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Participants:
TAYLOR PINCKNEY
SHOSHANA FARBER
STEPHEN HAYES
NAKISA GLOVER
ZION GLOVER
INDRANI NAYAR-GALL
Length: 00:59:29

Preface

The following conversation was hosted at the McColl Center, facilitated by jina valentine. Consent was given by the participants to have their conversation recorded and transcribed.

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START OF RECORDING

Unknown: The card. You can just put them on [Mic Movement]

Unknown: And some, um--. [Child speaking]

[Inaudible - 00:00:05-13]

ZG: I didn't get help. Aye, what's this card?

JINA VALENTINE: So, what you want to do is go around the table and introduce yourself.

ZG: What's this card?

JV: To get started.

ZG: What's this card?

Okay.

TP: Okay.

[Chuckling]

TAYLOR PINCKNEY: I'm--. My name is Taylor Pinckney.

ING: Um, Jina. Jina you said?

TP: Oh — sorry. Taylor-Taylor Pinckney.

ING: Taylor? Oh, Taylor.

[Pause]

SHOSHANA FARBER: And I'm Shoshana Farber.

STEPHEN HAYES: I'm Stephan Hayes.

NAKISA GLOVER: Nakisha Glover.

INDRANI NAYAR-GALL: I'm Indrani Nayar-Gall.

NG: You wanna say your name? Wanna say your name? Say, 'I'm Zion Boyd.'

And we got Zion Boyd here as well [Laughs]

[Laughter]

[Pause]

ING: But if everybody chooses a topic that'll be- all--. You just choose it to talk about it by yourself, but aren't we also participating in a- in a topic that somebody's starting? Right?

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

NG: Yeah, you wanna start off?

ING: No [Laughs]

NG: Oh [Laughs]

ING: I just starting to be clear totally [Laughs]

NG: Does anybody want- have a card they wanna start off with?

SF: I mean, I picked a card.

NG: Okay.

SF: Mine is: *Recent closures in North Carolina abortion clinics disproportionately effects disenfranchised and non-white communities. Only ten clinics remain open state wide.* Um, and I just picked this card because, um, I'm the field organizer for Planned Parenthood, so I felt like, um--. I was just looking through the cards and I felt like that would be one that I could connect with, um, since--. Just since we deal with that on a regular basis.

NG: Did you hear where there's a bill in South Carolina right now where the lady is saying that--. The lady who introduced it is introducing it to counteract what's going on with the abortion clinics closing. But her bill is for men to be required to have a partner, um, advocate for them being able to get Viagra.

SF: Oh.

NG: You get the humor in that right? The humor and-and the statement behind that. So, it's-it's a completely ridiculous bill, right? But it's saying that the government has no place in telling peop- --men or women-- what to do with their bodies.

SF: Yeah. I mean, I think it's really--. It makes a lot of sense that they will do that because I feel like a-a law like that, it sounds, like, absurd, to pass. But yet, there's all these laws that pass regarding that issue.

NG: On-on women. Mm-hmm.

[Pause]

ZG: (inaudible - 00:02:59)

NG: Okay.

SF: Would you also think that it's interesting that the card says that it affects more non-white communities than white ones? Um, yeah, I feel like accessibility, that's one thing that affects some racial groups more than others.

[Pause]

NG: [Speaking to Zion] (inaudible - 00:03:24)

ING: Would you like some more cards and--?

TP: Oh, that's it. So I- I-I'm on my way from Massachusetts to California to work for Planned Parenthood [Laughs]

ING: Okay, that's interesting.

TP: Um, but I--. So, I'm part of this scholarship program where they paid for my schooling, and I owe two years in (inaudible - 00:03:41) community. And I'm from Portland, Oregon, and Portland, Oregon has (inaudible - 00:03:45) but I figured--. I've lived my whole life in there in the Pacific Northwest (inaudible - 00:03:50) and everybody looks like me, and everybody believes the same things I do, and everybody speaks the same language and I thought, 'For these two years I need to do something

different and do something special.' And I (inaudible - 00:04:00) to the south, and I was talking with Planned Parenthood Southeast in Mobile, Alabama, and I realized they don't- they don't have resources to start new (inaudible - 00:04:11) in grad. And so, what my plan had been, do in two years when I go back to the city in Portland, I'm thinking now, 'If I go and train in California, I'm gonna (inaudible - 00:04:22 to 00:04:29).and then I'll be training and return to something (inaudible - 00:04:34)

SF: Yeah. That is--. I think it's really important work, and I feel like coming into that area is that-they do serve. A lot of them they will (inaudible- 00:04:42) but others. I mean, having the accessibility of just public transportation, I feel like that is-it is really important. And since they're being targeted the housesitters, I think (inaudible - 00:04:54) increasing access. It's a really important tool.

TP: But the term (inaudible - 00:04:59) and they understood to come from (inaudible - 00:05:03)

SF: Yeah.

TP: I'm learning more (inaudible - 00:05:08-00:05:20)

NG: Now, I have a--.

SF: Oh, sorry. (inaudible - 00:05:18) song?

TP: Yes.

SF: Oh, okay.

TP: So, I'm going (inaudible 00:05:21) next. I'm literally on my way to (inaudible - 00:05:23) California.

SF: Okay.

NG: [Laughter]

SF: That's so interesting.

NG: Well, I have a question for you: So, you-you mentioned that you want to be of service.

TP: Yes.

NG: Like, is there a defining moment for you that, like, there was a lightbulb that said, 'This is what I wanna do and this is how I wanna make an impact?' And if so, what was it?

TP: I--. For--. I... I was--. I did the whole (inaudible - 00:05:52), college right out of highschool and realized I wasn't quite ready. And so I respectfully withdrew and then took some time to decide, 'What is my purpose [Laughs] in this world.' It took me two years. Um, just so I'm saying, 'What-what am I doing here?' Um, and at the end, I realized that the one thing I always cared about is (inaudible - 00:06:11) So I'll be getting that medical assistance and Planned Parenthood, and now I feel like (inaudible - 00:16:16) practitioner at Planned Parenthood, because the work... To be of service, to be- help somebody either have children or not have children (inaudible - 00:06:27) The mission of (inaudible - 00:06:31) so it's important for everybody. And it's so important and so personal and that these discussions that people don't often have or invited to have. But, talking to people we don't talk about in a comfortable and in a safe way (inaudible -00:06:46)

NG: What about the scandal that happened with Planned Parenthood? How's that affected y'all- your work?

