

File Name: MSY_031216_PPL1
Event Date: March 24, 2017
Location: New Orleans, Louisiana, USA
Participants:
LIANA IRIZARRY
RUTH OWENS
SCOTT ANDRESEN
MALIK BARTHOLOMEW
MEI LING HOM
AMANI SMITH
LEBARON AHMON
Length: 01:08:17

Preface

The following conversation was hosted at the Joni Mitchell Center. 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

[Silence from 00:00:00 - 00:00:26]

RO: Love your poncho.

LI: Oh, thank you.

RO: It's the cutest thing.

[Laughter]

[Pause]

RO: Is it from South America?

LI: Uh, my--.

RO: Or Dillard's?

LI: [Laughs] No. My-my best friend is working in New Mexico right now and she got- she got it from me there.

RO: Oh.

LI: Yeah, so.

[Pause]

JV: (inaudible: 00:00:54) you guys. Alright, did you all introduce yourselves already?

RO: Not yet.

AS: Not yet.

MLH: Not with the--. Yeah--. Not with the recording.

RO: We haven't even started yet. I guess we're waiting for Malik, too.

SA: Yeah. There he is.

[Pause]

LI: Alright, let's open up this envelope?

AS: Yeah, I think that was a good question from.

[Pause]

LI: So, how do we want to do this?

MB: I- well, I guess we can start from the--.

LI: One question?

MB: Yeah, one question a piece and then we can introduce ourselves.

AS: We do have to introduce ourselves first, I think, right?

MB: Oh, right. It's so they could get our voice.

LI: Mm-hmm. Um, okay, so, I'm Liana. [Laughs].

[Chuckling]

LI: Did you want to introduce yourself?

RO: Go ahead and say your last name.

LIANA IRIZARRY: Oh, Liana Irizarry. Irizarry, yeah.

RUTH OWENS: Okay. I'm Ruth Owens, and I'm a visual artist.

SCOTT ANDRESEN: I'm Scott Andresen. I'm also a visual artist.

MALIK BARTHOLOMEW: I'm Malik Bartholomew, I'm a historical researcher and photographer.

MEI LING HOM: I'm Mei Ling Hom. Uh, I'm an artist in residence here at J.M.C. and, um, a community artist projector.

AMANI SMITH: I'm Amani Smith, and I'm working on a non-profit organization for girls, it's a mentoring program.

RO: Okay, so--.

AS: So, we're picking a question?

MLH: Mm-hmm.

RO: Malik says we should each pick one question.

[Pause]

AS: I just picked two cards by accident, whoops.

RO: Oh.

SA: You're already cheating.

[Laughter]

RO: No give backs.

[Laughter]

MLH: Okay.

MB: So who wanna start with their first question?

RO: You, since you spoke first. [Laughs]

MB: Put me on the spot.

[Laughter]

MB: Okay, um, *2015 homicide statistics. 164 shooting related de-deaths; twenty eight police involved shootings.* So these are the homicide statistics for 2015, that there was 164 shooting related deaths and 28 police involved shootings, and I think this is local statistics.

MLH: Yeah, I would assume so.

AS: Oh, yeah.

LI: For the city of New Orleans?

MB: Yeah. So we have more--.

MLH: Twenty eight police involved.

RO: So it's like a-a fifth of the shootings were, um, police related?

MLH: Mm-hmm.

MB: Yes. So, um, the only question I would have — I would have to repeat this is-- um, why is there so many police related shootings, uh, and what type of, um, force

is acceptable, uh, with police interaction? 'Cause we all know what's going on in-in the community. That's what the question I would--. I said--. I also, what I would say is also shooting related deaths is, um, where are we as a country on gun control? You know, we have the thing where, like, people going in the movie theatre, shooting it up and stuff like that, so where do we make our leaders responsible for putting actual laws in place that protect citizens and people? And not trying to stop people from getting the gun, but a certain gun control where--. I mean, I think it should be--. It should be a process to own a gun, and I think if you violate something, your gun should be taken away.

MLH: Yup.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

RO: Yeah. Yeah. And I-I think this, uh, these statistics also, um, bring up, um, just some serious underlying social, uh, questions, that we have to deal with on a, um, daily basis, um, which are, um, you know, how-how Black people are perceived by, uh, the police and--. So it's just like a-a basic underlying feeling that, um, that-that-that we have. I mean, we're all probably part of this problem. Um, when we see a young Black--. I mean, a young Black man walk down the street, um, and I think that that's, like the- the undercurrent of-of these statistics. It's like we think about, um, these men and we always have a question in the back of our minds, you know, is this person gonna be a problem from--? I mean, I think about that myself when I walk down the street: is this--? And I'm a Black woman of-of color- I mean, a women of color, so I'm probably the number one victim of, um, you know, these kind of problems, but, um, I ask that question myself: Is this person gonna be a problem for me? And I understand that that's probably what the police are thinking in the back of their head. So it's, uh, a very

complex social problem that, um, that they're probably- there's probably a complex answer to. And I think, uh, you know, Malik is right, that one of the things we do have to address is gun control. Another thing that we do have to address is, like, how are we raising our children? Are we giving our children the best possible, um, opportunities? And I don't think that they- that they are. So I don't wanna give up...

MLH: It just seems to be a (inaudible: 00:06:43 - 00:06:58)

RO: Right, right. That is definitely an American thing.

MLH: And that they are looking (inaudible due to volume: 00:07:04 - 00:07:59).

RO: Shoot 'em up, wild west. Yeah. Attitude.

MLH: Yeah, and I don't know how (inaudible: 00:08:03 - 00:08:15) related to population and--.

RO: Yeah, it's also a-an American attitude of a quick fix. You know, 'We can solve this right now. We can solve this and--.'

AS: Microwave society, we're all, like, instant gratification and we're not worried about, like, how we can deliberate on things. It's always like, 'What's the fastest way to get to this answer?'

RO: Right, instead of, like seeking what's the source of the problem. 'Let's just do this quick fix.' And, um--. So, I mean, with regards to your comment, um, Mei Ling, um, about, uh, other cultures, uh, other cultures definitely have the same — maybe not the exact same — but they definitely have racial tensions and, um, it-it-it--.

MLH: I know there are racial tensions, but they're forced to deal with them (inaudible: 00:09:00 - 00:09:04).

