

File Name: BNA_032219_ART1
Event Date: March 22, 2016
Location: Nashville, Tennessee, USA
Participants:
M. SIMONE BOYD
MONIQUE DAVIS
CHRISTINA ELEM
CHASE MADKINS
ALICIA HAYMER
BRANDON JAQUEZ DONOHUE
Length: 01:03:59

Preface

The following conversation was hosted at Vanderbilt University. 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

[Sounds of mic placement]

SPEAKER 1: 'Kay--.

MONIQUE DAVIS: We need to start over?

SPEAKER 1: No.

MD: Are we good?

SPEAKER 1: Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CHASE MADKINS: Uh, but you know, I asked the question I guess—What is the natural economy, like arts economy? Once you take, once you take the non-profits, once you take the philanthropy out of it, what-what exists? Like, naturally? Like, what natural means of support exists of functionalities? Exist? And, you know, I—speaking for Memphis—it's moot. It's nothingness outside of that supplemented support. So, then the question is, what needs to be done to create a better ecosystem? Uh, and I'm pretty sure a lot of the possible solutions is rooted in addressing race, class, issues, things of that nature, accessibility issues. Uh, and then going to the-what Monique said about, you know, not classifying what you do as High Art, but what about those that don't classify what they do as art at all? Because of the systemic, you know, issues uh, in-in art? So, so I kinda answered a question with a question, but... [Laughs]

[Laughter]

Unknown: That's good.

MD: No that's...yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ALICIA HAYMER: Um yeah, I would say in Nashville. I've been to lots of museums or art exhibits, but I think, um if you want Black art, you have to seek it out. It is available for you to appreciate, to purchase, but I mean, is it at the Frist all the time? No. If there's like a special exhibit coming through that highlights a certain cultural community, then yeah, you can go and enjoy it. But Black art is by no means always on display at our major art museum, which is the Frist. But um, there are art crawls on Jefferson Street, historic Jefferson Street here in Nashville, where you can go to like [Pause] Black art houses. Um, Black tattoo shops. Uh, Black...There's um, a-a

Black-owned sort of art and art framing company, Woodcuts. Um, you can go there and see lots of Black art. So again, I wouldn't say that it is advertised or pushed to the public or greater Nashville. Um, I think probably with any city, if you want something culturally specific to you, you have to go to that community. You have to seek it out.

[Pause]

M. SIMONE BOYD: I kinda—I agree with you 'cause I'm a native Nashvillian--moved back here four years ago. But on the other side, I-I do feel very supported as an artist. And I think it's because I seek it. Like, I live in North Nashville. I go to the Jefferson Street Art Crawl. We get our pictures framed at-at, you know, Woodcuts. Like you know, like that's-yo go—When North has an open, we go to their shows. Like, we are like... And TSU [Tennessee State University] has a gallery that's doing a lot of things. Rooted—

Unknown: [Inaudible - 00:03:45]

MBD: Yeah, community outreach. In-and so, when you say local gallery and museum record, like I've never been to the Frist before. Like, I've been to their community space, but I've never actually paid admission to go into the gallery. So, I can't speak to that. Well, they had Nick Cave, but--,

MD: Yeah.

MSB: And that was--...

[Crosstalk]

MD: Yeah, we're getting it next--.

MSB: Oh, you're all gettin' it--?

MD: Technically--.

MSB: Okay, okay.

MD: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

MSB: And that he's, you know, really amazing themes. Um, so I do feel supported. That's actually why I keep checking my phone, because my friend's supposed to be coming here to the Black Lunch Table. So I'm sorry. I don't want y'all thinking I'm being rude. [Laughs]

MD: [inaudible 00:04:21]

MSB: But she's a friend that I met at a book club; I'm a writer. And she came. She's like, 'Oh, you're gonna be there. I'm gonna come.' So, I do feel very supported. But I think it's because I'm... It's like Doctor Ve—yeah. Doctor Vega said, "I'm surrounded with people who—"

AH: Built that community.

MSB: "With the community." So...

[Pause]

CHRISTINA ELEM: Um, so I'm from St. Louis--,

MD: Oh.

CE: Yeah. Um, But I go to school in Bloomington, Indiana. Um as far as St. Louis, like I haven't been to a lot of like, I guess galleries--but more so like the big name museums, like Saint Louis Art Museum, stuff like that. Um, I-I-I feel like there is like representation like of us, but I feel like in the greater scheme of like-like art--or just like me as an artist, it's-it's those pockets. You know, kind of like what you were saying. Like,

you can find it like at those uh, at those festivals or like, you know, those special event type of things, but is it like, in-ingrained in like the-the institution? I would-I wouldn't say, and I feel like they could be definitely um, a better job at doing that. But um—And I would—And even if it-we are like present, it would be at those big institutions where they have like, the money for like, uh inventory and like keeping up with those perks. You know what I mean? So...yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

BRANDON JAQUEZ DONOHUE: I think I agree with you too. Like, I feel supported. So I'm an artist here in Nashville, and I've been here for about, oh, eighteen years. And so I started as an airbrush artist, which is like—I work directly with people. I don't have to have like a, like a gallery or a, like some sort of institution to promo. Y'know, sort of like, promote me, so. I feel like there is support for-for Black artists. But the rosters, like the stats don't show it. Like there's a lot of Black artists, and they—Some people don't consider themselves like artists. They-they're like makers, and they just do things for-for hobby. So, um, I mean-I-I don't know, it just depends on perspective, of-of what you're looking for. But, I mean I, I feel supported by Black people--you know and white people--but it's, it's just depending on like what you are aiming for, and what's your-what's your goal, so. Uh, the Frist is doing better though. Like I think, people are kind of looking at like, community outreach is like a medium that they get-like, reach more people through. And I think Nick Cave came through and really like—He really shook the city up. And he showed like what-like what's, what's possible.

MSB: Yeah, um, I echo that too. I think-I think Chris is actually doing a-art, an exhibit. Someone just told me last night with North Nashville artists--,

BJD: Yeah.

Unknown: Oh, nice.

MSB: And I haven't heard from them. But they're, gathering North Nashville artists--,

BJD: Yeah, yeah.

MSB: I think they are being [Inaudible - 00:07:09].

BJD: I'm in Nashville too, so it's like--,

MSB: Oh, that's so [Inaudible - 00:07:13] --...

BJD: It's gonna, It's a--, yeah. And they're like, it's--,

AH: Congratulations.

BJD: And so they're like giving the artists like a budget to-to actually like make the work. So we don't have to pay for out our own money--,

MSB: Yeah.

BJD: Like, they deliver their like, the canvases to us. Like is--,

MSB: Oh, that's great.

BJD: It's a good, it's a good, yeah it's good support--.

MSB: Yeah. That's awesome.

BJD: Like finally.

CE: Yeah--,

AH: Oh.

MSB: That's awesome.

AH: I will say there are a lot of um, murals in North Nashville, in my community. Like, the sides of buildings--,

[Laughter]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AH: With like beautiful Black art, and all around Fisk and Meharry and uh MLK. Like in those neighborhoods—Lots of mural art as well reflecting Black people and Black children and positive images. So...