SF: Well, I mean, I, like, recently graduated from Queens, um, in May. So, around the time that I actually started working at Planned Parenthood, um, it was like- it just--. It was August 29th, so it was after the scandals hit and--. I'm mean, my first event that I had there, um, I hosted--. It was a big day of, um, Pink Out Day, which was like the national, like, response of getting Planned Parenthood supporters out, um, to show what they were doing and why they stood with Planned Parenthood. Um, but-. I mean, my first even event had about like forty-five protestors--. I mean, and that was a, like, big shock, but I think, honestly, I feel like they've really tried to address all of the scandal that happened with the videos just because I feel like the fact that the healthcare community has--. Like, they validated the work that Planned Parenthood was doing and that they had been covered for many wrongdoings, um, medically, because those were a lot of the claims in the videos, but I think in the community they're still not a trust that they're still working to rebuild, um, through just going out to events and telling people what Planned Parenthood does do, because they do feel like-. I mean, just some people don't have that trust with any, uh, Planned Parenthood.

NG: Well, we've been doing all the talkin'. Your turn. [Laughs]

[Laughter]

SH: (inaudible - 00:08:18) How 'bout I just do my question.

NG: Okay.

SH: [Laughs]

ING: I think they-they wanted, uh, us to, I think, tell our name when--.

SH: Before we start talking, yeah.

ING: We start to talk so that...

SH: Alright, so my name is Stephen and, uh, my question is: *How do we bring more people to this table?* Ooh. *How do we bring- how we bring more people to this table?*

ING: How do you--?

SH: Uh, ch...

ING: I think this question is so related.

SH: So I guess, I will bring more people to this table if- it'd probably be for, uh--.

ING: To this one. Stephen, if I'm just interrupt you for a moment, I think your-your, uh, question, um--. By the time--. I-I guess when I'm ready to respond I can probably just tell you my question. I-I think they're so related. So, I-I-I will let you speak. Sorry to interrupt.

SH: Yeah. Uh, I guess the way we bring people to this table is just to help more people, like I said. I guess use our social media and, um, advocate, talk more about what we're talking about at this round table, because, um-um--. I don't know what else there is to say, I mean, or hope for. Yeah. You were about to say somethin'.

ING: Um--.

NG: I was gonna ask you a question.

ING: Yeah.

NG: What is the table?

SH: Uh, I guess this table is more talking about, like, social issues, I mean, from what I've--. What her question brought up, about, uh, this healthcare and stuff, I guess

it's just more about what's going on in the media, and, uh, how we're being perceived.
So...

[Pause]

ING: Uh, this is Indrani. Um--. Well, I-I-I-I came here because, you know, the-the name and the whole forum, Black Lunch Table, um, is what drew me into this thing. You know, I-I felt that, you know, I would like to know, I would like to--. This is an opportunity to be a part of it. You know I--. Um, I am not one who will go and walk for the whole day in the stuff, I-I just couldn't handle it, but this was a comfortable thing to me and I'm looking forward to seeing more people and I think that's probably--. You know, Stephen, your question: how do we involve people, because I feel that you expected more people and you probably didn't feel that there's enough people and it's that- I don't know if that was your question that it brought you.

SH: Yeah. Well-. So, I'm actually one of the artists that are in here at the McColl Center and, uh, I just feel like I should support. I don't really put myself there, so that's why I'm kind of quiet, just sit back, you know. So, um, I decided just to come and support.

ING: I think visual artists generally tend to be--. We're very--. You--. We're visual artists since you are too and I'm one, too. We tend to be bit quiet, we like to be in a corner of our studio, I know. So, that's the kind of hard thing for us, is to come out. But, I-I will just read the card I picked up, and I-I--. Well, I felt that it was so connected to your-your topic. Uh, this one is: *Discuss the cultural and physical geography of Charlotte. How does this affect the art community?* I will leave out the second part, I will say, 'How does it affect the community and, uh, what is the cultural and physical

geography of Charlotte?’ And that might directly relate to *How do we bring more people to this table?* For me, that was, you know, Black Lives Matter or, um, or generally even remove the word Black to Color, I guess, if you want to do that, you know, so that we’re talking about all those issues that somehow get pushed in the corner or-or-or kind of marginalized communities. So any thoughts on that? Hmm. I don’t know how to bring more people unless they want to come, but that means--. That- What is that?

NG: I’ll--. I would like to speak to that. I think that speaks to the work that I’m doing. Um, my name is Nakisa, and I am a community organizer. Uh, been doing work, uh, related to environmental awareness since about 2013, and I was doing it for, uh, quote-unquote big green organizations, and--. [Chuckles] And doing the work, um--. We--. Zion. Zion. Okay, no tablet for you. Okay, well finish eating. I want you to finish eating. And doing the work there, um, we were charged with going out and raising awareness about environmental issues and, specifically, in minority and underserved communities. Um [Pause] what began to wear on me, while doing the work for the, um, particular organization I worked with, was that we were kind of, essentially, just sitting on an island over here, ‘Hey, come care about the environment,’ when we’re interacting with people whose basic needs are not being met. So, until you address the basic needs for those individuals, um, you can’t come and put another issue in front of them that they need to be concerned about. Especially when they’re worried about a job, or access to housing that’s affordable, um, um--. So for me, I began to question my role in the work of being a community organizer, because I’m someone who cares about the environment. I have a background in science and everything, so I care about it, but it’s so many other issues that are impacting our community and I didn’t see the link until

