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Participants:
PHOEBE WOLFSKILL
KISHA TANDY
JERE ODELL
CHRISTOPHER NEWELL
WALTON MUYUMBA
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Preface

The following conversation was hosted at the Crispus Attucks Museum, facilitated by Aja Scarlato and Keondra Bills Freeman. Consent was given by the participants to have their conversation recorded and transcribed.

Readers should keep in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word and are encouraged to refer directly to the original audio if possible as some interactions and utterances may not have been transcribed due to the nature of unscripted group conversations. The views, thoughts, and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the roundtable participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of Black Lunch Table.

START OF RECORDING

AJA SCARLATO: Okay, we are recording now. Shuffle your cards, introduce yourselves a couple of times, and then we'll be good to go from there. Have fun.

WALTON MUYUMBA: [inaudible 00:00:09]

KISHA TANDY: Phoebe, um...

JERE ODELL: We're supposed to shuffle.

CHRISTOPHER NEWELL: All right.

JO: I think I just touched the table and broke the rules. Oh, you shuffle.

CN: Okay.

PHOEBE WOLFSKILL: Okay, should we introduce ourselves first? I'm Phoebe Wolfskill. I'm an associate professor in the departments of American Studies and African American/African Diaspora studies at Indiana University Bloomington.

KISHA TANDY: Kisha Tandy. I am curator of social history at the Indiana State Museum.

JO: I am an academic librarian on the IUPUI campus.

CN: Christopher Newell. I am a local Indianapolis artist, and I'm also a office manager for a chiropractor.

WM: I'm Walton Muyumba, associate professor of English at Indiana University Bloomington and Indianapolis resident.

[Pause]

[Sound of movement and various items adjusting]

CN: Well, well, well. Pressure's on—

PW: [Laughs]

CN: I mean, I guess, do we—?

PW: Wanna pick a card? [Laughs]

CN: Yeah.

[Pause]

CN: Okay, so the first card: *How has your community changed since you became a part of it?*

PW: Mm.

[Pause]

CN: I can start.

PW: Go.

CN: I think even witnessing firsthand, as a local artist here, like GANGGANG, the culture from here in Indianapolis since that started, that has brought a lot of like Black equity. It's brought a lot of opportunity for Black individuals and has created a different sense for the art scene here. I think that it feels more diverse. I think there's more pride in, not just Black art, but art in general. And starting with Black art, I think that really screened a lot of volumes for me. I think even having my experience going to Herron [High School] where I was like really one of two Black kids in my graduating class out of all the photography majors, I've seen a change even in the demographic of the amount of kids going for art and the people who're proactively pursuing it outside of school as well. So, I think that's been a really big change for me. And it's been inspiring, because it shows that these opportunities and these opportunities, jobs, and outlooks are obtainable to have. They don't feel as dreamlike anymore. So...

KT: Mm.

[Pause]

WM: I guess I might say that part of the change—or the way I'm experiencing change—is by paying attention to the neighborhood where my house is. So, I think technically that neighborhood is Watson Park. I'm just slightly north of the center of that neighborhood. Um, and also it's kind of like an overlap, so Meridian-Kessler is really close by. The Parkway is close by. And I'm trying to learn the history of the neighborhood a little bit. I've seen photographs that represent—especially along Central between 38th and the Parkway was a really vibrant Black district. And as

neighborhoods, you know, evolved and changed, prototypically, not just in Indianapolis, but all urban centers in the country, right? There's a lot of gentrification. And so, I think there's this interesting [Pause] wavering, let's say, that the very last elements of that neighborhood's Black history in terms of its residents is starting to age out. And, you know, I think I'm one of the newest Black residents on my block, but I might be one of the last to move on to the block in that way. And so I'm just trying to pay attention to the way that the neighborhood preserves anything about its history. There aren't markers there to demonstrate, for instance, that that used to be a mixed-residential commercial district. Where, I think on—if I'm remembering my blocks right—like around 30th? There on all four corners used to be businesses, so that that neighborhood was walkable. But basically now, like a lot of parts of central Indianapolis is a food desert. So I'm just trying to pay attention to the way that the demographic shifts are also starting to shift what's happening in and around the neighborhood. I think that's kind of important in terms of like the kind of cultural life that anyone might be able to imagine for themselves. I lived in Dallas for fourteen years. One of the things that was interesting about Dallas, a slightly newer place than Indianapolis, but because of all the money that's there from gas and oil, there's just more money spreading around for cultural institutions. And so, those cultural institutions helped communicate history about particular neighborhoods in Dallas in a way that I don't think Indianapolis necessarily is up to speed with, right? So that... And not to say that this is a thing that GANGGANG has to do, but [Clears throat] I'm just struck that that could be a central element of GANGGANG but not its front face at the moment, right? Like, not only promoting new artists, but also thinking about the cultural history and how to preserve it along the way. So in some ways, I think, you