CM: I-I-I think Memphis is just taking that approach as well with the mural, uh mural art funding. I-they-they have a actual name, but I just can't think of it. And I think they have uh, something built into this-this land-use development plan that they're, they're-they're putting together called the "Memphis 3.0." And I-and if I'm not mistaken, I believe they're looking to put like a resident artist in--,

MD: Oh.

CM: Each of these twelve distinct—

BJD: That's smart.

MD: Smart, smart.

[Crosstalk Ends]

CM: Uh, neighborhoods. Right, so um—And-and you know, even then it's, you know, it still kind of has its limitations. 'Cause at the end of the day, you know, I think a lot of it really come down to the consciousness of-of the artists, as well as the people that's kind of making these plans or proposals. But, uh generally [Inaudible - 00:08:43]

it's-it's a great idea. [Inaudible - 00:08:45] And they're doing a lot of mural work. Uh actually uh, one of the, one of the uh members of the organization that I'm-I interned with, her husband--she's a visual artist--but her husband is also like, one of the main muralists uh, in the city. And uh--,

[Crosstalk]

BJD: Who is that? Who's her husband?

CM: His name Jamond Bullock.

BJD: Yeah. Jamond Bullock--.

CM: Yeah--,

BJD: Um, yeah. I think it's like Alivepaint—

CM: Yeah, yeah, yeah--,

BJD: Alivepaint. Yeah, he's a good [Inaudible - 00:09:11].

CM: So he's like, he's lightin' it up of South Memphis. You know, just various parts of Memphis, so.

BJD: Yeah.

Unknown: Nice.

[Pause]

BJD: It's pros and cons to it too. Like, I guess when you use an artist to like build a community, sometimes the artist that paints the mural or is chosen, you... They may be developing for a different demographic of people or like, you know what I mean? So like, it-there's a, there's a pro and a con to it as well. Like, I see it happening here in Nashville, and like, uh like The Nations area here. It's like growing pretty fast, but they're

using art as like a tool to like sort of gentrify in a way, too. So that's a, that's a, that's another conversation. Like...

MD: Like that big tower, with the man--,

BJD: It's cool—No, it's a nice mural. But like it...

CM: [Chuckles]

BJD: You know, it's just—There's a history to that, like...

CM: You know, it's funny, when I was in Charlottesville, they was working on a structure that would essentially eclipse a public housing unit, right? And even though we don't necessarily—Well, I'm not gonna say “we,” but you know, there are those people, including myself at one time, that would not have necessarily considered architecture as a form of art, but in essence, it is, 'cause it starts with drafting, uh--

BJD: It's an idea, you know?

MSB: Yes. An ide—right.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CM: You know, so you know, it was just really interesting, uh, it-you know—A small crowd of people, uh kind of stormed in on some of these city-this, uh planning discussions and-and, and chimed in and really, you know, kind of developed the resistance towards that. But at least just to get them to develop the consciousness of what-what they actually are—What do you consider doing, you know? Ah-you're literally [Chuckles] you know, you're gonna build this, resurrect this tower that's gonna completely eclipse, you know, the vantage point of people that live within, you know, the confines of these, this space. They're saying something that, whether it's intentional or not--,

BJD: Yeah.

CM: You know they sayin' something very--,

MD: Yeah. What do they value? Them, right? Yeah.

CM: Yeah, so...

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MD: I mean, we are using artists in residence, um to have listening sessions in rural communities, and getting them to create in association-in collaboration with the artists. So, um what their project's going to be that addresses what the community wants, what their challenges are. And I think the requirements are-has to be participatory. So-it-so, the community members have to be involved in the origination of the idea, the implementation of the idea, and then the resulting artwork, whatever it is, has to live in the community after. There has to be some, like, type of sustainability and longevity or teaching skills. And we just started it--I mean, we're just making an announcement in March--but I-we have really high hopes for the program. Because I think the way people change their perspective and how they view themselves is using art as a tool to do that. And, and through dialogue and conversation, so—Conversations can be happening when the making and the creating is happening, and that's even, like more powerful. Um...yeah. [Pause] But um, and artists-arts are the economic driver of um, cities. I mean, you know, city developers are trying to get away from that fact. But art, artists make a place cool. I mean, you know? That's where p—People wanna be there. [Laughs] [Pause] I think right? Always.

MSB: I mean, all the time in Nashville.

BJD: [Chuckles] Always, always.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AH: They-they-they have call-they have um, they'll do this big calling for like sculptural artists, because they want something cool downtown or, um you know, like mural artists because they want something creative. So, definitely it-it rounds it all out. And it's what makes it beautiful, and not a bunch of tall summit buildings.

[Pause]

CM: Richard Florida, [Clears throat] Richard Florida has a book, *Rise of the Creative Class*. And he-he discusses that in-in depth. Um, he says that the three main factors of a-a flourishing city--urban city in particular-specifically--is talent, technology and tolerance--.

Unknown: Mm.

CM: Right? And so, mhm-that's really kind of the barometer for where your city stands in terms of progression--,

BJD : Yeah.

CM: And where it's heading. And uh, I mean it's-I-I don't think he could really give more...You know--...

[Crosstalk]

BJD: You said Richard Florida?

CM: Richard Florida.

MSB: Yeah. He talked-at the beginning of that book, he talks about how what makes that flourish is diversity. And the book was written well.

CE: That was a while ago.

BJD : Yeah yeah.

AH: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah.

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:14:02]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MSB: He talks about diversity from how a lot of times like, that cultural diversity, like what made Nashville cool, like the Sudanese population, the Ethiopian population, the Kurdish population--,

BJD: Kurdish. Yeah.

MSB: Like, what makes the city cool, then gets erased as the city evolves. And so, that's such a good point. It's like, how do we anchor the people who made Nashville--,

AH: The "It" city.

MSB: The "It" city.

CM: Nashville. Yeah.

BJD: Or any city--.

CE: Or any city.

[Crosstalk Ends]

BJD: So another issue too is like, when you put the art up, and the sponsors—Like how, I guess, how do we feel about, like, companies or corporations like putting their names into the actual art? Know what I mean? For example, if like, if Dr. Pepper wanted to put a mural, like, do we mind a corporate sponsor being present in

that mural? Or do we want them to be like a hidden...? You know what I mean? Like should we put their name directly in the center of that? 'Cause that's-that's another issue too. Like...

[Crosstalk]

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:15:00 - 00:15:02]

MSB: I'm not a visual artist. I've, b-ah so I'm like, hey, if Dr. Pepper wants--,

BJD: [Chuckles] They can do it?

MSB: Better schools in my neighborhood--,

BJD: They can do it.

MSB: And they gon' paint somewhere--

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:15:08 - 00:15:16]

MSB: Yeah I don't have a-I uh-I don't have any problem with that. Yeah--,

MD: Obviously you'd be set. Sponsorship.

MSB: If Dr. Pepper wanted to put in something on my sticker, I say 'Dr. Pepper, here you go.'

BJD: Go ahead? Okay.

MSB: She could be drinking a Dr Pepper.

[Laughter]

CE: So do you [Inaudible - 00:15:20]...

AH: Like a lot of times it's like, you have to do that to get your work--,

MD: Yeah.

MSB: Yeah.