recently. Um, I went to a conference last year, and this particular conference, when I walked in, was the first time where it connected all the dots and helped me make sense of how the environment relates to these other issues. Um, what's the point in having a cleaner, greener world --we have clean water, we have access to cleaner water, we have access to clean air-- and people are still victims to the social ills of the world. For- f- mass incarceration, people faced with homeless-homelessness, poverty, all those other issues, and then taking on the other perspective of if we deal with all the social justice issues, everybody is living a life where they're not- their basic needs are being met, but they have no access to clean water or they can't breathe the air. We have not done our jobs on- in either end of the spectrum, so the work that I'm doing now, I work for a different organization, it's called JAMN: Justice Action Mobilization Network. And the work that we're doing is about bringing more people to the table, and understanding that your issue is my issue and we have common ground to move forward on. And being able to create those spaces where we're having a conversation where we're educating people about what's going on, and how, yes, it matters that that coal ash plant is down the street from your home because your kid is suffering from asthma, it-it-and--. This wasn't happening generations ago, it was ever since the coal ash plant was being put- was put in your community, so you have to come out, and you have to advocate for what's right. So, I think that's the- to the answer the question about how do we bring more people to be table; we have to break down silos, we have to start talking, we have to start working together, and we have to start identifying what our common goals are, and I think this is a great space that kind of fosters that. Because I look around, there is so much diversity in the space. Um, so--. And-and we all come from

different walks of life, different strengths, but something led us all here, there was something common about it and I think we have to create more-more things like this to bring people around, and meet people where they are. That's the other thing. That- that goes-going back to the, um, first part of where are you still--. Like, standing on this island isn't going to work anymore. 'Hey, come over here and care about this issue.' No, 'Let me come to you, let me see what your issues are already are, and help you with that, and then we can see how it all connects together.' So...

ING: That's a great idea. I think that's the most important part too, you know, we have to learn how to kind of strengthen each other.

NG: Mm-hmm.

ING: Yeah.

TP: What conference was that?

NG: It was, um--. Oh, gosh. It was at the University of, uh, the District of Columbia. Uh, I can't think of the name of it off the top--. It was the first ever that we've done, and so it transitioned to what is now JAMN: Justice Action Mobilization Network. It was, um, it was titled, uh--. Let me get back to you on that 'cause I can't- I can't think of the exact name, and I don't want to misquote the exact name for you.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

TP: There was a conference I started going to in Massachusetts that was similar where the title was about (inaudible - 00:18:10), but then there were sessions about the environment. Sessions about, I don't know, the (inaudible - 00:18:16-18) and all these things that weren't directly related to private healthcare. And it became so clear because they're all connected. And it's-it's-it's only when (inaudible - 00:18:27) that I

realized (inaudible - 00:18:30) Planned Parenthood (inaudible - 00:18:34) and how even if you're able to get so many years of birth control, that doesn't mean that everything is fixed. But, there's still so many things going on (inaudible - 00:18:41) That's where when it's, like (inaudible :- 00:18:43-50) and I'm sorry (inaudible - 00:18:50) and I'm so pleased to have opportunities likes this.

NG: And I think you spoke on something very important that needs to be addressed, is that the different movements and non-profits that are out there [Pause] they're saying one thing and doing something else and you recognized it when you said the leadership in Planned Parenthood is very white. Um, everybody--. There's-there's not people that are being affected by the issue of [Mic movement] of being represented, so it's much like when we think about politics also, because North Carolina is faced with this whole gerrymandering mess and we're not being represented — um, the-the people of North Carolina are not being fairly represented — and so it goes--. It- I think it transitions also to the nonprofit world. The people that are being impacted by these issues are not being fairly represented in positions of leadership in these organizations.

SF: On that--. I mean, they actually have a health center advocacy program that we're, like, working on, So, like, part of my job is to go into the health center and talk to people and get their stories, so they can then become advocates for Planned Parenthood, instead of the fact that when I first got to Planned Parenthood, most of the volunteers that were in my database, they looked like--. I mean, much whiter and much older women who were from the reproductive movement of the 70s and things like that. So, they've really been--. I mean, in that aspect, trying to have initiatives to make it so that they can increase the population that's represented and they have, like, a--. It's very

new, they just started doing the program in 2011, so it's still taking on but they want to, like, really be intentional about, maybe, including --if you're doing a phone bank-- including, um, 20 percent — try to get the goal of getting 20 percent of people who are patients, to then come and be a part of that event that you're having. So that that way--. I mean, 'cause that's something that did bother me when I felt like, you know, they didn't really know that we could- that you could volunteer and you could really be a voice that--. Because those are the services that I feel like we're protecting and their interests should be the ones that are represented. Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

TP: T-to answer that question: inviting them, but I know- I work so much better (inaudible - 00:21:02) compared to one. And people that I-I find respond to (inaudible - 00:21:06) 'Why did you-- (inaudible - 00:221:07)?', but then putting up a poster (inaudible - 00:21:10) I'm not a big part of social media, [Laughs] but I just think that there's still a way to do (inaudible - 00:21:14) But just talking to a person based on (inaudible - 00:221:15) and say, 'Why don't you come with me?' So, that often has importance (inaudible - 00:21:19).

NG: You opened up a can of worms with your question [Laughs]

SH: I mean, it was- it was in the card. You know?

[Laughter]

SH: See, I-I don't talk much. Now, I stay on (inaudible - 00:21:32), I stay in the studio working, so I don't really know what th--. Uh, I-I mean listen.

NG: Well-well, how can your work though be transformative? Like, what--? The work that you do, how can it spark the conversation and pull people together, what you do?

SH: Um, my work will ask the questions. It--. To ask the questions that don't- people really don't talk about. We all make the statements that people don't even talk about. So, uh, as far as--. [Mic movement] I could just--. Things that I make spark conversation that people don't know much about, so. I mean, I make statues about the transport of people as goods and commodity, and how it refers to today and how we get our goods today. And as far as conversations go, people who don't know anything about the transport of people. Uh, trackin'-, um, trafficking people and stuff, so. Um, I guess--. My work asks questions and makes statements and asks, 'Where do we go from there?', so. I don't know if that answered the question, but... [Chuckles]

NG: No, it does. Like, what are some other examples of your work that ask the questions?