know, this exhibition, I made a pass through and I was like remarking to myself that Marion photograph is really significant, because it then helps you understand how, say, the Ward photograph from Terre Haute—I remember seeing that image of that hanging, that lynching in Without Sanctuary [Without Sanctuary: Lynching Photography in America], probably in 2010. And it was the first time I ever heard that story, and I grew up in Terre Haute. So, Indianapolis is representative of the rest of the state's relationship to this particular history. And I think that for Indianapolis to get to another phase of its potential, let's say, I think that that history needs to be—the history of African American experience, I think also Latino experience in the state, Indigenous histories—need to be central to the story that the state and the city are telling about itself.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

PW: This is Phoebe. [Clears throat] So I will reflect on the IU Bloomington community. I first came there in 2009 as a visiting assistant professor, and have been there since then. And, my concerns about IU Bloomington is that there used to be more investment in the College of Arts and Sciences. And now, for a variety of reasons, we see students moving out of that college and not taking the courses that they used to. So I'm concerned for the Black Studies Department. I'm concerned for the American Studies Department and the arts and so forth. And I just want—and I understand students' end goal in getting a college education is getting a job; I understand that absolutely. And I think they often want a very clear path to how you get that job. And I think their parents do too, which, again, is completely understandable. But part of what college is about is challenging the students to think about new things that they haven't

explored before. And I hope to see more of that. So I have concerns about the College of Arts and Sciences right now, for sure. Um, yeah.

[Pause]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

KT: Being born and raised here in Indianapolis, one of the things I think that has meant so much to me, is being a person who has always appreciated the history of the city. And coming from growing up here and knowing about Madam Walker, Major Taylor, Wes Montgomery, Mari Evans—being able to witness Mari Evans and to be around her when she did things and was out in public to now being able to research and to share information about these individuals. Whether it's an article for the Digital Encyclopedia of Indianapolis or for historical markers, being able to work with the Indiana Historical Bureau and to put up historical markers not only in the city but in other places throughout the state and just having that true opportunity to share history, to research history, to document. Like, to document this history. I think that is so important, that people document their own stories, that they document their communities. When you were talking, I think, about how much time we spent over in that area—just even if it was just driving through or going to school. Because now I see so much change, you know? Being a witness to the change, not commenting on the change but just—necessarily—being a witness to the change. So just seeing so many, so many different things. But I think as I think about this question, it's much more the value of being able to research history and to document it. And so that that documentation is there for individuals who continue to, you know, who have an appreciation of the past. And history is used for so many, so many reasons and in so many ways. But I think as I,

again, look back at this, it's just this idea of being able to document and to provide sources that help us then to tell the many stories of life here in the city.

[Pause]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JO: I'm a white guy, obviously. I have Black children. And for me, I think the key community that I've been thinking about is my church; it's an African American church. And I'm fifty-three and I think I'm on the younger end of most people there. And COVID hit us kind of really hard, both health-wise and just the culture of it. So a lot of us, self included, are kind of looking around like, 'Where's the young people? And how can we get out of the way? Or energize young people to rebuild community?' And I guess—I mean, connect this to art, like I'm really excited about The Eighteen Collective. If you look at the members of that, most of them are around your age, give or take. [Clears throat] And the fact that they found each other, working on programming together, like it's really inspiring. And I'd like to see more of that. [Laughs] I'd like to see it in the arts and outside of the arts. Yeah, those are my thoughts.

KT: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

CN: Nice, nice. Well, card one down, huh?

KT: [Laughs]

JO: Yeah.

[Pause]

CN: Actually... [inaudible - 00:14:25] get this. I'm sorry, sorry.

WM: You want me to shuffle again? Maybe I'll pull up the same card.