RO: Right, in-in-in England, the racial tension is probably as bad, or worse, than it is here. But what-what do you do--? What do we do in America to, uh, incinerate that or to add fi- uh, gasoline to the fire? We add the ability to use a gun. You know, so that-that makes a huge difference.

MLH: And it's so deeply embedded in our culture, I don't know how to eradicate it. It's like (inaudible: 00:09:38 - 00:10:02) um, but then there's another level of hostility that (inaudible: 00:10:08). And they want it for the attention because they don't want to know or understand other people. You give opportunity (inaudible: 00:10:16) it's very homogenous.

RO: Very provincial.

MLH: Yeah.

RO: Self-referential.

MLH: My neighbors, (inaudible: 00:10:30 - 00:10:39).

AS: It's like they want us to live our lives in fear. Like, we're not supposed to go about our daily, you know, activities, we're supposed to fear everybody that's coming around the corners.

LI: Mm-hmm.

AS: I mean, in-in--. We're taught that, though.

MLH: Of course there are the few that (inaudible: 00:10:52 - 00:11:01)

SA: Well, in--. Uh, I remember when there was the-the school shootings in, what, Connecticut. Uh, and the fact that even that type of gun violence couldn't spur changes

to our gun laws is almost like saying, 'We're giving up on the problem,' you know? It's just--. Ugh.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MB: And while I think--. I agree with you, but I don't think the people have given up on the problem, I think it's the leadership of the country--. I mean, it-it sounds very heartbreaking, but when you have a shooting in an affluent, predominantly white community and white children are murdered, everybody knew, 'Oh, well we're gonna have gun control now.' And these rich, white people could not reverse or combat the lobbyists with guns. So that shows that we have a problem with our system of government--.

RO: Deep-deep rooted.

MB: It's deep rooted where a-a-a special interest group can control the well-being of the American people. I mean, there was no reason why--. I mean, literally it was kindergartners and first graders who were murdered in their classrooms. Like, any society would be like, 'You know what? We have a problem and we want to fix this.' 'Cause this guy had emotional and mental issues. There was no reason why he would have access to a gun. So, I-I-I think i-it boils down to--. I don't think it's the people, but it's the-the leadership that we have, whether it be our Senators, our Congress people, because these are--. The N.R.A. is sponsoring their campaigns, so they can't speak out against this group, so it-it's problematic.

AS: So do you think that we should have, like, psyche evaluations before we can get a gun or..?

MB: Um, I-I think--. I think, personally, um, we need to look at other systems in other governments. Uh, I think that there is somebody --I want to say that in 1980-something-- there was a mass-shooting in England, um, their parliaments said, you know, 'This can't happen,' and they got together, there hasn't even been, like, um, t-a mass shooting yet 'cause they got together and was like, 'We have to solve this issue.' And they was like, 'Okay, this has to change, this has to change. You have to be screened for this. You have to put in the applications to get a gun.' So they're putting things to, you know, combat gun, uh, violence. Uh, so I think we have to look at that and also really make changes, but it's also the people have to hold their leaders responsible, after that everybody in Congress should have been voted off. Literally, the next second--.

[Laughter]

MB: We should've voted all of them off.

AS: Right, start over.

[Laughter]

MB: And, like, start over.

LI: Fresh clean slate, yeah.

RO: They need--. They need to start somewhere. I mean, there's absolutely no reason that we should be able to purchase an AK-47. For what reason is that..? I mean, if you give some reason like what you're saying, 'Okay, I need to be able to shoot these varmints that are coming into my farmland, or I want to be able to protect myself,' you don't need an AK-47. [Laughs]

MB: They don't need an AK-47.

AS: [Laughs]

RO: I mean, those that--.

MLH: (inaudible: 00:14:14)

[Laughs]

MB: Yeah, I agree with that. Certain guns, we don't need, right?

AS: Right, right.

RO: Yeah.

MB: Nobody--.

RO: And that's- that's a way to, like, maybe s-seep into the problem because it's like such a formidable force, the N.R.A., like just a way to seep in and start chipping away at it. Let's chip away first at this thing that everyone probably can agree that is not, uh, necessary in our society, you know?

LI: There was, uh, this safety feature that was mentioned in, like, the last Democratic debate that could've easily, like, be implemented in all guns where you need- you- you just need to have your thumb print in order to shoot the gun. I mean, something as simple as that, and that's, like, that funding shoot not be--. Like, we have no funding to-to make that happen, but, like, something as simple, you know...

MB: Yeah, or Chris Rock said, "How about we make every bullet \$100."

LI: Yeah. [Laughs]

MB: And he was like, "People are not gonna waste a bullet (inaudible: 00:15:06). That you--."

[Laughter]

MB: "But if a bullet costs \$105,000 a bullet, you're gonna be like, 'Hold up. Is it worth me shooting you? Are you worth it? [Laughs] 'Cause I can't afford this.' " ' So yeah, it's a very--.

RO: He's so silly.

LI: [Laughs]

MB: Yeah, so maybe... maybe I was (inaudible: 00:15:20). I don't wanna put too much time in the--. 'Cause I'm sure this gonna come up about shooting this and shooting that, but, um, I know we have some other good questions. Anybody wanna read their card? Oh, (inaudible: 00:15:32). Pick a card.

LA: Oh. How y'all doin'?

RO: Hi.

LEBARON AHMON: I'm LeBaron, by the way.

AS: Nice to meet you.

LA: Good to meet you all. So I pulled one of the--. What's the thing? What do I do?

LI: There's a question on the card and you just discuss--.

MB: So you just look at one card and we discuss it. I did my card, but anybody else, you can do your card.

LA: Okay.

RO: Are you an artist, LeBaron?

LA: I am, yeah. Um, I'm an actor, a poet and a M.C. Yeah.

RO: Oh, okay.

LA: Um, *Discuss media representations of Black New Orleanians*.

MB: Um, Hurricane Katrina.

RO: [Laughs]

MB: That is the epitome of, um--. I-I-I do think it's mixed 'cause you get--. Okay, I see that. They love Black New Orleanian culture, they don't love Black New Orleanian people. And that's why we're mad. Um, they love the bands, the brass bands, the music, the food, just that- all of that.