SH: S-so, I have a- I have a cornfield that's, uh, basically the Brooks slave ship plan, which is the inner center pits how they put the people in ships. And the cornfield is, um, the stalks to the cornfield has today's stock markets on them and the numbers and everything. So, the work talks about capitalism and the (inaudible - 00:22:56). Corn is a GMO, a genetically modified organism. And it's talking about how we, as people, are genetically modified organisms today with, um, being brainwashed to want to make more capital and- capital gain, so...

NG: Oh, it's good [Laughs].

[Laughter]

NG: That was good. Where can we see your work?

SH: It's upstairs.

NG: Okay.

[Laughter]

SF: That's good.

NG: I've been doing a lot of talkin'. You've gotten broken in, it's your turn.

[Laughter]

ING: Uh, I have these two cards here. I- [Mic movement] I think they're kind of--. I don't know if they're related, but this one is directly, um, dealing with Charlotte, the one I just mentioned. This is Indrani again. Um, *Discuss the physical and the cultural geography of Charlotte*. Um, I just want to leave 'How does it affect the art community?' because that's such a small section, I'd rather address this question with a- with a general--. Ar-art is everywhere if you want to look at it that way. You know, art is an expression. So, I mean, those of you living in Charlotte, are we even gonna open up? Not think about Charlotte--. Um, we think of the country, um, how, you know, what you see in your- in your space, or where have you been, you know? Um, the-the-the nature of the physical and the cultural geography, um, that's basically--. I am relatively-relatively new in Charlotte. We've moved here in 2009, it's still quite a bit, still trying to understand Charlotte. It takes time to understand a place. Um, so if any one of you have anymore, you know, thoughts or, um, or reflections to share...

NG: I would ask you — I'm born and raised in Charlotte — am I the only one at the table--? I think I established I am the only one at this table who was born and raised

in Charlotte. So, I know you were brought here by the residency; you were brought here --not to even stay-- just passerby, and then you were brought here for your work also.

SF: No.

NG: Oh.

SF: Oh, I actually moved to Charlotte when I was, um, in seventh grade. So, I stayed h--. Like, I--. I mean, since I was twelve, so throughout college and then now.

NG: O-okay. Family brought you here.

SF: Yeah.

NG: That's good, that's good.

ING: It's been a good few years. Yup.

NG: So, for you, what — 'cause you could've gone anywhere — what was it about Charlotte that-that you decided to make Charlotte your home?

ING: Well, that was just plain simple work.

[Laughter]

ING: [Laughs] It's because of work. My husband is at U.N.C. Charlotte. And, uh, so we moved from Michigan to here. Kalamazoo, Michigan from Western Michigan University. And I did adjunct, you know, uh, for a while here, and now I'm just full-time artist. Um--. It- for me-me it was interesting, it was warmer weather, definitely.

[Laughter]

NG: A-a-a short drive to the beach, I'm sure.

ING: [Laughs] Yeah, yes. But, you know--. I mean, I felt- I felt the place where I lived, I felt it was more segregated in some ways. I've lived in Cleveland, also. I felt, I think, more segregation. Kind of. Um--.

NG: You felt it more in Michigan, you're saying?

ING: Michigan, yeah. And then before that, I lived a short while in Cleveland as well. Here, I didn't feel it that way so much. I think it felt it was less, it was more open. Charlotte is a more- very liberal city. I think one of the most, probably, liberal in-in North Carolina. Um, but, um, I don't know. I-I-I-I think--. Well, all- any society, I think, will have still pockets and will have the majority and the minority, and stuff like that. Um, and it tr--. I mean, i-it-it is a tremendous disadvantage for-for me, uh, someone of Indian descent. I don't see anyone, rarely anybody in-in-in Charlotte in the art community, I'm probably the only sole artist who is--. Maybe we have--. So, of course, that kind of feels strange, always. But other than that, I think I felt more warmth in Charlotte. You know, generally, culturally and-and, sort of, the s-speaking, but I'm not sure if it's all that as it seem to be on the outside. So, I like to hear your thoughts. W-what--?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

NG: I would like to, um, speak to an experience that I had the other day, here in Charlotte, that I think will speak to what you just said. 'Cause on the outside, and depending on where you're going in Charlotte, you-you don't feel segregation, you feel like Charlotte is a melting pot. However, I was riding down McDowell street, um, downtown Charlotte, I was leaving, uh, um, an event where I was on the panel. And if you go down McDowell street, uh, from, like, Morehead street, the court house sits on the left hand side of the street. And I just took a moment to, like, observe my

surroundings, I--. I-I don't know what-what had me going to my thoughts, but I'm just observing my surroundings and, looking to my left, at the courthouse, is people outside on cellphones and they all look like me. And the people who don't really look like me, they're in suits. So, if they're in suits, whether they're typically at the courthouse or they're you're lawyers. And then, I'm looking on the right hand side of the street, and there's a blonde--. I, uh, I don't know what color her eyes were, but, you know, she was white, she's on the right hand side of the street. It's two o'clock in the afternoon, and she's jogging. She has the luxury, on a Thursday afternoon, two o'clock, to jog. And the people who look like me don't have that same luxury because they're caught up in the prison system, the court system — whatever's going on that's causing them to be on this side of the street. And I'm looking at this difference --and I'm at a stop light, so I can take all this in-- and I'm seeing people walking in suits. And all the people walking in suits, again, and they're in the other s- on the other side of the street where the young lady was jogging. They're all white faces. So, I think Charlotte does have it, and I think it's something that needs to be talked about. I don't think it's highlighted, I don't think we're doing enough to really address the needs of our community. There's so much gentrification going on, here in Charlotte. Charlotte is going to be a brand new city. U.N.C.C. even, I-I graduated from there in '04. It's three times the size that it was in-in just a matter of ten-ten years, it's three times the size of what it was when I was going to school there. Charlotte is erecting buildings and tearing them down. Like, Charlotte has no history. Um, and being a native Charlottenian, and getting more involved in my community--. This work has led me into being more active and engaged and paying attention to what's going on. Again, Charlotte's- Charlotte is almost like a Wild Wild