CN: [inaudible - 00:14:32]

WM: *Discuss historical legacies defining race, class, that are unique to this area.*

[Pause]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

KT: So I think one way that we can discuss the historical legacy, is just the location of where we are today. We're at the Crispus Attucks Museum, and we're—which was part of the Crispus Attucks High School. High School opening here in 1927; one of three Black high schools throughout the state that opened around the same time. And that you had an individual by the name of Gilbert Taylor, who wanted to make sure this museum was started. He was the first curator. And, that you have a museum that honors, not only the history going back, but it also, then—with different activities like this—is helping us to continue to talk about history. So it's honoring the past, it's giving us appreciation for the present as well, you know. So I think being in this location and just acknowledging that where Crispus Attucks physically is located, is in the heart of what was the Black community here in the city. We have the building next door, which was a Black church. And then, the Ransom Place [Neighborhood]---not Ransom Place, Ransom Place is near. But the Flanner House homes that are within walking distance. You can walk to Ransom Place, but it's a little bit longer. But you have these very defined and distinct Black neighborhoods, and housing spaces that are near here. So the history is evident. We have a nice physical structure, but then also there's the written history, there's the visual history as well.

JO: We moved here [Clears throat] 2006. And for me, even like decisions that were made in this community—I don't know, way back when, I don't know—but the kind of the de facto segregation of the school system, and disinvestment in the public schools was like a thing we had to grapple with the day we moved to town; like where are our kids gonna go to school? And then, we did find good education in the public school system here. But then, you know, my kids were on the track team and that kind of stuff. And so sitting with other parents and hearing—especially grandparents—lament the disinvestment in the public school system, and the pride they had in the schools here, and the memory they had of them flourishing places like Crispus Attucks and the other schools too. So that disinvestment and that history it's a hard one to not notice if you have children. So...

KT: Yeah, do you mind if I add to that?

JO: Mm-hmm.

KT: The pride. So, you know. It's so interesting how many people that you talk to and they still talk about their schools. Like when I would be at different meetings and events, and individuals would talk about being a tiger, you know? A Crispus Attucks tiger. They can still sing their fight song, and they know their teacher's names, and there is just this immense pride, and it is something that is joyful to see. But it is very interesting. And just—you were right—that history and that pride and that appreciation of school. And, you know—And this is beyond having the 1955 basketball championship. This is everything, what they were able to learn. Because as you look at the walls of this museum, they had so many people that graduated and came from here that had an impact on the world. So thank you for bringing up the pride.

[Pause]

CN: Let me see that card.

KT: Oh.

CN: *Discuss histo*—Thank you so much.

[Pause]

CN: You know, I think since I've been here the last seven to eight years, I hadn't—when I first got here—I hadn't really thought much about, like, Black-owned businesses. And since, what? For the last like two, three years, they've been now, so it's like a huge portion of my life. As the office manager for the chiropractor, he's actually a small Black-owned business as well. Not only does he get the opportunity to work for the Colts, but he has this local clientele he caters to. And there's also another Black-owned business within that same wellness center who is a massage therapist. After I leave work a lot of times, I go to, like, get a smoothie from Pure-trition, which is not too far, like kinda going towards downtown. That's another like wellness Black-owned business. And then there's also like Black Leaf Vegan [Black Leaf Vegan Cafe]. Been vegan for the last like three years. Kinda cheated, did a little bit of, like, chicken and bison here and there lately. But like, I think all these different businesses have really made like an eye-opening experience for me to like, wow, as a small business person myself, like I see that, [Pause] you know, you can get noticed and you can grow your business in an area like Indianapolis. It doesn't have like a crazy big market for the thing that I like to do as far as my art and whatnot, but I think anything else, it's just been inspiring. And I've been seeing, like, those businesses more at different events and like local gatherings and whatnot. So, I think that just like the pride

in the—well, the pride and then the accessibility that we have to these businesses, like it just feels more vibrant today in 2023 for Indianapolis. So that's something that, yeah, I'm really going to miss. I plan on moving at the end of the year, so [Laughs] there's that. Yeah.

WM: Well, why do you wanna leave?

CN: Um, I just think that I've been in the Midwest my whole life and I don't have much experience living outside of that. So I've been—well, I am planning to move to Portland, Oregon for a couple years to see how I like it. I just came back from visiting for a week there and I think the biggest thing that really I took consideration is like, is diversity a thing there? And based on what I read online, talkin' to other people, not so much.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm.