AS: Mardi Gras, the (inaudible: 00:16:29)

[Speaker intermittently agree]

MB: Yeah, (inaudible: 00:16:30). But when we started Hurricane Katrina, it's that, uh, West--. I'm praying for my brother Kanye, he did that Black--. You know, he was like, 'George Bush doesn't care about Black people.' Uh, the-the-the work just--. Of course we have 'Oh, we don't know what's going on; oh, people are drowning.' Like, you know, I think the media when it c-cause someone to cry, you know about the shooting deaths, when they, um, say that there's, uh--. Oh, whether that-the-the Ninth Ward gangs or the Seventh Ward gangs, and I tell people there's no such thing as gangs, organized gangs in New Orleans. We don't have that. Now, you may have a group of drug pros, but they're not a gang. They're not even that organized to be considered a gang. Like, people in New Orleans, we're not gonna organize like that, a-a-a gang. So, I-I do think that there's a problematic view that in local media and national media about, um, Black New Orleanians. But one thing that is respecting, people do know, is that Black New Orleanians are culturally talented, and this, it's like--. That's crazy.

LI: Yeah. But they capitalize- they want to capitalize on that talent, so.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

SA: And now, I think that question speaks, er, as much to a local question, but it's a national problem. Um, some years ago, uh, a friend of mine was exhibiting in The Studio Museum in Harlem, which is a primarily African American museum. And so, uh, my brother was in town from Washington. Uh, we grew up kind of in the suburbs, if you will. There weren't many people of color when we were growing up. He has always worked in the fishing industry and so he wasn't around people of color. So, we get to the studio museum: diverse, beautiful, intelligent, articulate group of people, and we were walking to get a drink afterwards and you could see that he was visibly kind of shaken, and he kind of said, 'I had no idea how much the negative stereotypes of African Americans had filtered in', and how completely ignorant he was of this — you know? Diverse group of people and it was- it was just one of those things. You know, most of my friends in New York were-were Black and so he had been around tons of my friends over time, but he always thought about it on a case by case basis where, overall, the negative stereotypes — I- it really fucked with him, you know?

RO: I-I think that the-the nega- the negative stereotypes, um, question that was brought up in this card feeds into the first question that we talked about. The negative stereotypes, uh, brought up by the media definitely helps perpetuate, uh, the idea of a- of a Black man being a, uh, a threat to you and, um, being a problem. And so that--. Like, it's kind of a- it becomes a circle. I mean--.

MB: I don't- and I don't know if it's local, but have you ever read the comments underneath, uh, (inaudible: 00:19:47) article? Online?

LA: Under any article.

[Laughter]

MB: If they put like, you know, somebody- somebody being murdered or something like that, the comments underneath the (inaudible: 00:20:00) like on their, um, website, the comments underneath the articles are--. You should read it, like--.

RO: Their heartbreaking.

MB: It's--.

RO: It's like I can't- I can't--.

MB: It's heartbreaking, but really read the comments because they com- they call them thugs, they call them animals, they call--.

RO: 'Like, what are they doing here?'

MB: Yeah, yeah, they say such vile stuff.

RO: It's really heartbreaking. It's hard to- it's hard to read for me. You know? It's hard for me to read, um...

LA: I-I-I don't read it. I, um--.

RO: Yeah. I-I'm the same--.

LA: I'll read the comment. It's hard, but it's easy for me to comment on this subject because I studied media in college, so I know the agendas, and I know what's going on with media and I know a lot- a lot of it is about the dollar, but I know, also, a lot of it is pushing personal, uh, personal agendas. You know, Jesse Jackson running for president, Rupert Murdoch sent down a personal-personal note to every FOX station to basically 'Slander this negro. Don't let him succeed.' He sent down a personal note and it's--. That's why I don't watch the media, I had a-a old- older white man and I was--.

He-he worked in Birmingham in the Civil Rights Movement for the newspaper. He came to my class, the only thing he told us was 'Believe half of what you see and none of what you read,' and that stuck with me for my entire life, so it's hard for me to- even though I studied it, it's hard for me to take anything as truth that I see in the media at- you know, even if it's- if I see it with my own eyes, I'm like 'I don't know if that's the full truth.'

AS: See, and that you were trained in that, so you know that you can't believe everything, but then we have people who didn't go to school for media, and they believe everything they see in the media, and then they perpetuate that and start shooting people and just like --like we talked before with the killings-- and it just gets bad, like how can we- how do we teach everybody that we can't believe everything that you're- you're seeing in the media? Or how do we, you know, go about doing that?

LA: I think we would ha- maybe have to demand is a different rhetoric from the media. You know, I think they feed us that because that-that boosts ratings when there's murder on television and there's rape on television, 'it's-it's Black people doing it,' it's like, just--. I don't watch it. I don't even- I don't- I don't invest in it. I don't invest in the media.

MLH: (inaudible: 00:22:22) of our cultures (inaudible: 00:22:25).

LA: Right, right.

MB: Well, I don't think- I don't think that's what's necessarily what the public wants, I think that's what we have grown accustomed to. That's what we sell--. Uh, I think people--.

LA: That's a part of it.

MB: Well, I mean, everybody love to feel good, everybody loves to hear the things about people and what they're doing. Ev-every now and then they'll throw in a-a 'feel good', um, article or news, um, story about something or someone. Um, but I think, you know, um--. But that's what we are accustomed to.

LA: It's a- it's a part of it, but people are more in control than their own media than they've ever been now, and I- and I know in my timeline feed, I get two good stories a day. The rest of it is people sharing what they want to see, which is somebody got shot.

MB: And- and it--. And you--.

RO: I-I also--.

LA: Somebody got--.

MB: And you just said something that, now, we actually, through social media, control the information that you receive 'cause, like, pretty much, like, um, like when stuff was goin' on in Ferguson, people knew about before the media. It was like, 'Man, this is going down, the police are doin' this, and this thing happened,' and people knew about it. Even in Baltimore.

LA: It was the first honest version of the media--.

MB: Exactly.