West of sorts, seems like. Where these developers are coming in, they're, um, being predatory, and some of them--. You know those signs that say, um, "We'll buy your house"? You don't see those all over Charlotte. You see them in certain neighborhoods, primarily communities of color, and they get the house --and Smallwood is an example-- they're changing the face, and you have a five hundred thousand dollar home next to a eighty- uh, eighty — may-maybe not even eighty thousand — fifty thousand dollar home. And it's pushing people farther and farther out of their community. And what I want more than anything --and I think it ties back to a lot of our other questions that we've been talking about here, um, *How do we bring people to the table?*-- I want, for Charlotte, to be able to rise up and have its own influence on its city. I think that's what's lacking. And I'm not saying that there can't be outside influences, but I'm saying it's the Wild Wild West because Charlotte has no influence on its own city, and so--. It's basically- it's- it's gonna look like a brand new city, in ten years, if we don't wake up, pay attention, start participating, start getting involved in our community, and-and-and just be active and engaged citizens, so... Um, yeah, it's here. And I'm seeing more and more of it the more work that I'm doing. Um, we all- we already knew that the most segregated hour, um- or the most segregated day of the week is Sunday during church. So, that-that's no different here in Charlotte. It-it-it's segregated on Sundays. Um, and segregation in our schools. Um, I--. I graduated from Harding. Um, and when I went there, there was the I.B. program, um, International Baccalaureate in math and science and technology program. Very diverse, very integrated, um- uh, I-I had classes with people from all different walks of life. Um, my work has led me back into volunteering in the school — completely different school. And it's so many schools, that are these title

one schools, that do not have the same access to resources as other schools in our community, and I think that's a problem. Um, the student assignment plan, that's being discussed with C.M.S. right now, you have a certain segment of our neighbors that are saying, 'Well, we want better schools for our kids, so we don't want our kids to be bussed and--.' Basically, like, it--. They're- they're concerned about proximity because, 'I've spent five hundred thousand dollars on my home just to make sure I could get to this particular school.' But when I heard that comment, don't we all want better schools? A-and I mean, don't we--? I mean, don't we all want good schools for our kids? And I think that should be the priority. We're building up all these new schools and we haven't taken care of the schools that are lacking and suffering and kids don't have the same resources, Harding resources--. My m- background on Hard- and how old Harding is, my mom went to Harding. I'm twenty years younger, I went to Harding and graduated; my sister is thirteen years younger than me and she went to Harding and graduated. And the only thing new and different about Harding is one building; they added on this, um, brand new building for Harding. So, when you look at that and you look at the disparities, because you got a Ardrey Kell, or you have a Providence or Myers Park, they have different resources. I'm advocating for there being equal resources. If you are a C.M.S. student, you should have the same access to education and resources no matter what school you go to. And I say, bring all the schools up to the same level.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

TP: Definitely. I think i--. I mean, I feel like the school is definitely something that they need to really focus on that. Maybe even discuss the- what that actual plan looks like more, because I feel like--. I know they said you have the choice of going to your

school that's closest to you first and then the magnet program, but I feel like right now they do use the magnet program, but it's- the waiting list is so much, like, what're they gonna do about that? And--. I mean, I went to, um, Mallard Creek in its first years of being--. So, it was a new school, but I mean--. Uh, like, now, my sister, she went to Mallard Creek --she's eighteen now, so-- but the fact is that even--. They've put so much--. Some schools, they-they tend too much to focus on athletics. Then, they're not able to really compete with, uh, academics because that's their priority. So then for that to be a new school, they can't take their textbooks home, they can't do those things to really--. I mean, and that's a concern for, like, my mom as a parent because--. I mean, my s--. Like, some of my, um--. My sister has (inaudible - 00:36:31) like, to-to be able to take that home, and those resources at other schools, and CMS I mean, they're able to take that- those books home and have those resources. And for that to happen, those things to change at a new school, only, like --I guess at this point-- like, eight years old. Seeing things that happen, like, at North Meck and schools that have been here for years--. I mean, I feel like C.M.S.--. It's just really sad for a s- a-a school district that was the model for Brown v. Board of Education to then be one of the most segregated now. Like, I think that's really sad. Another thing is the upward mobility issue. I mean, I feel like Charlotte really has to address as well, being--. I mean, it's worse in Baltimore and cities like that, and I feel like--. I mean, our city council and people that we elect--. I mean, I heard we have to increase the engagement of people in the community to really voice their opinions because--. I know that one thing that stuck with me is, um, I was at a presentation for Crisis Assistance Ministry, and they were trying to get volunteers. And

she was just talking about how--. I mean, Superbowl and all these things that they're getting all this attention put on Charlotte--.

SH: It was about the money.

TP: Buildings that all the things are around it, and then you have a baseball stadium and how that tends to be inaudible - 00:37:47). But, how she was just predicting that Charlotte is gonna be, like, a golden city, an uptown and then all the poverty going out towards, I mean, West Boulevard, I mean (inaudible - 00:37:55) Paris — all those places, just pushing it further out and that--. I mean, Charlotte (inaudible - 00:38:01) up isn't gonna look like uptown to people who are coming out of Charlotte. And I feel like that's just really sad because--. [Laughs] To see, like, when the D.N.C. came, I remember I was--. A lot of students at Queens were interning at the D.N.C. just for those weeks to get that experience, but, um, I didn't have my license at the time, so I remember I was, like, um — well, I did get license, but I got my license pretty late. So, my parents were talking and then they were like, 'We don't want you to really drive your first week with your license to drive in all this traffic to uptown.' So, I remember, I took the bus from Queens to, um, uptown and they had hidden all the people who were taking the bus, they hidden all the, um, peopl- uh, homeless people, they were hidden behind this stadium and so far out. And I just got off the bus and saw all these people, and I just was, like, 'You know, all the people with wits are all these people- these big politicians are here to see how great Charlotte looks, but then you're hiding--.'

NG: You're not seeing the truth.

TP: 'This poverty that really exists, and it's like--.' I just feel like the priorities were just so mixed. I just really...

ING: Yup.

TP: Yeah.

[NG intermittently agrees]

ING: But the zoning thing and the school thing is really a great topic, and if--
Really, a biting issue in the whole of the country and, you know--. I mean, uh, if you- i-if
you continue to pulverize the-the people who do not have that-that community is never
going to have them as easily. The only one, or two, that is going to somehow trickle out
of that and the majority will (inaudible e- 00:39:28) because the lack of exposure is really,
you know, a-a-a tremendous, you know, problem. And that (inaudible - 00:39:35)
problem. It's almost like the-the base and the, you know, [Laughs] we're keeping of all
the problem that you have today.