CN: But, when I went and saw it for myself, I had a different experience. And I don't know much about Black-owned businesses there, but I do know that the Black art scene is more vibrant than I thought it was going to be. And that's something I think that's gonna really carry me, as well as, like, just different experiences within the community there, and they have a huge, very vegan friendly [Laughs] community there, so that will also carry me too. But yeah, I just wanted something different, and just I know a lot of people on the West Coast. So, yeah.

KT: Mm-hmm.

WM: Good luck.

CN: Thank you, thank you.

KT: [Laughs]

CN: I'm gonna need it.

WM: Mm-hmm.

CN: Yup.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

WM: I ask that question because I think, you know, [Pause] one of the things that the state has difficulty with—and I don't think it's affected the city just yet—but it's not keeping young people. It's not attracting them. And I do think that that has something to do with the [Pause] the legacies of kind of racial and class histories in this state. One kind of really important person who I think about a lot in relationship to Indianapolis, and specifically to Crispus Attucks, is Oscar Robertson. And because of his personal pain growing up in the city and the state, he doesn't come back here.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm.

CN: Yeah.

WM: Like, he's one of the greatest basketball players ever and there's no public memorial for him—yeah, and memorial's the wrong word—but there's no recognition of him, right? So, the Pacers are doing all this stuff around the arena, and there's no major statue of Oscar Robertson as, like, the most significant basketball player to come out of this city. And I think that's telling, right? That, you know, artists, athletes who've come from the state leave to build themselves, but don't necessarily return. Although, although, right? Mike Woodson, who has come back to coach at IU, where he was a star college athlete in the late '70s and early '80s. His return I think is really important. But I also think, given my neighborhood, that I can't help thinking about the fact that Broad Ripple High School, which used to produce ball players like it was growing

apples, you know, is shut down. And, you know, the pride in the high schools was so important, right? It's like, um... I think in most parts of this country, people from the same place, when they're meeting for the first time, they're like, 'What high school did you go to?' Right? Because that's the way to understand who that person is, right? That the high school is a representative characterization. With Crispus Attucks, from what-what I gleaned from a documentary that's on PBS about the high school, it's like this was like a preparatory school, right?

KT: Yeah, yes.

WM: And necessarily. With very few opportunities for Black students, especially before 1954, that the high school had to do a lot; they had to be like universities, essentially. And the preparation wasn't just in terms of academics, but how to be adult people. And how to like, at eighteen, be able to move out. And, if you wanted to be an entrepreneur, how are you gonna start a small business? Where do you get that experience so that you can produce the service that is going to help the community and simultaneously help you build a life? And I think that that kind of stuff is absent just in the ether, if you will. And, Phoebe, to your point about the, you know, the College of Arts and Sciences at IU, I think that all the really significant research institutions in the state have some responsibility to help produce the next wave of students. But one of the ironies, you know, coming back to teach at IU, having been a student there, is that I know that there are the same number of Black students on campus now as there were when I was an undergraduate in 1999. Right? That's when I started in Bloomington. And it was a moment, actually, of vibrancy because that era from the late 1960s to the early 90s—about a twenty, let's say, a twenty-five year window there—IU had been one of the

Midwest's important campuses in terms of producing students of color who would move back into the main Midwestern cities and create vibrant business or social culture. The Black Expo used to be a drawing card, right, to bring people from other parts of the Midwest here. I'm not sure that's happening anymore. And I think like, I can't draw the historical chart to really lay out why all the shifts, but I think it's... You know, this stuff is connected, right? This idea that you, as an artist, may need to leave the Midwest, not simply to experience all this stuff, but to get started, to like be connected to the kind of community that will help you launch yourself. You know, that's gonna hurt us when you leave.

[Laughter]

CN: Yeah.

WM: [Clears throat] Excuse me.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CN: You really actually, um... I don't know what you said, the Black Expo portion. When I first moved here seven, eight years ago, that was something that I heard about a lot. I'm like, 'Oh wow. We need to—' I think I went one time, and then I just hadn't gone back. I don't really know why, but I kinda wish I went more. And now that you brought it up, I was just like, 'Wow, what a blast from the past.' Felt like I was kind of remembering an old thing I saw on TV or something. Like, I don't hear about the Black Expo anymore.

KT: Exactly.