LA: People started--. Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

RO: But I- but I think it also feeds back to, uh, the idea that we talked about before, that Americans are very lazy in a lot of ways, they're- they're also, uh, very

willing to accept the easy answer. Like, I think it's really easy to say, 'Okay, Black people are here, white people are here, let's put these two categories and let's put some stereotypes on 'em. That's easy for my brain to digest and, uh, for my brain to see. And I don't have to think anymore about this very complex social problem that I am definitely a part of.' And we-we know we're all a part of it, and so that's why- that's why the media may not change. It's- it's- what is it, geared toward a sixth grade education? I mean, you know, people don't wanna think about it, they just want to have an easy answer.

MB: Yeah, it's so funny: in media training, I was talking to somebody in (inaudible: 00:24:16) I know. I said, 'You should not--. You can't use too many big words,' said, 'They can't be too long.' So you have to be direct, to the point and you have to, like you said, use a middle school, or sixth grade education so they can- so they can understand what you're trying to say. It's so funny that, you know, news media and stuff, they say that, like, the American people don't get it if you're too intellectual. So you have to make where they can understand it. So that says a lot --like you said-- about our society.

RO: Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LI: Even to build off of your thought and, like, how people don't- they- they want a feel good story, right? But I think, like--. When I- when I saw this question, I thought about- immediately about the education system here in New Orleans, um, because I am a teacher, and how, like, from--. I think, outside of New Orleans- if you live outside of New Orleans when you're studying education, people look at New Orleans as like- s- with such- ul- the education system here in such ultimate reform, and they--. It's like the

ultimate, like, feel good stories, like all these Black and Latino children are being saved by these like white- white saviors, right? And so I think about, yeah, although it is like it seemed like a feel good story from the outside, but it is like just so genuinely distorting the situation here because like it is an extreme op- -- like, I work in a charter school-- extremely oppressive system and they're, like, not truly educating our children at all, you know? And it's like how media--. How that feel good story will allow that to perpetuate--.

RO: Wait, what did you say? That they're not really educating our chil--?

LI: I don't- I don't think they're truly educating with empowerment. Like, they're-- those systems, they are super oppressive. Like, the system--.

MB: Yeah, and actually I was--. My sister, she's in a dance group and she danced with the young girls and she was saying how, um, they was talking about something in a- something about Black history, and a young girl was like, 'What?' and then it was like, 'Didn't they not tell you this in school?' And she was like, 'No,' and they literally--. So my thing is a lot of people talk about --like you said-- like the public schools and how the media makes it where it was so bad, uh, before Katrina, but we had teachers, we had teachers who cared, we knew our teachers, we had teachers who, like--. My oldest sister, fifth grade teacher what we--. My teacher so, the teacher was connected to me, my family, our community, she knew who we were, she knew our mother, she knew all of this type of stuff, she can call on our parents on you--. Fourth grade. You know, uh, I remember walking in and the teacher was reading my name, and she was like 'Bartholomew?,' she said, 'Hold up. Is this your father? I went to elementary school with your father, I--.' She's like, 'I know I'm not gonna have trouble with you; your daddy was the smartest boy--.'

[Laughter]

MB: And so like she--. So, but they don't get that because nowadays they're shipping in teachers from out of town, a lot of them young white professionals and, also, what we don't discuss is how the majority that our teachers were focused on was young Black women. But now, they pretty much killed a part- a Black middle-class New Orleans 'cause they're no Black teachers, or they're not in the majority anymore. So that money that they used to make--.

LI: They're just starting [Laughs] now to try to hire Black teachers, yeah.

MB: It's just a lot of things, but from the media perception, like you said, oh, every-everywhere you go around, you go to Detroit, you go to L.A., they talk about 'We need to do what they did in New Orleans.'

LI: They're trying to model after it--.

MB: Yeah.

LI: And it's so scary, so it's, like, genuinely so scary, like working in the system and knowing that, like, cities across the country are looking here to model after- like, to model after the system.

RO: So when you say 'oppressive', what do you mean by that?

LI: Um, well, first, um, there's like no- there's no ties to the community, like you were saying, and I'm- I'm- I'm a teacher of color, but I'm also from out of town, too, right? So I don't speak the same language as my kids in many ways, um, and, um, like the majority of the teachers are white, which comes with their, like, that-that bias [Laughs], you know? Um, yeah, they-there's like a lot of racist systems that are implemented because of--. Like, admin-administration is white for sure. So like the

systems that teachers have to work in are, um, uh, just, like, extremely oppressive, like our kids have to walk in straight silent lines. Um, they have like tiles, they have black tiles in our floors that our kids have to walk — till eighth grade, like grown children--.

Renew is a [vocalizes].

AS: And I'm just like , 'This is ridiculous.'

MB: Walking the line is a prison thing.

LI: It is. It is a prison--.

MB: They walk the line in prison.

LI: They walk, yup, straight silent lines.

AS: Lines, like why do we have to do that?

LI: They have to like- they have these positions, like start position has to be like this, like um--.

RO: That is so like 19--.

LI: Forget about learning, um, Black--.

RO: 50's.

LI: History, Black culture in depth, right? It's very much from a white look, like if they- if they wanted teachers from, like, a white, like, perspective. Like, we'll talk about Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, like--. And that's pretty much it.

[Laughs]

[Speakers intermittently agrees]

MB: I think to get- to get over that hump, we gotta, like, help people debunk the idea that understanding is a higher calling. Understanding is here, it's not here, it's not

hard to get to. Like you were saying about- you know, people don't want- people are lazy and you treat that idea of understanding like it's not reachable for everybody, and especially with our kids, you- when you have white educators educating Black kids, it's fine, but they have to understand how our kids are, right? There are fundamental differences between all of us sitting at this table based on our genetic makeup. That's just- that's just real. There are fundamental differences, but to understand that and know that and accept that, is a difference. And that's- those are the people we should have educating our children. White, Black, I mean, of course- of course there is oppressive systems in place, I understand. I went to a school like that and it was terrible. It sucks that I--. Anywho, um, it's just--.

RO: I want to, um--. I'm probably one of the oldest here at the table and I was in the army and so we --just talking about schools-- um, and so we had one tour of duty which was in Augusta, Georgia, um, and, um, we went- we lived in a Black neighborhood and all of our schooling was done in a brand new, beautiful place. It was a beautiful new building, all the teachers were Black, all the administration was Black — so I'm kinda going to give you a bit of counter argument here. Um, everyone was Black, it was in our little community, and, um, I was like killing it, you know? I was fourth- you know, from first grade to third grade, I was like it, the best student ever. I mean, I was bad, but I mean, my conduct grades weren't so great, but I was very, very bright. Then we moved from that school system to a department of defense school system in Germany, um, which was, uh, up to the nouveau or the standards of the rest of the United States. I was so behind, I was so behind. I remember crying and having to learn my multiplication tables with my mother because they were, like, on multiplication, we

haven't even gotten to multiplication yet, um, and so there's gotta be a way to-to bridge this- these two.