BJD: Okay.

AH: Out there. And then, you know what I'm saying like--,

BJD: Yeah.

AH: You know for instance in-in movies and television, all we see is sponsorships and commercial actors are the highest paid actors in Hollywood--,

BJD: Yeah yeah yeah.

AH: Because of--,

MD: I mean, it's an interesting question...Because yeah—What Chase said is like, what-what would art be in its natural evolution if philanthropy and foundations and grants weren't involved? And like, how would artists--,

BJD: That's what I--...

MD: Sustain themselves? And like, you know, what-what does that world look like?

CM: Scary.

[Pause]

MSB: But you're a visual artist. Think ou-only two visual artists here, so can you answer?

CE: So, I was kind of wondering what you were talking about in terms of like ethics. So you know how like, um, just people who just kind of give money to a school, and then like they give so much money, and put their name on the wall, and we change the name of their thing. So you were talkin' about ethics in-as far as that?

BJD: Yeah, yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CE: You know, I keep thinking about that, too. And um, you-I don't know. 'Cause it's almost like, well, I know you gave or like, we-you're contributing to this community, um for the good. But it's like, do we have to know that it was you necessarily? Bun-but, but can we just like, appreciate what you did give in the-a-and the impact you did make us for what it was.

BJD: Well see what I see also was like a hidden hand, which means a hidden influence--,

[Crosstalk]

CE: Yeah, yeah.

BJD: Which means like, when you turn in your idea, the idea has to be approved--,

CE: The ownership, and the [Inaudible - 00:16:51] too.

BJD: And has to be approved; you have to go through so many filters in order for it to like, represent that company that has sponsored. I mean, it's-that's pretty—It's even with all things. Like I think I would—I mean I'm sure you have to do that, too [Inaudible - 00:17:02] too--.

MD: I mean we have to put sponsors on the-on the title walls of exhibits. I mean so there's no getting around--.

BJD: They don't approve. They don't have to like approve...

MD: No the, they don't-they don't have curatorial control. There's two separate things. I mean you're not--,

MSB: You're talking about curation--?

MD: Yeah.

MSB: Brandon, you're talkin' 'bout cur-like, they get to control the direction?

MD: Yeah they know. Yeah.

BJD: That's what I [Inaudible - 00:17:18] to it--,

MD: Okay.

CE: Yeah.

BJD: For like, the curation of the ideas that we come up with.

MSB: Okay.

MD: Oh no, they don't let me configure-say whether they want to sign onto it or not.

BJD: Okay.

MD: Exhibit plan and interpretive materials and all that's already developed--,

BJD: Okay.

MD: And they-either they support it or they don't.

BJD: Okay.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Pause]

MSB: That's a good, that's a good distinction for me [inaudible 00:17:38] North Nashville--,

AH: Hey.

MSB: And um, um I've asked these owners and business developers and people for \$50,000, And I want them to pay local artists; but I mean defining artists very broadly. And I need to make the distinction between curation and sponsorship.

MD: Yeah, you have curatorial control. Yeah--,

BJD: Yeah.

MD: So you control what that is, what themes they're addressing, all of that. And they just support the mission of the festival, which is create a platform to highlight underrepresented, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah--.

BJD: Blah blah blah, yeah yeah yeah, yeah. Yeah.

[Laughter]

MD: Whatever, whatever your language is... But yeah. [Laughs]

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:18:13 - 00:18:17]

MD: We got to. Yeah, yeah.

CM: You know I think-I think that kinda falls into--,

[Audio blackout - 00:18:21 - 00:18:24]

[Inaudible - 00:18:24 - 00:18:32]

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CM: And uh,I mean it really speaks to uh, the corporations, and businesses, you know, giving, donating, supporting in service of themselves, and not really going with, to your point--both with, supporting the things that they truly, ethically in line with. Because they're—In doing that, they could really say some telltale--,

[Crosstalk]

MD: Sure.

CM: Things about them, you know? 'Cause they [Inaudible - 00:18:57]—They made be really conservative, very conservative, you know, in nature, and in-kind. And uh, you know, but they want to kinda keep to their constituency--,

BJD: Yeah, abroad and...

CM: Uh, abroad. So they, you know, they have these-the one-off things that they support using the buzz words. And, you know? And uh--...

[Speakers intermittently agree]

BJD: Yeah.

MD: But yeah. I mean, that also requires us to be educated consumers, and to think about how we spend our money, and to think about who's on their board-how-what the board representation is. Think about the impact of their products in our community. So that requires us to not be lazy, and become more intellectually curious, um and do a more in-depth analysis of like, you know, what-how we're spending our dollars; who were supporting, who are not supporting. And unfortunately in this age, people don't necessarily want to do that level of internal reflection when they're making those types of choices. We have to train ourselves to do better.

[Pause]

CE: That's a lot of work to put into it--...

[Laughter]

CE: That's a lot of work. If you're looking, back to the whole background history of the--...

[Inaudible crosstalk and laughter - 00:20:13 - 00:20:19]

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MD: But it's a moral decision how you spend your money, 'cause all money is is energy. All money is, is energy. So where you invest your energy is what you prioritize, and what you think is important.

[Chuckling]

[Pause]

[Crosstalk]

MSB: What do you say we move to another question--?

BJD: Sh-yeah, that was [Inaudible - 00:20:36] --,

MSB: Like that was, that was, that was--,

CE: That was kinda good.

[Laughter]

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:20:37 - 00:43]

AH: How much time we got left?

MD: Okay--,

AH: Alright, so we--,

MD: Who's go--,

AH: All right--,

MD: Okay, you read?

CE: Um, *What kind of public art do you find valuable?*

AH: Do you find valuable here?

[Pause]

BJD: I guess I'll--,

[Inaudible - 00:20:58 - 00:21:00]

MSB: Just speak specifically.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

BJD: Okay. Public art? What kind of public art? I think socially engaging public art is one. Like having something that's-that's just formal, like a shape and color. Not so much, but when-I guess when you have workshops that, that come before the actual making of the work, I think that's-that's important because then people have a better association with that work, and they can identify with it. So I'll say socially engaging artwork, or public-public art. [Pause] I think the process is more important than the-sometimes the actual end piece. So, that's what I mean.

CE: I have a in-a question to the question--.

BJD: Yeah.

CE: Um, just about like art for art's sake. And then like art that is like, that has like that meaning or like social uh-engaging aspects. Because like, when you come into a space and you just see a piece of art that may not have like depth, but it's visually pleasing, and it does add to the ambiance of the space, like that's valuable too. So I was just wondering like, where do we balance that out? Yeah.

BJD: Yeah.

MD: I don't know. Why is it either/or? Why can't it be both/and? Why can't we have--,

[Inaudible - 00:22:20]

MD: Socially-engaging that questions-makes me question my deepest core beliefs. And then something, 'Ooh, that's really cute and sparkly, and makes me giggle.' I mean, dit-I think there's like room for all of those things.

BJD: Right. Mm. [Pause] But do we see more of one than the other, though?

MD: Depends on where you are.

BJD: And it's based on who you are and where you are--?

MD: Mmhm. Mm.