NG: You spoke about upward mobility, but I'm not sure everyone knows what
you're speaking — can you elaborate a little bit more on what-that that is?

TP: Um, well, this past s-summer, they did a- at one institution they did a survey
about, um, counties and all across the country, and they were talking about, um--. In
certain, um, counties where if you're born in poverty, you're more likely to stay there,
um, throughout your entire life. And they--. It was a--. The ones that were published
were fifty counties and then Charlotte was the number one. And they--. I mean,
Baltimore, they viewed all these other favorite lands, and they viewed all of them, um, in
that. Just that--. And you're born in Mecklenburg County in poverty. (inaudible -
00:40:27). So, I mean--. I don't know if after that was published- I mean, there was all
this backlash. I mean, they were upset about it, but I haven't seen any real movements
towards changing it. I know some city council people that did run--. I mean, they were

running about wanting to build this upward mobility and rebuild that and really change. But I mean, personally I don't really know what specific plans they have about that, but, I mean, I think that-that's just horrible of a study that's done na-nation wide for Charlotte to be one of those. Yeah.

ING: Yeah, I'm not surprised. [Chuckles]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

NG: I've heard it in various different meetings and events, people will bring that statistic up and the statistic is, um, if you're born into poverty you stand a 4 to 5 percent chance of escaping poverty in Mecklenburg County. So, again, to your point, what's being done about it? How are we a--? Like, all-all these issues are connected and what's challenging for me because I am --like I said, I'm becoming more and more active-- I-I'm going to the school board meetings around the issue of Student Assignment Plan, but the issue with Student Assignment Plan has a lot to do with the housing. The housing is being handled in your city council, so how do you get everyone talkin'? So, again, it goes back to this question about getting people to the table. It goes back to we gotta break down the silos, people gotta talk and see how all these issues are interconnected and stop looking at them so- so small and down to the smallest detail of the issue, and looking at the greater picture. Look at the greater picture of Charlotte, Mecklenburg school systems as a whole. Our schools are failing as a whole. If you got a school that is a F-rating, we are only the best of our worst.

TP: Mm-hmm, exactly. Did you graduate from high school in 2000?

NG: 2000?

TP: We're the same age.

NG: Oh, wow [Laughs].

TP: [Laughs] So, I was--.

NG: You were doing the math over there [Laughs]

TP: Yeah.

[Laughter]

TP: Um, so my first college experience, the one that didn't quite work out, I went to Amherst College in Amherst, Massachusetts. And before they even started, they all sent us- sent us, uh, books. It's a small liberal arts school.

JV: You got about ten minutes, everybody. You got ten minutes to wrap up.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

TP: Small liberal arts school, there's no tests, no grades, like twelve hundred people, um, and in the middle of Western Massachusetts. They sent us all our books before we started school and their book was called, *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria*. They said, 'Read this book, be ready the first day of-of-of c- of class.' So, the first day — it's not even the first day of class, it's the first day of, like, we just said goodbye to our parents, our tears are, like, just drying on our cheeks, and they're like, 'Let's talk about race.' [Laughs] And I was like, 'Okay.' In this- in this area that is, like, not diverse, this area that's very, like, this is the five (inaudible - 00:43:20) with Amherst and (inaudible - 00:43:21) and these like fancy colleges and they're like, 'We're gonna talk about this.' And I was sitting there saying like, 'You know, but-but-but...', like, it was not what I was expecting. And this woman who wrote this book went on to explain, like, 'It's a teeter-totter' and, like, 'Right now you're up here and you need to come down so other people can come up', and I'm like, 'No, it's- we have to

all raise up,' but, like, now I get it. She's absolutely right, and the one thing I loved that she also talked about is: if two people apply for a job and they ask for a, b, and c--.

She's asking for a, b, and c; and one person is a, b, and c; the other person has a, b, c, d and e? She's like, 'Pick the person that's a, b, and c because that's all you asked for. And this other person clearly has other privileges that have allowed them to get D and E. Let this person come get a, b, c and (inaudible - 00:44:02) opportunity to get d and e.' And that has--. But, so we actually--. Things have changed me in my life, and that is definitely one of them. I think it's something as simple as having a conversation about that, a book or something where it changes your whole mindset. And so when you think about these schools, rather than keeping the good schools, get better. We got schools that, you know, aren't even meeting the basic needs. Take care of them, and we'll all, you know, the teeter totter will adjust, so...

ING: If I- if I'm--.

[Crosstalk]

SH: My family says--.

ING: I'm sorry.

TP: Yeah.

SH: It's nice to meet you all.

TP: Oh, it's nice to meet you.

NG: Nice to meet you.

ING: Oh, you have to go? Okay.

TP: Yeah, I'll (inaudible - 00:44:32)

SF: Thank you--.

SH: Nice to meet you.

ING: Nice-nice seeing you again.

SH: Hope you all have a great day.

[Crosstalk ends]

ING: Yeah. I just wanted to quickly, um, bring three different scenarios, because I lived in three different countries in- conceptually, sometimes literally [Chuckles]