CN: So it's very interesting that you said that was like a drawing card, 'cause I think it was a point. And now, even for myself, I'm like... Yeah.

WM: I mean, maybe GANGGANG is gonna be that, especially with BUTTER.
But, you know, my worry about GANGGANG is that, at some point, for it to have like—

KT: Longevity.

WM: —second, third, fourth life, it's gonna have to, like, make some compromises.

CN: Yeah.

KT: Mm-hmm.

PW: Mm-hmm.

WM: And I think that's, you know, that's just, like, troublesome. It's like thinking about the lotion and soap company, Shea Mois—?

KT: SheaMoisture. Yeah.

WM: Right?

CN: Yeah.

KT: Mm-hmm.

WM: That SheaMoisture, in order for it to have its second and third lives, they had to sell it, and that sale shifted it, right?

KT: Mm-hmm.

CN: Yeah.

WM: It's like, instead of being, you know, not to say that needed to be segregated necessarily, but it was a product for African Americans specifically. But for it to have its other life, they had to start figuring out how to draw in white consumers, so they had to, like, diminish the Blackness, if you will, in order for others to come to be

consumers so that the investors who had helped make this a multi, now, you know, million dollar, if not billion dollar company, could say like, 'Okay, our investment isn't just going to meet the quarterly report as it stands. We wanna see gain over time.' And I think that's probably gonna happen with GANGGANG at some point. You know, um... They're featured in Forbes magazine for goodness sake.

[Laughter]

WM: So, someone is like, 'Huh, what is this about? How do I get involved with this? How come this is only Black artists? You know, forget about artists of color, why not make this a bigger thing? We could make this a bigger thing.'

CN: Yeah.

WM: 'Why don't you let me buy this from you?' And at that point, BUTTER is gonna become something else. Maybe GANGGANG will have other projects, but I think that's the thing that is not just a legacy—Indiana legacy—but a larger one, right? We've seen that narrative have a play-out in other locations with other kinds of enterprises. So, I suppose that's the thing that I worry about all the time, to think of, also, about these collectives, right? At some point, people are gonna start saying, 'Well, let's go somewhere else to do the collective.'

CN: [Clears throat] Now I feel bad for moving. I mean...

[Laughter]

CN: I'm kidding, I'm kidding.

WM: No. No, I was about to give you my information so that when I come visit Portland, I have a place to stay.

CN: Yeah.

JO: Yeah.

KT: [Laughs]

PW: [Laughs]

CN: Fair fair. I see.

[Laughter]

CN: You're a full circle guy; it makes sense.

JO: [Laughs]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

PW: All right, one small thing I'll add to this; I'm learning a lot more about Indianapolis just by talking with you all, so I'm grateful for that. But part of what I learned about in putting together this exhibition was on George Tomkins, which the Indiana Remembrance Coalition has done a lot of work to create a memorial for him. Part of what they did also is change his death certificate so that it no longer said "suicide;" it said "homicide." And, you know, it shows you, first of all, the person originally signing the death certificate was in on it, knew exactly what had gone on, but just labeled a suicide. But to have that kind of corrective, and then to create a memorial so people can see that, to have that history told seems so important. And then, to think about who would this man have been if that horrible event hadn't happened? And we have one photograph of him, and it's sort of grainy, and they've reproduced it. But, you know, that loss, and that's one person and he's one of so many, but that really stuck with me. The people that are doing the work, that kind of memory work within Indianapolis and throughout the state and throughout the nation. [Pause] So, all right, next card. [Pause] *How has political polarization affected you and your community?* [Pause] I can start with

this one just on recent things in Gaza. Um, that's a tricky one that people don't necessarily wanna address and deal with right now. But one of our departments had sponsored a film, *Israelites* [*Israelism* (2023)]? I forget what it was called. But now because of what's happened and the violence that's going on in Gaza—first the abduction, of course, and then the retaliation—nobody feels comfortable showing the movie. And part of it is, we need to have this conversation. And what the movie is about is the ways in which American Jews tend to be sort of indoctrinated into believing a sort of conservative Israeli pitch on their identity and how that's faulty and we need to question it. Noam Chomsky is in the film and so forth and so on. But, that people are sort of canceling that film 'cause it's just not the right time. So it's like we need to talk about this, but how and when? So that's the first thing that pops into my mind.