BJD: Yeah, yeah. [Pause] Hm.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Pause]

CM: I need to sit on it. [Laughs]

[Laughter]

[Inaudible - 00:22:51 - 00:22:53]

AH: I—For me, I have two daughters, and I'm very conscious about representation. And so I try to expose them to things where they can see themselves. Uh, [pause] so, I think that answers the question. That's what's important to me: Art that is representative of Black women. The whole, the-the gamut, you know? Glamorous Black women, beautiful Black women, hard working Black women, exotic

Picasso-esque looking paintings; just Black people. Um, it-know-representation, you know? So, it's important to me that they see the complexity of Black people at home. And it doesn't all have to be beautiful. It doesn't all have to make sense. But I want-I, you know, I just want to constantly show them...You know—Black people appear in many ways. Many things—Black art is many things from you know, the-the pictures we all see at the flea market of all the dead rappers--.

[Laughter]

AH: You know? Somebody--,

[Crosstalk]

[Inaudible - 00:24:17 - 00:24:20]

AH: Somebody—Black Jesus.

[Laughter]

AH: You know like, the whole gamut.

[Inaudible - 00:24:25 - 00:24:27]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AH: To like, when we go to the festivals, and we see all of the art; some of it that I can't afford, but we can admire and admire the beauty and the mind that it came from and I'm like, 'A Black person made this.' So I-I'm just a big on representation. It's very, very important to me.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Pause]

MSB: I'll-I'm willing... Yeah I don't think I really answered the question, but I just feel like we are so blessed in Nashville. 'Cause we have the African Street Festival. I mean, we have a [Inaudible - 00:24:57], the Black bookstore. We just have--,

[Crosstalk]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AH: Yeah.

MSB: Like you don't have, a lot of people.

AH: Like you don't have to work ha—Like if you—It's not like, 'Oh, I gotta go way out to here to the one little boutique, and buy—' it's-it's—You really can like [Pause] engulf yourself buying Black and experiencing Black positive--...

MD: So as a non-Nashvilleian, where—I mean is that neighborhood close to physically where we are now? Like if I wanted to spend some Black dollars, like physically where would I go?

MSB: Yes, you would go—I guess this is the Main Street West end--,

MD: Uh huh.

MSB: This is the Main Street West end. You would go down 17th to DB Todd. And then DB Todd intersects with Jefferson Street. Once you're at Jefferson Street, knock out [Inaudible - 25:43] --,

AH: You can pick a di--,

[Laughter]

AH: You can pick a direction.

MD: Okay, alright, okay, alright--.

[Laughter]

MSB: Gar-Garden brunch [Inaudible - 00:25:46] --,

[Speakers intermittently agree]

[Crosstalk Ends]

AH: Jefferson Street also has, uh—it's-it starts with TSU. And there's Meharry. There's Fisk. And so you got, like three HBCUs on one street. And then like you said, there's restaurants. There's a Black-owned tattoo shop. There's Woodcuts. Yeah, the owner of the Black-owned tattoo shop is right there in the [Inaudible - 00:26:08]. Um, but like you said, there's Knockout Wings. There's Garden Brunch Café, which is a Black-owned restaurant. But yeah, that's like... What else? Oh yeah, Alkebu-Lan Images right down by TSU.

MSB: But I don't want to paint this picture that it's some utopia.

[Crosstalk]

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Right, right.

MD: I mean, well we don't have a street like that anymore in Jackson--.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm, mm. Right.

MD: We had one, but after the riots, [inaudible - 00:26:33] had just come in and it's vacant. So... [inaudible - 00:26:39]

AH: But that's the closest, I would say, hub Black businesses [Inaudible - 00:26:43] to our location.

[Pause]

AH: You agree? You live here right? You agree?

BJD: Yeah I live here too. I think Antioch, like further out, is pretty--,

AH: Yeah. Yeah that's the closest--,

BJD: Pretty [Inaudible crosstalk - 00:26:53 - 00:26:54] --.

AH: You go to Antioch and you get--,

BJD: Like--,

AH: A lot of Black-owned restaurants and businesses and boutiques and--,

MSB: But they also have a lot of Ghanaian—Like it's a very ethnically diverse
[Inaudible - 00:27:04] --,

MD: Oh, interesting. Okay.

MSB: They're ethnically diverse community. Kurdish, Mexican--,

BJD: Nolensville Road. Nolensville Road; it's just--,

AH: Nolensville Road, if you want--...

[Speakers intermittently agree]

BJD: It's a really long street that takes you from, from downtown all the way out
of the city. And it's just full of every coun—Uh, it's called Nolensville. N-O-L-N,
N-O-L-E-N-S-V-I-L-L-E--,

MD: L-L, N-O-L--,

BJD: E--,

MD: E-S--,

BJD: And N. No, E-N--,

MD: E-N. Nolen, okay--,

MSB: Yeah. Nolens--,

MD: Okay.

BJD: Nolens, yeah.

AH: Yeah, and that's if you want the world.

[Laughter]

BJD: You want that--...

MSB: Eastern European, like--...

BJD: Yeah.

MSB: Yeah.

AH: You—whatever, whatever you want--,

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:27:40 - 00:27:42]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MSB: Tomorrow, like, Plaza Mariachi...[Inaudible - 00:27:44 - 00:27:45]. Like if
you wanna go see live music. They have--,

MD: Mhmm.

BJD: Learn how to dance--,

MSB: Yeah.

BJD: Do some--,

MD: Outside.

BJD: Salsa, Mariachi.

MSB: Yeah.

AH: It's like a whole leh...uh, a mall--,

MSB: Yes.

AH: Grocery store. Restaurant. All that, like the Latin community built themselves. It's a radio station in there, and it's like, it's amazing.

MSB: I don't know if that answered our question on [Inaudible - 00:28:08] --,

[Laughter]

MSB: [Inaudible - 00:28:10] find it valuable. Yeah.

BSD: You want to hop back in there?

MD: [Inaudible - 00:28:13]. What's your question?

CM: Uh. [Laughs]

[Laughter]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CM: Um, I don't know. I, honestly, my preferred—Like, what I prefer to see in terms of art in the public is just really regular life, day-to-day existence. It sounds kind of euphoric—I don't know... Um, almost utopian. But the truth of the matter is like, even like right now, like there's an art to these types of collaborations, right? And someone's going to transcribe it, and put it into some form of creative writing here, right? So some art is going to come from this, uh... 'Cause it's really been, you know, to me, it's just really being in places where this happens where I can see this, you know, uninhibited, like completely free of obstructions. Um, and so I don't necessarily frequent museums and you know things like that often, at least not in Memphis. I go to the Withers museum, but it's usually to go meet someone, or to speak to someone. It's not necessarily there to look at the pictures, you know? Um, and even then, you know, our

conversations are usually framed around how people come in and see one thing, and in our experience, and knowledge, and understanding kind of reflect something different. And even then, we kind of have to let them have their experiences. For [Inaudible - 00:29:58] don't enjoy that. You know, uh... So, for me, it's really more so just, I just prefer to be in spaces where, you know, we could just be us freely. Y'know, that's enough argument in and of itself, so...

MD: So I have a question that I wanted you all to talk about. So, *Discuss how to maintain spiritual, physical, mental wellbeing as an artist or art worker.*

MSB: Mmm.