LI: See--. So-so that is--. I mean, that's the argument--. As much of the argument that like has allowed a charter school system to, like, develop to what it is--.

RO: Right, so there's gotta be--.

LI: Here in New Orleans, 'cause before it was, like--. I mean, our kids, you know, they were not ranking nationally at all, like it was the worst education system in the country, um, but--.

RO: So, there's gotta be a way to join those- the two ideas.

LI: Yeah, but like they have hit a plateau too. Like there has not been growth for years. Like, New Orleans is riding on that, like, charter school success, but I'm- like kids are still- kids are still ranking like 40 percent mastery, like they are not being successful, and it's like these- these systems only work to a certain extent, and I think a majority of it had to do with, like, just simply the schools who got so much more resources after, um, the charter school, like, movement because they got private funding, you know? Like, it was--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MB: And they have to- and they have to be very careful. You know, um, there's a balance between school, and home, and in culture with the expectations of the community, for its school and its community, uh, you know, the unity did say what the-the experience of the children will be. Uh, and we have to be careful pretty much saying, 'Well-well this one did bad and this one did good,' and it's like, but no, what is the community expectation for these children? Also, what are they doing outside of the

school to nurture the children to make sure that they're, um, getting everything they need to get, 'cause they know, um, we need them to do this, like we need for them to--.

So, um, and for a society, for a city, or a state, to build a new prison, s- tells me what their expectations are. So I mean, they're not hiding it, they're saying, 'Okay,' like she said, 'Okay, we got them.' You know, normally, they used to say a long time ago that New Orleanians did not necessarily have the best, um, school system because they was teaching to be either entertainers or to work in the hospitality industry. You don't need to educate- a highly educated workforce in clean up- to clean somebody bathroom. However, now with the influx of more migrant groups here in the city, you don't even need them for that. So what- where else can you make the money from them? In prison. Like, prison is a business, we do not do prisons, a lot of times people think prisons means lock them up and try to reform them or lock them up to keep them from society. Prison is a billion dollar business. There's people who get paid millions and billions on operating, um, prisoners. We have to look at the numeral value and see what's going on because, clearly, somebody, they didn't build that new prison for anything, they built that prison as a business and to make money.

LA: And obviously most schools are holding a pattern until they figure out what they want to do with you.

MB: Right.

LA: Most public schools are like, 'All right, he's going here, she's going here, they're going here,' like just based on grades and how you function in this small society. This is how we figured you were going to make it out here.

MB: So there's nobody saying, 'Okay, we want this industry to be the next big industry in New Orleans. We want (inaudible: 00:34:42) we want this, we want, you know, again to be like the south version, of, uh, technology. So we need our students to really learn technology because we need them to take these jobs in the next ten years. It's not a- we need, but there's nobody saying, 'We need them to take the jobs.' So, where are they--?

RO: I think that's a really good point, especially with the technology because, uh--. I mean, I'm an artist, but I do think that the technology should be a focus because that- we can do that here. We can definitely do that here. There's no reason why we shouldn't be able to do that in New Orleans. I mean, it's not like, you know, we're farmers or we're relying on a s-s-s-specific natural resources, only the natural resources that come from ourselves and our own natural intelligence. But, um, I wasn't trying to say that, like, the old system is a good one than the new system, um, but the new system is obviously not really new from what you're telling me. It doesn't sound like it's a new school system, it sounds like. What they im-implemented with this quote-unquote new system is really an old system they did in 1950s, that's what my mother had to do. Like, walk down, you know, straight lines, put your hands on the table like that. It doesn't foster any type of creativity or anything like that. I sent my-my kids to a country day school. I mean, we spent a fortune on it, but those kids are all over the classroom. You go in there, you don't even know what's going on, they're everywhere, and they come out, like, being able to think.

LI: And I--. Like, I was actually charter school educated, um, back in Jersey, K through Eighth, but it was like--. Before I came here, my understanding of a charter

school was always, like, very different 'cause it was- it was, like, very like liberal, like, kinda 'you make your own path' kinda charter school and, um, I gave--. Like, I-I learned to love as a result, right? I mean, learned to love — I loved to learn.

[Laughter]

LI: I loved to learn.

MB: You learned to love? I was like, (inaudible - 00:36:42)

RO: Who was your teacher?

MB: (inaudible - 00:36:46) in school?

[Laughter]

LI: I loved to learn.

SA: (inaudible - 00:36:49)

LI: But like my kid--. But- like the education system here, for real, does not like- does not foster that at all and like completely and like it's a--. Yeah, it's not a system kids want to be in.

AS: It's really not setting them up because--. One of my friends, she's a teacher that, um, ReNEWschools and basically what they- their grading scale isn't even setting them up for success. So like a 'C' is like a forty or a fifty, and like when I was in school a 'C' was like a seventy.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LI: Because they're all failing.

AS: And now all of this, like, base level, they're all like, 'Oh, I'm getting a 'C', ' but really it's like a failing grade. They're going into a different school system and then

they're like, 'Oh, I was, you know, valedictorian, but I mean, you only had a sixty, like, in your class.' So it's like how are they even measuring their success if it's at a forty or fifty is passing for everybody?

LA: I forget who said it, but, um, a friend, an educator, actually last night she gave me her card and on her card, it says, "You have to make the world worthy of our children." And we're not- the education system doesn't think that way. We have to make the world worthy of our children, not the other way around.

AS: Exactly.

SA: Well, my-my understanding of charter schools is-is- it started out, you know, individual schools based on a group of people that wanted to create, you know, a small, independent school. It was never a model that was supposed to be uniform all over the, you know, all over the country.

LI: Yeah, that was the--. I went to an independent charter, so that was my experience--.

SA: Yeah.

LI: But here it's networks--.

SA: Yeah, and it's--.