[Pause]

KT: Think I need a second to think about this. Um...

JO: Do you want me to go first?

KT: Yeah. I'm still thinking about that, thank you.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JO: Sure. For me, this isn't polarization. Which might mean I'm on a pole; I don't know. But, uh, for me it's like the resurgence of the Confederacy in the United States. And I guess as a white person with lots of loyalties in different places, it's been a really painful one. So it's pulling apart, you know, my extended family. Like, there's people who can't talk to each other anymore. And it's been a painful realization, as a white person, that people I thought that loved me and my children didn't love them so much that they couldn't put aside their allegiances to an idea of what this country should

look like. So yeah, it's been really rough. I don't consider it polarization, though. It's kind of like a, 'There's good people on both sides,' statement when they talk about polarization. For me, it's something else.

[Pause]

WM: Yeah, I think—You know, I think one of the great, kind of, conundrums of my adult life has been about the inability, I think, culture-by-culture, nation-by-nation, to actually own history. Right? And by owning it, I don't mean you, like, every once in a while pull it out and look at it, and then put it back in the closet, or even to memorialize it with statues or plaques, but to deal with the—to go back to the earlier question about legacies—to just deal with the ramifications of very specific choices, right? The... You know, when we look at Black life or Indigenous life alongside European experience in the formation of the western hemisphere, right? As a series of modern societies, we don't really wanna reckon with the genocide that helped build the wealth. You know, scientists tell us that at some point in the 16th century, the temperature of the planet changed because of the number of Indigenous people who had been exterminated, right? So even from the beginning of how we, like, process our relationship to ourselves, let alone our relationship to other parts of the globe, we leave that out. Right? I'm just struck that one of the things that we're unable to do—and have been in my lifetime, unable to do—is talk about that a lot of the difficulties in the Middle East began in the immediate aftermath of Second World War when the Allied powers made some very specific decisions about who were gonna be the winners and losers. And who was gonna get aid to come back into the economic fold, and who were going to continue to suffer because of broken promises, right? Even the way we think about the world, that

Second World War, it's framed consistently as Western Europeans against one Central European or a series of Central European and Far-Eastern Asian forces, but it was in fact a global war, right? If you have African conscripts fighting for different European nations, Caribbean conscripts fighting for different European nations, and then the "unallied spaces," so to speak, up for contestation among the winners and losers at the end of that war, it was a global war then, right? And everyone was involved and everyone had a stake, but we leave that part out when we discuss the continuation of what those very choices, right? So when we think, even about Black experience here in Indianapolis or in the state of Indiana, we leave out all kinds of elements that are, like, structurally significant to those narratives. And I think that that's, you know, that's a great shame, because your relatives, who are making some very specific kinds of choices, right, they don't know that deep history and they refuse to know that deep history in favor of a mythology that comforts them. But, you know, can you be addicted to something that is going to kill you and call that comfort?

[Pause]

KT: Wow. And it just makes me think about the idea of history and how much history has an impact on politics, then in turn, has an impact on our everyday lives and everything that we do. I think about—and I know this is probably something that you all thought about as you were putting together this exhibition. Even in the climate of how you—in the time that you were putting together the exhibition, I don't know, did you think about the language? The—? Actually I do know, 'cause I was at the community meetings. The language, meaning the label copy. What does this label copy say? And how will it be received? Just the images. I was at a meeting yesterday, and we were

talking about the framing of the lynching, the Marion lynching, and how now you only see the three faces as opposed to seeing—I think someone in the audience yesterday said, instead of all the sightseers and all the people who were there as a part of that. And it's just, you know... It's the history, all of the history as a whole, the comprehensive history, and how we look at things. And how, then, does that impact you as a curator, you as a historian, an artist, a writer? 'Cause we bring all those things with us. We just do. And then, how do we make those decisions and choices?

PW: Right, right.

KT: So...

[Speakers intermittently agree]

PW: And how to tell history in a particular climate, too? 'Cause that's so much of what we're negotiating. What are people really willing to look at? How are they gonna be offended? How—? And we knew that that was... I mean, it's—some of the images are just toxic. And we do have the Marion photograph; that's the only photo in there. But, you know, the artist at the time had to figure out, 'How do I deal with this? Do I show the crowd? Do I show the victim?' And so, yeah, it was... Yeah, it was a careful negotiation and that's why we started with interpreters to say like, 'Let's help people through this, and then let's regroup afterwards and have people record their responses and talk about it.'