[Pause]

MD: Go.

[Laughter]

AH: Okay.

[Inaudible - 00:30:31 - 00:30:33]

MSB: I have been thinking a lot about this, so I wanna jump in here. Um--, Take breaks. Like, I'm learning—Um, Brian's [Inaudible - 00:30:41] Have any y'all seen his TED talk? So Brian is just--

MD: Mm-mm. I've got his book though.

MSB: He is just an amazing soul. He started the Equal Justice Initiative, which studies mass incarceration [Inaudible - 00:30:55]. So he has a TED talk, and he's in Alabama. And he talks about the first time that he met Miss Rosa Parks. And he was—I think in the first three months, he had these women gathered there and he just sat there

and it was like the first three months they were there, he was going to visit. Finally, after three months, she was like, 'What you [Inaudible - 00:31:14]?' And he was talking, he was like, '[Inaudible - 00:31:17] I'mma do this, I'mma do that.' And she just said, 'You gon' be tired.'

[Laughter]

MSB: 'You gon' be tired.' And the neighborhood [Inaudible - 00:31:30 - 00:30:33], but you can't quit. Like, there's just too much work to be done. So like, it's like next week, I'm taking a break. I think I'm just gon' turn my computer off for the day, take naps, go to the movies, [Inaudible - 00:31:43] my son. And then, when the next Monday comes, I'll get back at it.

BJD: That mental health break.

AH: Mhmm. [Reaffirming sounds of support]

CE: Yes. Yes. Just that spiritual, like, like...

[Speakers intermittently agree]

BJD: I want to hop in on that too. I think we—I think it's important to have therapy. I think we all need therapy. Like, like that's underrated, you know? And we know that too. But like, so—or having someone, like having a partner, who you could like, you know, decompress and take. 'Cause, I mean, without, yeah, without proper therapy, without some sort of release, or like learning how to articulate like, your emotions and what you've been, like, building up, like angst, like, you know, having—Yeah, I don't know. I think therapy is one thing that we need to like work on over the next couple of years. Like, no matter what age and even raising children up with accepting therapy as normal. You know?

CE: Because, as artists, we take things more deeply; we feel it deeply. It's internalized, and so you have to figure out how to, like, process that and like you said, release, and so it's just-it's imperative.

[Pause]

BJD: Mm, *In order to attain spiritual, physical, mental--*,

MD: Mental wellbeing--,

BJD: Yeah. [Chuckles]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MD: As an artist and artworker. I think, and especially as Black people though, we also need to reckon with the fact that we never that we are all suffering from post-traumatic slavery disorder, and figure out ways that that presents itself in our everyday lives. Like... So when the *Green Book* [2018] came out, it kind of just clicked for me that when I was growing up my parents never stayed at a hotel, because they were afraid. So we used to plan trips based on where we had people. So I didn't even sleep in a hotel until I was like nineteen or twenty years old. And how I—And I didn't understand the reason, but how I kind of internalized that... Um, and you know, there's plenty of stories about how people have adapted their behavior to cope with an initial trauma, but now we don't know the story associated with their trauma, but we're still carrying on the tradition. Um, and I think we need to also think about that—especially since we're empathetic, creative people, and how that informs the way that we think about things...

[Pause]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CM: Eh, [Chuckle] I think, kind of, to add-on to that is, I think attaching this notion of Futurism to our work and our vision, you know, and using the past and the present, as a, you know, almost platform to aspire to what can be, what will be, and find different innovative ways, creative ways, to illustrate that. And, you know, and just—and let it live. You know, let it live. It may not live with us. It may live somewhere—but that's the whole point of it being futuristic. I mean, yeah, you know? That's a, you know, that's—that's a—And also, I think there's a art, somewhat of a view to me personally, in kind of creating the dystopian worldview and using that to our advantage, you know? So that you don't get deluded and ultimately disappointed in “What isn't?” Right? So you kind of create this dystopian reality for yourself.

BJD: I was gonna say that sounds romantic, you know, about the future--,

CM: Yeah.

BJD: I was gonna say that sounds romantic, you know about the future. And I'm kind of pessimistic. Like, I'm like, cautiously—Yeah, like, I believe that we can do it, of course, but like, do I see it? Like, do I—do I see—Do I think we will all one day like...? [Pause] I don't know. I just...I don't know. So it's like, there's something about that that sounds like so beautiful, but like--...

[Crosstalk]

CM: Yeah, we may not see it. That's what I was saying--,

[Laughter]

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:35:46 - 00:35:49]

CM: Yeah, that there-and you have, make pe-that's the dystopian--,

MD: You're all-it's like, don't get it twisted.

[Laughter]

CM: That's the balance, you know. The dystopian, the balance. I may not see it.

[Laughter]

CM: It may be a million years--,

BJD: Yeah.

CM: But I can at least dream it--,

BJD: Got [Inaudible 00:36:02].

MD: Right.

CM: You know, I can at least dream it, and hope that this dream goes on to live with someone--,

MSB: Absolutely--.

CM: Who actually gets to see it--,

MSB: Yup.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CM: And that's something that we admire to this day about Martin Luther King Jr. But not just him, you know? So many others, uh, [Inaudible - 00:36:19] Edwards, yesterday kind of spoke to that. You know, being the manifestation of his ancestors' prayers. You know, they didn't know he was going to be him. But I'm sure they hope that he would be who he is, and just—and likewise, with us... So just kind of attaching it [Clears throat], and attaching that genealogy—

MD: Yeah.

CM: Aspect on to it. You know, it's like, you know, my kids' kids' kids—Somebody's gon' get--,

BJD: Somebody's gonna get it.

CM: Somebody's gonna get it--.

MD: Right, right.

[Crosstalk Ends]

CM: It's gon' click. And, I mean, that's really it. That's the greatest manifestation of all my hopes, prayers, dreams, ideas... You know, thinking about it in real terms, it's just-it's not even pragmatic. It's nonsensical. You know, it's nonsensical. Uh so, yeah.

MSB: I'd like to piggyback on what you said. Um, on what you both said. Because I've been to-like, you're working [inaudible 00:37:19] have to keep, you know, as [Inaudible - 00:37:19 - 00:37:20] says, keep hope alive, because we are working toward a future that we may never see. Like, [Inaudible - 00:37:25 - 00:37:28] before. [Inaudible - 00:37:29 - 00:37:34] --,

AH: Right. That somebody's gonna make space for us--,

MSB: Yeah--.

AH: To just talk, and meet--,

MSB: Yeah, right--,

AH: And be Black.

MSB: Right.

CE: And be Black.

[Laughter]

[Inaudible crosstalk- 00:37:41 - 00:37:45]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MSB: So, I feel like, in-we're doing that for the people that are coming. So...that's the whole [Inaudible - 00:37:52].

BJD: I noticed something weird when I came in and got food. It was like all Black people, and the only white person was the server.

MSB: Whoa.

[Laughter]

MSB: What?

[Laughter]

BJD: Was that intentional?

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:38:02 - 00:38:10]

[Laughter]

MSB: That's crazy.

MD: That didn't even cross my mind.

BJD: Yeah.