TP: [Chuckles]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ING: I was born in India; I started in India, I grew up in India and then I met my now husband, David Gall, who came from Barbados to India to study and I ended up in Barbados, and now I'm in States. So, the- I have the--. Becau--. I'm being teacher all my life, I have that, kind of, you know, direct experience. So, in U.S. you have--. We are talking about, you have basically a zoning system where the poor community gets less and the rich community get more, um, opportunity, more, uh, everything. But at least the system is free, it allows you to go to school. No matter where you're coming from. There is that, sort of, class system in the U.S. as well, but in India, where I was born, we literally have caste system. Okay? And the government schools are non-existent. Basically non-ex--. There's no- there are no teachers, there are nothing in the government schools, so basically they do not run, nobody sent their children to school. And when I say nobody I'm literally talking about, oh, more or less lower middle class to upper class. Their schools are basically private. So, education become literally your- a privilege and belongs to the privileged society. So the very lowest of the caste, who are

normally poor, the untouchables, the-the (inaudible - 00:46:08). They are sent to, probably, the schools where they're nothing there, so they never get to move upward, really. And then in Barbados, it's kind of opposite scenario. Barbados is interesting, uh--. What they call the Caribbean, it's very interesting, um, demographic and the dynamic social di-different--. I mean, colors are, um, African descent, are the majority and you have a small group of (inaudible - 00:46:36) those from the planter- receive planter background. So there they- then they may hold economic, uh, power, but the Blacks, or the African descents, hold the political power. So, it's a total difference; they have made schools free for everybody. And Barbados, until recently, the whole education system was to- up to tertiary level and university level. Anybody could- could go to, once you, you know, wh--. I mean, anybod- anybody can go to a primary school. I mean, we have, like, a primary or secondary, which is slightly different from here — could go to school, get education, and that lead to tremendous amounts of social mobility or upward mobility, as you call it. Um, but of course, there are always difference because, um, all schools are equal. But, again, you may have slight problem, but there's no zoning the same way that existed--. So, a-a-a-a child from poor community can do very, very well in that eleven plus exam, which is like a - like when you reach eleven there's an exam to go for a primary school to secondary school, which is kind of a combination of middle and-and-and, uh--. What's the last one?

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: High school?

ING: High school. Yeah, middle and high school. So, if they do well--. So, it could be, probably, a-a-a house, uh, household helper's or janitor's child, but did well and

went to the best school in Barbados. So, that is- so that--. I just want to bring this three interesting scenario and what dynamics can create these scenarios [Chuckles].

NG: So, the zoning. What are your thoughts about zoning, your personal thoughts? Like, now you've got such a rich experience...

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ING: Zoning has problem. If-if the zoning is, uh, strictly related to economic, um, opportunities — I mean, economic status, then zoning has tremendous problem as you see it here in U.S. And that is why the social system the way it is now, has happened and will continue to happen if you don't get out of the zoning system. Fully. Or we are- we make schools equal regardless to, um, where the school is. Like, now- right now, your funding depends on the income that is earned from that community, which is grossly long. And the schools will never be equal as long as you keep it tied to that.

Unknown: That makes sense.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

NG: Where were you Tuesday — no, Wednesday? I was at that school board meeting. Like, they--. I really think they need to hear different perspectives. I was in that-that meeting, and I'm there as a concerned parent who's gonna have a child in the school system next year, um, and then also a community organizer. But in that space, it's green shirts and orange shirts and it's becoming this — very divisive. And there was one person that got up and spoke and he spoke from his heart and I was like, 'That's awesome,' and I went and spoke to him, and I'm like, 'So, are you green shirt or orange shirt? Because I-I don't know. It seems like you're- you're- you're playing- making a team out of something that just needs to be objectively handled and looking at the, um,

betterment for all kids.' Um, so I-I want to encourage you to get into this conversation, 'cause that's a perspective that I haven't even heard about the zoning being rooted in the issue, so I'll be happy to--. Thank you for sharing your part with me, I'll be happy to--. Even if you can't make it, if you can give me some talking points, I'll- I'll pass them through.

ING: (inaudible - 00:50:19) the thing, I, uh, I-I don't know if I can, but I will try depending on what have--. 'Cause right now I'm kind of trying on the last lap of the project I'm doing and I need to get it--.

NG: Get it done [Laughs]

[NG intermittently agrees]

ING: Get it done and then get it--. Because my work is about, you know, this type of, you know, discriminatory policies. And I'm now dealing with, um, dealing with situations, traditions in India and the strict- strict caste system that exists in India. Here, we have caste system. Actually, that's the kind of thing that block me here. I wanted to open up the discussion about institutionalized caste system--. I mean, caste and that are literally written down?

NG: We might not be using the words but we have it is what you're saying, right?

ING: We have it. Yeah.

NG: Mm-hmm.

ING: We have it and that's- that's what actually I was hoping to (inaudible - 00:51:05) but maybe we'll have, I don't know, we have more time I guess.

NG: But if not--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ING: It is what I'm dealing with because I'm dealing with the-the (inaudible - 00:51:13). There's a- there's a strange tradition --which is illegal now-- that continues to exist in the small part of southern India. Um, it is called Devadasi system, it is about religious servitude where little girls are thrown into religious prostitution when they come of age. They're dedicated when the very very (inaudible - 00:51:35), pre-puberty. When they reach puberty, they are literally thrown into religious prostitution. And that still goes on, it's illegal so it is underground. It still goes on. So, it is all about the caste, it is all about not to- not allow the social mobility to happen. To keep that segregation, to keep that stratus so that one- the higher the rich --which I'm from that high upper class, too-- continue to enjoy, you know, the- all the facilities and all the privileges. And that's what you have here in unwritten words basically. You know, and it's not written down in your scripture, but that basically exists. [Pause] So, I am--. Actually, almost finishing a documentary and, uh, I-I-I mean- I'm going to go on the road on that- with that.

NG: Okay. Yeah, I-I think it's awesome. Like, the--. I'm- I'm thinking about everything that you said and for you to say that you're- you're from the upper class of the caste system, but to have awareness and a presence that the scales are out of balance--. What-what do you think shaped that, for you to say, like, 'I'll-I-I-I think it- I think I need to do more work to bring people up,' or like to have your perspective?

[NG intermittently agrees]

ING: Well, I use--. Yeah. Well, there are many more like me. I mean, otherwise this work will not be known and I will not have known about this, the- this peculiar tradition that is still continuing. So, that is the positive focal sign, but still not enough

work being done still it- still is out of balance. That's why the system e-exists, but more and more people need to talk about it, need to do something about it, make noise, and do something about it so that the policy makers are forced oppre- you know, pressured to make those changes.

TP: How will we be able to see your documentary?

ING: Um, if you email me, I'll try to make a list. It is just, right now, I'm doing everything and it started driving me crazy. If you want to be part in any way, any way you can help--. I mean, that'll be, like, godsend. I can--. But I'll kind of--.