[Speakers intermittently agree]

WM: Yeah, I think one of the most important books I've ever read about lynching is Grace Hale's book, *Making Whiteness*. And she writes about lynching as an expression of ordinariness. Because in some places, they would not necessarily have a

victim in mind, but they would announce that something was gonna happen so as to draw an audience. And then, of course, use photographs and remnants of the body, to literally send mailers to other parts of the country as warnings. And when I read that, I thought like, 'Wow, you know, this isn't just like irrational mob violence.' This is—When you hear that fifteen thousand people showed up for a lynching and that it was reported in the newspaper, or on the radio that fifteen thousand people showed up, that's a cultural event. That's not, 'Oh, we grabbed someone because we thought he did whatever.' And I think that's also part of what makes it really difficult, because for contemporary viewers to actually think like, no, this was a thought out, plotted, planned event as a demonstration of power, not just to affect African Americans, but to affect white Americans, white citizens to have a particular belief and participation in a particular belief system to communicate how power is going to be exercised, right? And the fact that we don't talk about it as terrorism is striking. Right?

JO: You can't even talk about January 6 [United States Capitol attack] right now.

WM: Right right.

CN: Yeah.

JO: [Clears throat] So, you know, a thing people don't have to know history to see that happen, right? But it's like watching history be tinkered with real time now.
[Clears throat]

WM: I mean, we were all at home watching that on TV.

JO: Mm-hmm, yeah.

KT: Mm-hmm.

WM: And to have people say like, 'Well, that actually just did not happen,' is wild.

JO: Yeah.

KT: Yeah.

PW: Mm-hmm. Yes, yeah.

JO: Yeah.

CN: 'But what really happened was this.' And I'm like...

WM: Right?

PW: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

JO: Yeah. [Laughs]

CN: Yeah.

WM: No, no. I was watchin'.

[Laughter]

PW: [inaudible - 00:46:56-00:46:58]

[Pause]

WM: Thank you.

CN: Yeah.

KT: Should we try for one more? Okay.

WM: I think they'll come and stop us.

JO: They come to us.

WM: [Exhales]

KT: Oh, okay. So, *How is cultural memory passed down through generations? Discuss legacy, intergenerational advocacy, and mentorship?* Okay, I'll read that again, 'cause it was kinda a lot. *How is cultural memory passed down through generations? Discuss legacy, intergenerational advocacy, and mentorship?* So, I'll begin with that one. So I am someone who loves history, who appreciates history; that is what I do for a living. And you mentioned that earlier in the conversation. And so one of the things that has been such a great joy and blessing for me is having the opportunity to actually speak to elders. To hear them talk, to share their memories, to go through with them. To have individuals who have kept hundreds of years of history—for whether it be their family, their congregation, what have you—that they've kept it and to make sure that it goes to repository; that it's cared for. And being able to work with them to get those different pieces of history, because we know that we have materials, that it's written down, we have oral history, then having the artifacts and the things that help to just document, but also just helps to share the story so that we can share it in different ways. And now being able to meet so many members of descendant communities and descendants, and just having that information. So, being able to hear it from individuals, but then also the records that they leave us. And, I had an amazing mentor. I feel like I've had more than one, but I had one in particular who helped me and definitely helped to shape my career. And I'll be forever grateful for her, that she taught me so much, and that she allowed me to go with her to so many different things. And even as I get older, I'm still claiming mentors and individuals who help from the people that I'm working with as we talk about their community history, their family history, and then just in general, history of Indianapolis and history of Indiana.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CN: I think this is a really interesting question because this idea is increasingly changing. This question is increasingly changing as the internet, like, kinda finds new areas to expand it, between social media and just like other educational platforms as well. And, what people are starting to—as we were saying before—like become either less or more comfortable with actually speaking about such topics, or conversations, or creating an avenue to have those things. I mean, even like—I don't really go on Facebook unless it's like for family at this point—but even scrolling through Facebook groups, I'm like, okay, what're people getting together on a social platform to talk about? I know that it's pretty active there still. And I'll see a lot there. And I'm just like, 'Wow, I didn't know this,' or 'My parents probably should have told me this, but now I know,' you know, twenty-seven years later. So, and it's also one of those things too, that it's not that I couldn't depend on my parents to tell me about cultural history, but I really couldn't depend on them to bring it up unless I asked. And just like the things that people deem important for their child. Like, you have two BI—er, I don't know if you said two Black children. But you have—

JO: Good guess.