CM: Yeah. Interesting.

BJD: I bet.

[Laughter]

BJD: And that blew my mind.

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:38:18 - 00:38:20]

BJD: I don't know--,

MSB: Wow.

BJD: I don't know.

AH: [Inaudible 00:38:23] hired us two white cafeteria workers

[Laughter]

AH: Need y'all for a special event.

[Laughter]

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MD: And I also want to talk about the spiritual part too. Because our faith is you know, such a—for me—faith is such an important part of my work. Um, because that's what keeps me going, past the rejections, past the failures, past the... You know, what I believe is that I'm fully accepted, fully appreciated, fully realized, so no matter—You know, this is how [Inaudible - 00:38:49]. So, um, I think sometimes the world that we live in tries to make us feel less-than. But my faith is where it keeps me grounded, and who I'm [Inaudible - 00:38:59].

[Pause]

MD: Yeah, the spiritual part for me is tricky, 'cause I find it a very colonized base. And spiritualit—well, specifically Christianity has been used to wipe out--you know since the doctrines of discovery--it's been used to wipe out Indigenous populations, it's been used to subjugate women, to harm people. And so, redefining for me what that really

means has been complicated. I'm Catholic, and I'm struggling with my relationship to the church and their sai—all that--,

AH: Yeah.

MD: Um, so yeah, this renegotiation from...

[Laughter]

BJD: So--...

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AH: I think it helped very much—having a community is what keeps me grounded, and my spiritual community is what has changed my life. Um, I'm not Christian, but being around [Pause], like seriously, being around like a good sixty or seventy-five Black people that believe in spirituality, and economics, and science, and having a garden, having our own center, and wanting to start our own school, and teaching the spirituality classes, and history classes, and home buying classes, to me, that's Black power. Right? And that is community. And they're artists; they're teachers; they're—You know, like, it has shaped my mindset to where when I was very religious, there were just—my mindset was different. Um, and, you know, coming out of that, and then not being anything for like a good five or six years, and then just finding what speaks to me spiritually is what has given me just the foundation of support I need. And to-to be free in who I am, as an artist, a writer--somebody that wants to write--somebody that writes about Black life. Like I feel you like, the plays that I write; they're about, like Black people just livin', normal. And people were like, 'Well what is your goal? What is your...' you know, like, 'mission statement?' And I was just like, 'I'm just wanna write about Black people doin' normal Black shit. I just want--,

[Crosstalk]

BJD: Right. [Inaudible - 00:41:24 - 00:41:29]

[Laughter]

AH: Tell the world that Black people are normal.

[Laughter]

AH: And I was like, I was like if-you know, if they-if it came-if one person reads this, and it's like, 'Oh, this is a Black family.'

[Laughter]

BJD: [Inaudible - 00:41:39] Black--,

[Inaudible - 00:41:40 - 00:41:41]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AH: Then my work is done. 'Cause I was just like so, so much of our art has to be grounded in pain or struggle--,

CE: Right, right.

AH: For it to resonate with people of other cultures. And I'm like, again, that's not all we are, is struggling and heartbroken.

CM: Ah-you know, it's interesting. I think even in spirituality or religion, you know, the dehumanization of the African mind, body, soul experience like is extremely undermined. Like, no one really speaks to that component of how the improper usage of dichotomous logic has been used as a weapon, as a tool of psychological destruction, almost. You know, like, either you this—like, either you're right or you're wrong. Either you're good or you're bad. You're either righteous or you're evil. You're going to Heaven

or you're going to Hell. You know? And-and then framing it around things, you know? Like, the act of being able to own land, being able to have certain amenities that I'm barred from, so that automatically means that I'm bad? 'Cause I can't have these things that the people that are the most holiest have, right? But it's not a natural happenstance, you know? It's completely constructed to be this way. But I eventually internalized these practices, these concepts, and then I cancel out my own humanity--.

[Crosstalk]

[Inaudible - 00:43:24]

MD: Yep, yep.

AH: Mhmm.

CM: You know, I begin to cancel out my own humanity and it becomes so repetitive, that we [Chuckles] I don't know--...

MD: We don't see it.

CM: It's invisible--,

MD: Right.

CM: But it is extremely powerful. Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MSB: It's internalized. Like one of the questions on the [Pause] tables in there was like, *How is racism internalized in your community?* And I was just like...I mean when you treat a community-when you don't give a community quality grocery stores, when we don't give them quality schools, when you don't give them quality places to shop, when you let their communities be run down, then you can't help but look at your

surroundings and internalize, 'I am less-than. My community is less-than. People that look like me don't deserve nice stuff.' And I'm like--,

CM: And we say it all day. You know we cain't have nothin'.

[Laughter]

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:44:19 - 00:44:25]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

[Crosstalk Ends]

MSB: Yeah. And that's how it's internalized. Because-that's 'cause that's what they show you. And if you grow up, and that's all you see is a rundown-ass Black neighborhood, then you feel like that's what your neighborhood is—That's the norm; that becomes the norm. And then-and we don't even realize like, the very least, the littlest amount of effort, is what we have internalized as normal.

CM: And a lot of it is sponsored-a lot of it is is-is pushed and advocated by government. You know? By--,

[Crosstalk]

AH: Absolutely.

[Crosstalk Ends]

CM: Yeah by government; state local governments. You know? Big businesses. Industry. You know, everybody's kind of got their hand in the pot. I could take you to about twenty-three locations in the Hollywood district of North Memphis. [Clears throat] You know, just one zip code, 38108, it's twenty-three Brownfield sites. You know,

Brownfield sites are, are areas—Well it's land designated by the EPA as basically either impossible or extremely difficult to redevelop because of environmental pollution--,

AH: Wow.

CM: It's twenty-three just in that one zipcode; twenty-three of 'em. And-an-an-an interesting enough, that zip code has the highest infant mortality rate for the whole county. And we talkin' about six almost seven hundred thousand people, just in the inner city. And about 1.5 in the metropolitan area. And that one zipcode triples, quadruples, like, national averages and all that for infant mortality. This is-and this is—clearly the government know this. Like, it's not like...[Chuckles] Y'all know this. This is something y'all know; y'all got the data and everything. Like I can go on the website and everything, and satellite the location. Like, there you go--.

BJD: [Inaudible - 00:46:25]

CM: So, you tell me. You know, what is it? Like, is it? Yeah, they waitin' on us to say, 'Hey, we're gonna start cleaning up some stuff that you all basically said that y'all don't even know what to do with. How does this really work? You know, how does this really work? And essentially have reparations, right? 'Cause something like that will require some form of reparations. Which is, I think, tied to why it's not really spoken on, or it's not really made as prominent of an issue as, say, hanging up a piece of public art downtown might be, you know? That's-that's a big deal--.

[Crosstalk]

MD: [Inaudible - 00:47:05] talking about real money.

CM: 'Cause you talkin' 'bout some real stuff—

MD: I think yeah. You talkin' about lawsuits--,

CM: Real accountability, yeah.

MD: You're talkin' about accountability...

CM: You talkin' 'bout some real accountability, so. Um, but, I say all that to say, that, at least from like where I stand in all of this is, just from a knowledge perspective, right, is helping the people in those communities fi-find their humanity, and knowing that this stuff ain't—This ain't your fault, man. It's like none of our fault. We ain't do this. Don't buy that.