LI: So you have to be--. It's like standardized, like--. Th-the network looks after every single thing. Like, teachers are- have no autonomy, like, it's really, really hard to do what you want, or like to react to your children's needs because you're being watched by the (inaudible: 00:38:41). [Laughs]

MB: And you gotta watch out for testing scores, too.

LI: And testing, yup.

MB: That is--. Testing is a big thing now in school. I mean, we had to take one or two tests, but they take like- kids today just takes test after test after test, tryna, you know, rate them in order to...

RO: No, you have to look at the individual child which is what-what your friend, um, had on her card. You know, you have to--. Everybody--. I mean, it doesn't matter what color you are, you-you have to look at the child. That's why they're all over the--.

LA: When I have children, I hope to send them to someone like you, where you're like educating my child as well as a small--. Yeah, teach them how to love again.

[Laughter]

MB: So, I guess I'm gonna be the task master, so we're gonna- got different cards, we ain't get through the rest of them, so--.

SA: Before we go, do you mind if I ask you a question? Would their major--. I guess, can you pay major audiological differences between the school you grew up in and the one you went to in Germany in how they taught?

RO: Um, I'm sorry. I was in, um, fourth grade.

SA: Oh.

RO: But--.

SA: So, it's been a while.

[Laughter]

LA: Say no more. Say no more.

[MULTIPLE SPEAKERS]

[Speakers intermittently agrees]

MLH: And I think when you go to school (inaudible: 00:39:54). It's like I remember that in grade school (inaudible due to volume: 00:40:00 - 00:40:47).

AS: And just passing them off.

LA: That holding pattern.

SA: I-I teach, uh, foundations in the art program up at L.S.U. and one of the biggest challenges for me is that my students come in and all they want to know, like, 'Is it gonna be on the test?' And breaking them of that so that they can become kind of independent and, more importantly, almost inquisitive, is really difficult, you know? And they ask you, 'What do I need to do to get a good grade?' Your an- you know, the answer is, 'Everything but what you just asked me,' you know? [Laughs] Like, it's really difficult.

MB: That's how they are, and they get that all over the college and they bring that to college and they bring that into the workforce and it's very scary when people say, 'Okay, well, what do you need me to do? What do--? Uh, how do you do that?' Instead of saying, 'Let me see if I could create a new way on how to do--.' So, they don't think like that because since they was in kindergarten, that's what they were told to do in the test, 'You gotta worry about the test, you gotta worry about this.' I mean, after you've done from 12th through- kindergarten to 12th- I mean, can you really break that mind cycle of really thinking for yourself?

RO: Yeah, I think that-that, um, now that I have a second to reflect on the question that you asked me, um, I think that-that, uh, some of the-the-the Georgia school, the Augusta Georgia school, there may have been an underlying expectation

that 'y'all aren't really gonna go anywhere anyway?' You know? And, um, you don't need to think for yourself, and, like, what we were- what we were talking about.

MLH: The problem being, if you don't develop critical thinking at a young age, then you can't take anything (inaudible: 00:42:31).

RO: Yes.

MLH: And so this really (inaudible: 00:42:37) this education problem (inaudible: 00:42:45 - 00:43:02).

RO: And not just be a cog in the wheel, not just fall into this expectation that, uh, that-that-that has been given to you and everyone seems to be propagating. You know--.

MLH: (inaudible: 00:43:13).

RO: Oh, absolutely.

MLH: They train you to walk in a line.

LA: Exactly. Is that--.

[Crosstalk]

RO: That's why we walk--.

LI: Who do you think funds the charter schools? [Laughs]

[Laughter]

MB: I mean- I mea, even Common Core. Common Core is-is the corporation's capitalistic--.

AS: That scares me.

MB: Driven types, education system, like--. 'Cause you gotta think about once again, like, the prisons, like, somebody made those textbooks and was like, 'I'm gonna push this agenda so they can't- have to buy these textbooks from my company.' So, we have to watch out for corporate greed and capitalistic greed in America, which we don't 'cause it's such a fundamental part of our society.

RO: It's so integrated.

LI: It's a--.

MB: And it's integrated; who we are, you know...

LI: We eat out of their hands, at least in the ch- in the school system. Like, you--. At the end of the day, you have donors you have to impress, and, like, their white corporate donors. And, like, if they come into your school and, like, things aren't structured, er, like the model that--. I'm being a critic, but someone who loves to say is like, 'Structure liberates.' 'We believe here that structure liberates, structure liberates,' like that's the structure they always say and in-in my school--.

RO: Oh my goodness.

AS: How does that liberate?

MB: Mm. That's kinda like- that's kinda like (inaudible: 00:44:24). [Laughs]

RO: And it sounds like that Hitler thing--.

LI: I'm like, when has it ever- when has structure ever liberated people of color? Tell me that, please. [Laughs] Because that's just--.

RO: That's what they're saying?

LI: Yes.

MB: Liberty liberates.

[Laughter]

RO: Who says structure liberates? The Corporations?

LI: No, one of my, like, uh--.

MB: Let them do it like that, but we're gonna liberate you. [Laughs]

LI: An administrator. Like someone who I--.

MB: (inaudible: 00:44:41)

RO: Structure liberates. Structure liberates, yeah. Structure--.

AS: Scary.

LI: So that's like the mentality that the people that are running our school have.

RO: Making machines.

MB: I'mma go with your card next.

LI: With my card next?

MB: Yeah.

LI: Oh, this one right here?

MB: Yeah.

LI: [Laughs] Uh, okay. So *Unemployment rates. Blacks in 2005, had an 18.5 percent unemployment rate. In 2013, 13.6 percent. Whites, in 2005, 4.1 percent unemployment rate. Um, in 2013, 4.6. Black men in 2011: 52 percent; and white men in 2011: 21 percent.*

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm.

LI: Yeah.

SA: Do you want the blanks?

LI: Hmm...

[Pause]

RO: Those were too many numbers for me to, um, keep in my head.

[Laughter]

LI: Yeah, we could just read it. Pass it around if you want.

LA: It's all--. I could tell you right now, it's hard to find a job as a Black man.
Nobody wants to hire you.

MB: Especially in New Orleans (inaudible: 00:45:43)

LA: Everybody wants you- like, you are required to prove yourself in so many ways; when you walk through the door, like, you are--. Like, as soon as you walk through the door, you have--. Like, I don't know what it is, but you--. It's hard to explain.