[Laughter]

CN: Yeah.

JO: Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CN: So, you know, like you being educated and expressing like what you learned to your kids, I think is important. I have a white dad and he didn't talk about any

of that. But anytime I had issues with like, 'Dad, you know these kids are calling me an "oreo" at school; what do I do about this?' 'Son, just ignore 'em.' 'No, no, no, no. We need to have a conversation about this. Like, what do you mean?'

JO: Yeah, right, right.

CN: I turn around to my mom and she's like, 'You'll always be Black, till the day you die. Every time they look at you, white man, doesn't matter who it is, like, you're gonna be a Black kid.' I'm like, 'Okay, that's pretty true, but...' Also when I have-make friends, you know, it's kind of like, 'Am I too Black for this or too white for this?' And, I have those questions, but neither parent can ask or want to inquire about it. So it's like, kinda left out to the ether to explore myself. And there's pros and cons to, like, the avenues that I found online, but, you know, you can't believe everything you find online either. I prefer to speak more to personal experience from other people who have a like experience or people who will feel—people who can give me an honest answer with enough wisdom to feel like it's trustworthy. Like, I feel like this is a safe thing to look into investigate. So I just, yeah... As time's gone on, I try to find mentors myself and it's not the easiest, but they're out there, and I've found some in Indianapolis that I love and appreciate. So, yeah.

PW: So I will say with ancestors and so forth. So I remember my brother when I was a little kid—I have an older brother—and he was interviewing our great grandfather. His name is Dillard Hubbard. He's from Covington, Kentucky. And I was very young at the time, and I remember him saying he lived in the mountains and there was no entertainment, and the one thing to do was to come down from the mountains to see a hanging. And I remember him using the word "hanging." So for the longest time, I

assumed he meant illegal hanging, because they did those in Kentucky publicly until 1936. And then I found out from my brother recently, he was like, 'No, he was referring to a lynching,' 'cause I wasn't the one doing the interview. So my great grandfather could be one of those little kids in one of those photographs. I don't know if a photograph exists. I wouldn't be able to identify him. I mean, he'd be this young person. So that, you know, that's part of my family that was in the crowd, you know, was one of the spectators. I don't know how he responded to it. I don't know if he got sick. I don't know if he was cheering on—I, you know, I have no idea. So that, like, that sort of haunts me, right? So that's part of my history that, um, that I think about a lot, you know, [inaudible - 00:53:45] we put together something like that.

WM: I think part of the work we do as scholars, writers, professors is [Pause] is mentoring. Part of that whole training process—especially when I've run into artists in the classrooms, it's like, 'How do I get you going with a series of ideas so that you can see how you might be able to represent those ideas?' And I think that, that's how I try to be a mentor, and then I'm also trying to pass on the mentoring that I've gotten, especially concerning the stuff we're talking about. But, I'm always trying to get the history on the table and say, 'Everyone owns this. Everyone has access to it, and everyone has to struggle through this. But this isn't, say, a limitation, right? It's, rather, greater context for demonstrating what our responsibilities to each other are going to be going forward. Not only do we have to live next to each other, but historically speaking, and in the contemporary moment, we are intermixed. We are wedded to each other, right?' James Baldwin loved to say, one of the reasons Black people have not revolted, one of the reasons Indigenous people have not returned to, you know, an outright

terrorist response to incursion on their native lands, is that we're all related at this point. We're so deeply related that some people recognize that rising up might mean killing their brother or sister. [Laughs] And I think that there is still, yet, some folks in the United States who don't recognize that and are willing to maintain these structures that ultimately injure us.

KEONDRA BILLS FREEMYN: Thank you for that point. I unfortunately am coming to wrap everyone up.

[Laughter]

KF: Thank you so much for coming to this conversation. If you signed up for the artist's tables, you can hang out a bit; you'll get a different table number. I just have to add a little information to your recording. But, yeah. And then there's a trash can in the middle if you want to get rid of anything you're not taking with you. All right, thank you. This is keondra bills freemyn. The date is October 21st, 2023. This is People's Table number four at Crispus Attucks Museum.

END OF RECORDING

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