MD: Yeah.

CM: Don't buy into it, man. And stop, like—They know not to come to me with it. It's over with. It's over with. But, I'm-you know, to help y'all out, don't buy... It's not our fault. We ain't make this. We ain't create this, so.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Pause]

[Inaudible - 00:47:51 - 00:47:54]

MSB: Christine, I feel like we haven't heard from you

CE: Yeah, I've been just like, I feel like I agree with it-what it-what's been said. So it's like, eh--...

[Pause]

BJD: Well I got a question, um--,

CE: Okay.

BJD: *Discuss factors that contribute to changing cultural landscapes here. Have they affected your practice?* I guess that's like writing, art, whatever. But, *Discuss*

factors that contribute to changing the cultural landscape. We've talked about art, like visual art in a way. Like, I guess with music or like writing...

AH: Maybe uh...[Pause], maybe like broader exposure to changing the cultural landscape? 'Cause I, I feel like [Pause], like we said, in Nashville there are cultural pockets, but you have to seek them out. I don't feel like Nashville is even promoted as like a culturally-inclusive diverse city--.

[Crosstalk]

MSB: That's interesting.

AH: Like they're even startin' to call us "White-lanta."

[Laughter]

MSB: What?

CE: That's funny.

BJD: "White-lanta."

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:49:08 - 00:49:17]

AH: Yes. And when [inaudible 00:49:12] was sayin' it, we're like, 'White-lanta?!'

[Laughter]

MD: Wow.

AH: Yeah, man. Just in the last few months, I've heard it--,

MD: Wow.

AH: They were like, 'Aw, yeah. White-lanta.'

BJD: That's funny.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AH: Just because that's what is in the marketing of it being an "IT city." You know, I-uh-there?

[Pause]

[Crosstalk Ends]

AH: You know, it's not marketed as diverse in any way. It's just like, young like um, millennial, rich business, you know? It's not—Even as-even as lovely and culturally diverse as it is, it's not pushed like that. Like anything you want with like flavor you gotta go to it. Like we said, go out in Antioch. Go out in Nolensville Road. Go out north. You know, but it's not integrated into the city, and I think integrating it may just take the city. So, it would have to come from higher up. And it would have to be an initiative pushed by the city to it to want more exposure, to want to sell the city as a diverse place. But I don't think that's on the agenda--.

[Crosstalk]

MD: I mean I know—Yeah as a museum, we're starting to ask different questions. And especially around colonialism, um, how do we get the objects? So we have one of the few images of an enslaved person, name is Delia. The own—the family that owned it gave us the [Pause] well, sold us the picture. But then, we're asking ourselves like, so we need to find out who Delia's people are, because perhaps there might be some reparation—I mean, there should be some effort to identify her, to figure out wha—to continue to humanize her. 'Cause she was a piece of property by the people that owned her, and now her likeness is a piece of property in our museum. And so, figuring out that complicated relationship, um is something we're trying to start to deal with. And then also including pictures of artists next to the work that they create, because if we're really

accountable to community about representing underrepresented populations, we need to show--,

AH: Who they are. What's the face [Inaudible - 00:51:48 - 00:51:50]

MD: We need to have a visual of who they are. And we recognize that we have major gaps in our collection, especially by women and women of color. I mean—and disabled folks. So you know, just really being a lot more intentional about how to diversify and broaden our collection.

[Pause]

MSB: [Inaudible - 00:52:10 - 00:52:12] --,

BJD: Mm. [Pause] Now I'm-I'm just thinking--,

MSB: Yeah...[Laughs].

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CM: So, so, I-I will-I will say uh—I would like to see more oral tradition, oral history being practiced and exercised. Uh, you know, narrative constructing. You know, because—And-and, and one of the reason why, is 'cause—For one, it's already there; it's just—I feel like it's kind of been removed from the essence of which it came from. You know? But we kinda still—Even now, you go into like, I'm in Memphis, clearly is urban. Some people call it “hood.” You know? And uh, it's a lot of the nuances that you may discover are... A lot of it is kinda of shaped and created through oral, like unwritten history, and lore. It's very interesting. Like, each neighborhood has its own very, very distinct flavor. It has its own lexicon, everything. Like South Memphis, North Memphis--,

[Crosstalk]

BJD: I mean, we could be talkin' about, like Orange Mound being like one of the first Black-built cities.

MSB: Right. Yes. Yeah yeah, yes.

AH: Yes, yes--,

BJD: Or not cities, but neighborhoods in-in America. Like--,

MSB: Yeah, absolute-absolutely. In America.

BJD: That's a--,

CM: And Orange Mound, to this day, has that unity, but it's not guided by that history. That's the problem. Like, there's a disconnect. Uh, you know?

BJD: I see what you're sayin'--,

CM: Yeah. It's a disconnect.

[Inaudible - 00:53:46] --.

CM: So I-I would love to see--...

[Speakers intermittently agree]

BJD: How would you do-like how would we construct that? Like, like-like, I guess like community gatherings, or like having the elders lead—I think maybe the elders would be the proper way to, like, keep passing the information down--...

MSB: Yeah. Like this--,

CM: I don't know. How would--?

AH: Work. Like you gotta-you gotta be like—It-it has to be more than just a notion. You know to be like, 'Okay. We got to reach out to these people. We gotta plan a

meeting. We have to have an agenda. What do we want to see happen? How c—It takes like work, and a committee, and commitment, you know? I-I just, applying it to my own neighborhood and seeing what's happening there with gentrification, and you know, and things that I would like to do--I'm just like, if had the money, we would be straight I think--,

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

AH: But it takes, like the money and the initiative--.

BJD: And I guess-and I guess like being practical, I guess when we have our like, like certain events like parades--,

[Speakers intermittently agree]

BJD: Like Melrose has that parade; maybe accompanying things that we normally do, we should like fit those activities in there, because everybody's already present--.

[Inaudible group crosstalk in agreement with statement - 00:54.52 - 00:54:58]

BJD: Yeah, showing like a screening-projecting something on a building, while everybody's outside. I don't know. We can get creative--;

CM: Yeah--.

BJD: We know how to do that.

MSB: Aw yeah, that...

AH: I just think about that; like I said, just thinking about my neighborhood, and I was just like...[Pause] Also, it goes back to what you were saying, like as artists, we feel

things so deeply. And I look at my neighborhood and I'm just like, 'What can I do? How can I--say I'm one person but--what can I, can I do?' You know?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MD: Carry voter registration forms with you.

[Laughter]

AH: No, you're right--.

MD: Yeah. That's what I do, yeah.

AH: This is like, how do you start? You start small--,

MD: Small.

AH: Just like, you know, when they're like, 'Well, how do you-how do we end racism?' It's like love your family--,

MD: Right.

AH: Start with your people around you--.

[Inaudible crosstalk- 00:55.47 - 00:55:52]

AH: And then they start with their people. And they—And the circle get bigger and bigger--,

MD: Yeah.