NG: So, w-when will you see the light at the end of your tunnels?

TP: Yeah.

NG: So, like, I-I don't wanna, like, add anything.

ING: Right now — yeah. Right now, I'll tell you I have the teaser, which is a rough teaser on my page on Facebook.

NG: Okay. And we'll find it--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ING: And on Vimeo. So, if you google my name, you will find me on Vimeo and find me on my page. The teaser is out, um, which it's still kind of rough teaser, but I'm hoping to go that--. And I'm hoping to spark discussions like this. So, it doesn't really limit it to one little issue because this is a very broad issue, it's a global issue.

TP: Yeah. (inaudible - 00:54:20) does anyone listen to the podcast *Another Round*?

SF: Yeah. I've- I've- Well, I've added actually, like, a (inaudible - 00:54:27) podcast, so I only heard a little bit of it, but...

TP: I would invite you to [Laughs] put it at the top of your list.

NG: [Laughs]

TP: I--. It is one of my favorites every week, but if they did it--. They did a section--.

ING: Tell me the name--.

TP: It's called *Another Round*.

ING: *Another Round*, okay.

TP: It's with Heben and Tracy from BuzzFeed, but it's so smart and it is so--. To say, it is so smart and they talked about this idea of being an ally. And what I love is they said they hate the term 'ally' because 'ally' isn't a title, it's an action. They're like, 'And plus, being an ally isn't really a thing, it's just being a good person.'

ING: (inaudible - 00:54:55) Yeah.

TP: They're like, 'So just go be a good person.' [Laughs] I was like, 'That sounds about right, but show up.' I mean, I've been to other places where they-they--. I went to a-a seminar called "Appropriate Whiteness" and we were all just sitting there, like, 'Tell us how to be white appropriately.' And she's like, 'Show up. It's gonna be awkward, it's gonna be weird, you're gonna say something wrong, but show up.' I'm like, 'That's--.'

SF: That kind of reminds me of the, um, like, Macklemore, um, song of, uh, what was it? (inaudible - 00:55:19). Macklemore came up with a song about Black Lives Matter. Um, it's about, like, basically, being an ally and he--. Like, the whole ver--. Yeah,

he released it online a couple months ago and it was just like talking about, like, going to their rally and, like, you know, it was--. Like, how it was awkward at first, but, the thing is, he c- he, um, worked with, like, a Black Lives Matter, um, artist who sang parts of it. So, it was supposed to be like a collaboration from both sides. I thought it was really interesting and I remember hearing, uh, (inaudible - 00:55:51) like a month and a half ago, but I remember them talking about it on NPR because it's just an interesting take on it. But yeah, I think--. But then, it's like, kind of interesting because then people were saying, like, they liked it, but, um, then wasn't he also profiting off of being, um, being a face of Black Lives Matter in a certain way. So, it's just- it's all complicated. It's so hard to be an ally effectively, I guess? I don't know, in that sense of releasing music and that joining with the people that you're advocating for.

ING: You see--. [Pause] I-I-I hear--. Because I am not literally African --well, we all are African descent anyhow--.

[Laughter]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ING: I mean, but I'm--. You know, I-I'm still in Indian born. So, although I'm not--. I think- I think we have to look beyond. It's sometimes very hard to walk across. You know? Like, even now, Here, I'm sitting down and you are the only white person here, and she's at the white jogger--. I wonder what (inaudible - 00:56:49) [Laughs] Shoshana is thinking. You know? It doesn't make it hard, but the thing that- it takes courage no matter--. So I think we could think beyond the, 'Hey, is that person going to profit from there?' A person has taken a courage, taken a decision to cross that line and be on the

other side no matter what that is. That to me sometimes is an important thing. You know?

NG: Mm-hmm. And you don't want to stifle that. Like, you-you--.

ING: No, you don't want to stifle that.

NG: Like, it might not be the perfect, or the way that we imagine, like, the way that you should behave, but the fact that you are--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ING: And I don't think it's impossible- impossib--. Important, too, for, an African American or African person to work on the other side and mingle. Both ways. I-I-I'm saying this because I am in the middle and I have been in the middle since the time I left India, because wherever I went, that discussion was mostly Black and white. But the Brown was not there, non-existent because, as you know, the Brown community is really interested in wealth building. You have the I.T. Indians, or the Indians who are doctors, they are in their offices within the community. I'm saying 'they' because I'm not, but--. Although I'm really that skin color, that hair color, but that is the point and- and we all need to--.

HEATHER HART: (inaudible - 00:58:11) it's about time to wrap up.

ING: Do that. To need to (inaudible - 00:58:14).

HH: Your last few sentences, um--.

NG: Thank you all for sharing.

HH: Grab more food, there's so much.

[Laughter]

TP: Yeah, I think it's great.

NG: Well, I would personally like to stay in touch with everyone. I don't see your nametag, I was gonna write down your name.

TP: Oh, sorry. It fell off.

ING: You know, I have to do this.

NG: [Laughs]

ING: This does not stain.

TP: Yes.

NG: I'm assuming--. No, you said you're not on Facebook, so maybe if you can write down your email address...

TP: Yeah, yeah.

ING: So please look me up. I am trying to take this--.

NG: Mm-hmm, I definitely will. And I'll send you my contact information.

ING: On the road. Yeah, please do so. Send me your contact. And if you know anybody who might be interested, I-I-I have to try to post this thing. I mean, I want broad discussion, I don't simply want smaller discussion. Yes, I want to help those girls, women, but, you know, to me this is a- this is a discussion that needs to be on the table.

NG: Mm-hmm.

TP: Definitely.

ING: Yeah.

[Mic movement]

NG: I'm on Facebook, you can find me and fin--. I'm- I'm all over. [Laughs] Like, as far as, like, in the community and different events and stuff I'm doing.

ING: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I-I love to get--. So you send me your contact also, if you please.

NG: I will. I'll be (inaudible - 00:59:21).

SF: Very interesting.

ING: This was cool. I like the idea of the card.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm-hmm.

ING: So I'm actually teaching myself--.

END OF RECORDING

Transcribed by: Andres Molina 03/21/2021

To be copyedited.