AS: You have all these strikes already against you so you kinda have to work against the negatives to even get to, like, a zero.

LA: Right, you gotta be dressed well, you can't talk how you normally talk, you have to, uh, what, kiss a little butt, do you whatever you gotta do, and you still probably won't get the job. So you gotta know somebody.

RO: Is it the 11th? (inaudible: 00:46:17)

LA: You gotta fight and claw and scratch, it's a- it's a hussle. My-my dad told me something the other day. He told me, uh, 'As a Black man in this world, you gotta do a little bit of everything as God will forgive you.' And that's probably--. The realest thing I can say about employment rates is that you gotta do a little bit of tumbling with

everything so you can survive, so you can eat and put a roof over your head and just ask for forgiveness at the end of the day.

MB: That's a hassle, hassle.

LA: That's a hassle, hassle.

[Laughter]

LA: I'm serious, and I know you know and it-it's--. You probably never--. It's- it's probably never been terrible, but you had to do whatever you've had to do to get it done. I'm not saying it's illegal, I'm not saying that that at all, but you had to be on, like--.

MB: But people--. And it's- and it's a- actually, it's very much a New Orleans mentality. And that's why you see a lot of what you see in the evening with crime is, you know, 'I gotta get mines, I gotta get me,' 'cause the thing about it is, if you--. First of all, you know, we talked about education, you graduate, let's be honest, you can work two, uh, fast food jobs or two, uh, part- two jobs with and you're gonna make what, nine thousand dollars a piece on each job a year? Twelve thousand, maybe? So, who-who can live off of twelve thousand dollars a year? And then you start gaining, you start going to places, you get a child, are you gonna be able to feed your child on twelve thousand dollars a year? So it's gonna be like, 'Okay, I gotta get me a--. I have to do things to really, you know, provide for myself and my family, whether it be legal or illegal. Some people do it legally, some people do it illegally. And then-then legal in the way of--. Some people do it illegally where they're actually doing illegal stuff, some people are doing what you can say illegal businesses, meaning (inaudible: 00:48:09) I can cut hair, I can do this. You know--. So--. But, I mean, unemployment is an issue for any

society, 'cause you want people to be productive, and you want them working, but at the same time--.

LA: Right, and you're at the lowest socioeconomic class and have always been and have always been stepped on, of course unemployment's issue is gonna be the biggest issue for you.

MB: Yeah, 'cause people want, uh, you know--, you can't be living and gas be \$3 a gallon, you know.

LA: Me and my friend joke; I call him everyday and we both have jobs now and we joke and we say, 'Man, I've been eatin' everyday.' And we joke about that, but like it was a point where we weren't eatin' everyday and we were grown--. We were not--. We were young men, but we were trying to make it happen and there was this point where we wouldn't ea everyday and we joke now. It's like, we gon' have this to eat--. 'I ate pancakes yesterday, I got money to spend on this,' like, and it's little stuff. Like, 'I got money to go buy water for the house. It's-it's- but it's funny, I--. It's- it-it creates a light in some life, it's not- it's not so heavy where--.

RO: Yeah, you have to laugh about it. You have to bring some- some- something to laugh about it. And this all starts with the school system. You know, you-you- it's all interrelated to that, if you're not prepared to go out into the world, I mean, what do you expect? Do you- do you expect anything other than unemployment if you're not prepared? I mean, there's no way. I mean...

MB: And also, in schools in urban areas and (inaudible: 00:49:45) few people of color or even rural areas with farmers, pretty much it needs to be more of a-an education of entrepreneurship. People shouldn't always have to look for a job. People

should be prepared and skilled enough to create the job. And the problem is, me and my sister just drove past here, um, there used to be a (inaudible: 00:50:07). Now there's a business giving out (inaudible: 00:50:12), but it's probably from somebody (inaudible: 00:50:13) somewhere up North, out west.

[Laughter]

MB: Or too. Man, it's like, really, like some white people who just established a business, why couldn't we establish a business? Why did nobody give us that chance, why nobody gave us that opportunity, why nobody gave us that grant, you know what I'm sayin'? So you're setting up- you're setting up and going to people in Black churches, like, 'Hey, these are business grants. This is how you apply to get a grant for a business,' because people don't give out, you know, predatory loans. Like there's people going for business loans and the bank tells them no, you know? So, I mean, there's---. What we really have to educate the workforce in creating jobs, to create an employment (inaudible: 00:50:53) because, you know, once you get (inaudible: 00:50:57) downstairs, trying to get the most offers, you know what I'm saying, the most (inaudible: 00:51:04) unionize this workforce. Then you look at people as a product, it's like 'Okay, I need to figure out how much work I can I get out of her (inaudible: 00:51:13) I mean, society should not work like that.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LA: When you say educating the workforce, are you talking about, uh, Brown people or we talking about people who are at the helm of the workforce in educating them to, like, a sensitivity to people who are trying to establish their own businesses? Because it's- it's like, I know even though there are coffee shops in the corner, I know

ten brothers trying to start coffee shops, you know what I'm saying? Like I know these people who are out here trying to do this, but which side needs to be educated? Is it us, or is it them who would be- would be educated?

AS: They both need to be educated at the same time.

RO: Yeah, because the- it's--. When we say 'us', 'us' needs to be educated, too, because 'us' doesn't have the opportunity to think creatively. It's like, 'Okay. I-I'm expected to, uh, you know, have a job in the hospitality industry. I'm not expected to go out and do something for myself,' start a farm, start an organic farm. You know, that's--. I--. I mean, I would love that, [Laughs] you know? You know, because I'm all about, like, healthy food and everything.

LA: I know I need to be educated, personally.

RO: I think a lot of people are.

LI: Yeah.

RO: What?

LA: I need to be educated, personally, just on starting a business on learning how to start a business.

AS: We all need to be.

LI: Yeah.

MB: They're just throwing out bot conversations, doing something to help your own community, uh, [Snaps fingers] being educated on, uh--. At first, it needs to have the skill, meaning reading, writing, critical thinking and how to communicate with people.

Also, they need have--. Anybody should leave high school without being skilled on a trade, meaning plumbing, haircutting --especially if you're a person of color-- I'm sorry.

LA: You got- you gotta have two of those--.