AH: So, yeah you're right. I like—That's the least I could--,

CM: You-you know I-I've flirted with the ideal of, uh the voter registration. I still haven't learnt the process in of how judges get voted in. Or like is that—Is that a ballot election? What is--?

MD: It depends on your jurisdiction.

CM: Yeah.

MD: I mean, most of them are voted in, though.

CM: Yeah. Yeah, and...

MD: Mhmm.

AH: Yeah, I've seen judges on the ballots here in Nashville. Not like every election, but I have seen 'em on the ballot.

CM: So I've-I've been flirting with the idea of creating like a constituency group, of brothers who've been affected--or maybe know someone who's been affected by the judicial system--and maybe creating a voting bloc, specifically geared towards--

BJD: Towards the incarceration—

CM: Yeah, toward-towards [Inaudible - 00:56:40]. I'm like they wasn't—And then from there, and just creatin' the support [Inaudible - 00:56:45] group from this whole thing. When you go to court then we all going to court. And we gon' make sure the judges know, ay, we'll see you at the voting bloc--.

BJD: That's power [Inaudible - 00:56:55].

MD: Oh, you need to do that.

[Inaudible - 00:56:56 - 00:56:59]

MD: She came—Did you all see we have five minutes left?

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:57:01 - 00:57:10]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AH: Okay.

BJD: I just wanna say too, this is a form of therapy in a way. Like this is-this is—I feel lighter at this point, like--...

AH: Absolutely, It feels good to just to not have any disclaimers about, 'Well I'm an artist, so...' --...

[Laughter]

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:57:19 - 00:57:22]

AH: 'So my perspective might be...' --,

[Laughter]

AH: Just...

[Laughter]

[Inaudible crosstalk - 00:57:26 - 00:57:34]

MD: So I suggest that we each write our name, email--,

AH: Oh, yeah.

MD: On a piece of paper, and then we can take pictures of it--.

AH: That's smart.

MD: And then so we can stay in touch. [Inaudible - 00:57:48], 'cause this is a...

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Pause]

CM: So [Inaudible - 00:57:54 - 00:57:56]

MD: 'Cause I want to hear about this votin' bloc thing--.

CM: Yeah--,

MD: I want you to do that.

CM: Yeah. Yeah, especially in Memphis.

[Pause]

BJD: You was about to say something?

MSB: Yeah, I mean, the reason I was struck by that is 'cause I was on jury duty and, you know, jury duty's gonna [Inaudible - 00:58:08 - 00:58:09], but the woman who was being tried--I was living in DC at the time--uh-like—There was no one. It wasn't like you see on TV or, you know, *Law & Order*. Like, there was no one there for her. Like, she was—It was her and her attorney. [Inaudible - 00:58:24 - 00:58:25], 'Where are her people?' Like--,

[Crosstalk]

AH: Where're her people?

MSB: Right. Like-like...yeah--,

BJD: Yeah--.

MSB: So I, [Pause] so...

[Crosstalk Ends]

CM: It's a... [Pause] It's an interesting phenomenon. I was in court in Bartlett, Tennessee. And Bartlett is like a suburb outside of Memphis. [Clears throat] And I went to court. And it was like, it—To be honest, I should have never been there in the first place. But that, you know, that's just an extension of racism, white supremacy, in it of itself, the fact that I was there for something I wasn't guilty of one way or the other. So I went with the intention of just showing some type of [Inaudible - 00:59:05 - 00:59:07].

[Pause] Didn't work like that. Now, I also noticed that there were uh--when I came in--there were two sistas in the courtroom. Nobody else. No one else in the courtroom. Two sistas. There's myself, judge, clerk, I guess transcriptionists or somebody, and the bailiffs. So I came in, sat in—I was late. So the clerk asked me, '[Inaudible - 00:59:37 - 00:59:40]?' I said no. Like uh, 'Did you just come in?' I said yes. He like...[Pause] [Inaudible - 00:59:45 - 00:59:46] [Laughs] --,

[Laughter]

CM: [Laughs] So he called me up to his bench. And uh, he like, 'Man, look, just plead guilty. We'll drop the criminal charges, make it a misdemeanor. Just pay the fine.' Uh, I was like, hold on. Review—? Tell me what my charges are.

[Crosstalk]

BJD: Yeah yeah yeah yeah.

CM: 'Cause you telling me to plead gui—I don't understand that type of talk. And so I was like, 'I didn't here for this. I came here to get the charges [Inaudible - 01:00:13].' 'Oh, well what grounds do you have? What legal standing can you give me to make the decision so that somebody don't ask me, 'Hey mister,' whatever he say the name was, 'Why didja let that guy—?' All this stupid shit?' I was just like...[Laughs] I was just like--...

MSB: So, like [Inaudible - 01:00:29] it's a hearing.

CM: Yeah, yeah. It was really really simple. So I was like uh—So I just opened my folder. I said—'Cause I came over prepared--,

BJD: Yeah--,

CM: As-in--,

BJD: As you should.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS [Including BJD] : As you should.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

[Laughter]

CM: Said, 'Okay well...Have this, have this, and this...Have this.' I had this. You know? And he was like, 'Well, uh...Well I-uh...Well...' The-he actually went as far as to tell me that, 'Well, you know...'—'Cause I told him I said, 'Well you know, the truth of the matter is, I-I should have never been cited for this in the first place.' Right? Because these reasons—Just for transparency, it was about my license. I'm licensed out-of-state. I'm licensed in Virginia; I'm not licensed in Tennessee. But somehow, some way, Tennessee decided that they were gonna suspend my license in Tennessee that I did not have.

MSB: In-[Inaudible - 01:01:28] your Virginia license. Tennessee...

CM: But, they suspended my—They didn't suspend my—They ain't go after my Virginia license--.

MSB: Oh.

CM: My Virginia license is...well good standing--,

BJD: Good stand-yeah.

CM: It's good. Right? For whatever reason, they don't report those-these two particular statements, for whatever reason. But yet and still, uh the things that they claimed they suspended my license for in Tennessee, I had already satisfied a court previously, that would, you know--,

BJD: Yeah.

CM: For. So it was just a matter of, y'all just messin' with me. Like, just leave-let me be. Leave me alone. Lemme go—Okay you see it? Aight, now you don't-don't. No, he was like, 'Have a seat.' He told me he was gonna go check; make sure my license is valid in Virginia. Which is something that officer coulda did the day he pulled me over. When I told him that—

CE: Right. Right.

CM: See? [Inaudible - 01:02:17 - 01:12:21]. So he went and did that, instead [inaudible 01:02:23] comin' back, say you, hey you can go. Still--,

MD: Still.

BJD: They want your money. They want it-they want--...

CM: They ain't get it--...

[Inaudible - 01:02:28 - 01:02:32]

CM: They-they didn't get it.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Sound of clapping in the background/room]

CM: They didn't get it. But, really my point in telling all of this, is uh, the fact that [Inaudible - 01:02:48 - 01:02:56] --...

[Crosstalk]

[Inaudible crosstalk to fade out - 01:02:48 - 01:02:56]

[Silent file from fade out - 01:02:56 - 01:03:58]

END OF RECORDING

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Transcribed by C. BAY MILIN DATE: 12.28.22

Reviewed by Miwa Lee 1/09/2025

To be copyedited.