened. And then 2018 not much had changed aside from internships. And so I knew that there was that idea of internships that hadn't been talked about much. So I was ready to go in with questions about that. I gave Jared Smith a call one day and just kind of briefly talked with him about darkroom and kind of the process behind it, and he was telling me, you know, all these different things that had opened up. I mean, they started that music production class, and production class, which is awesome. I've I have never heard of that in, like, a high school class before, which I think is cool, and stuff like that. And so my expectation was going in was essentially just getting more information about stuff that hadn't been talked about as much on the previous stories. I was able to talk to students that I wouldn't have been able to talk to before, in the sense of, like, having that performer and internship background, and kind of understanding both sides of it, I was able to talk with students who had been impacted by the class itself that didn't even exist at the time of those other stories. And so I walked in there with expectations of just a recording studio, and I

ended up walking away with something much more than just a recording studio. There was a lot more to it, in terms of the performances, the internships, all the classes, stuff like that. So it was really cool just being able to go in and realize how much more there was to something that's literally called a studio.

RAMSEYER: That was Katie Grawitch and Tyler White on this episode of the Vox Insider. The articles we discussed today are live now on Vox Magazine dot com. Make sure to check it out, and keep tuning in to Vox Insider.