MB: You think you got that? You got a--. You know what I'm talking about?

[Crosstalk]

LI: [Laughs] Jack of all trades.

AS: In order to graduate, two electives..

MB: To create designs, network, taking a, um, an I.T. network, we--. These are things--. Because, not too long ago, there was a-a group work that came to my college, young Black kids. I said, 'You know, some of y'all are gonna go to college, some of you may not go to college. Some of you may not even want to go to college.' I said, 'Even if you to go to college, get a skill. You cut that hair. If some of you don't wanna go to college, get your own cosmetology license, get your barber--. That's a--. Get your plumbing license, 'cause that's something nobody can ever take from you. And anywhere you go --literally-- after you get your training (inaudible: 00:53:39) I was (inaudible: 00:53:40) and I was looking for one in New Orleans--.

[Laughter]

MB: And he was still making money. When everybody come to New Orleans, like 'I need to have New Orleans person cut my hair.' So while he had lost everything, he was still making money because he had a skill. Learn one--. And that's something, like--. Somebody told me he could even do only (inaudible: 00:54:02) I feel old. We had to take woodshop class. We have to build something--.

AS: We took workshop, too, in seventh grade.

MB: I didn't want to take woodshop.

RO: That is a shame--.

AS: I hated it.

RO: A shame.

MB: But I appreciated that I built something.

RO: I loved home ec. [Laughs]

MB: And it taught me how to measure, it taught me how to (inaudible - 00:54:16).

AS: I didn't have home ec, I took wood shop.

RO: Did you have home ec?

LI: Yeah.

AS: I took woodshop.

RO: You took woodshop. Yeah, you should be able to have--.

[Crosstalk]

AS: In seventh grade.

LI: Especially, like--.

RO: The option.

[Crosstalk ends]

LI: I feel like we live in- in this day and age, we live in a place where it's like- so it's- it could be so easy to be an entrepreneur. Like, with technology, you can promote whatever the hell you want--.

MB: Google university.

LI: Yeah, all over the world.

MB: I go to Google, 'How do you do that?'

LI: Yup.

MB: Google university.

LI: Exactly.

AS: Yeah, but why aren't they teaching that in schools though? Like- like a class--. Like, they're implementing stupid shit like Common Core, why aren't they teaching a business class to students, or--?

LI: Because the focus is so much on-on data, on the test scores at the end of the day, like, I--. There's programs out there, like, there's Code.org that Obama just, um, put out there to teach, um--. And it was specifically to teach children of color how to code. And so like I try to do that with my kids, like, on the side when I have extra time 'cause I know how to code, but, like, it's not- it could not be a class because--. But, like, you're not gonna be tested on that, you know what I mean? Like, that's a life skill, but, like, is that gonna get- make our math scores go up? No, so.

LA: 'Cause they're training the workforce basically.

AS: Right.

LI: Yeah, yeah.

LA: Yeah, that's why they're not educating people, so.

LI: Yes, exactly. No art program. There's no art program at my school.

MB: Film production, (inaudible: 00:55:29)

AS: No art?

LI: Yeah, like there's no crea--. My kids cannot- they don't have the opportunity to create something for themselves.

MB: You know, when people talk--.

RO: Do they--? I'm sorry.

MB: No, go ahead.

RO: Okay. Do they--? Do your kids ever get to go out into the community? Like-like, field trips into, like, people have, like-like, a photograph- go visit a photographer, go visit like a coffee shop or--?

LI: So now--.

RO: Or like a lawyer, or a doctor?

LI: Yeah, teachers are advocating now to have that and, like, have ti- like, time built in our schedule to at least have people come in to, um--. So like it-it is happening, but like it ha- it should have been a program that was already established and is, like, part of their curriculum, you know what I mean?

AS: Remember when we used to have career days and stuff?

MB: But, you know, also, what-what some people may take for granted is that some communities, you may go find a (inaudible: 00:56:15), maybe an entrepreneur and somebody can be a bank, uh, a banker, or somebody could be--. I'm gonna be honest, I come from a family where I grew up (inaudible: 00:56:23) my whole life. Both my parents (inaudible: 00:56:26) money will teach you. And there were certain things in the environment that you learned from that. Even if you're in an environment where your parents are entrepreneurs, you'll--. 'Cause you give them talk. 'Cause you're in an environment where momma- d--. Daddy is a musician, or daddy has a-a- or don't have

a job, my daddy's a (inaudible: 00:56:42). If you don't get exposed to a certain conversation about--. They could be a doctor, or a lawyer, or something, but somebody who just worked there, they may not realize how many kids are going home to places--. Even they--. I know one guy, he- he was actually raising himself because he was in high school and his family was offshore. So his family wasn't home (inaudible: 00:57:04 - 00:57:11) so really, this kid was in the house by himself.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

MB: Uh, you know--.

LI: Raising himself.

MB: Raising himself.

AS: Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LA: Yeah, I used- I come from a household and my- my dad has never worked since I've been born. My dad has never worked. He's- he--. Before me, he was a businessman, we've had a lot of large sums of money, and he got put in jail for embezzlement, which he did not do, and he did not want to work a minimum wage job because he used to handle million dollar contracts for the Alabama government, so he didn't want to go back. Um, my mom, uh, cleans up after folks. Still does it and I come from that. This just- this is just giving a lot to my story. I'm, uh, I'm still figuring it out. Like, I didn't have that in my home to know, like, this is how I do this, this is how I do this. My dad's been hustling since I've been born, and my mom's been cleaning up behind old white people since I was born, so I'm breaking that cycle and figuring it out for myself. And I wish I had had an education system that-that helped me with those

things 'cause it's- it's necessary, very necessary. My dad was a good- a good educator 'cause he did do those things at one time, but if you don't- if you're not keeping up in practice, you lose luster so, yeah.

MLH: Do you think that among the, uh, New Orleans African American middle class community, would-would the middle class- be willing to be mentors. You know, it's like professional mentors available to young people who need--.

LI: Well, you're non-profit, right?

MLH: (inaudible: 00:58:40), yeah.

[Laughter]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AS: That's exactly what we're doing, but our focus right now is-is young girls just because we can relate and show them something different other than what they see on- in the media and, like, give them opportunities to figure out what they want to do. So, like you said, everybody doesn't want to go to college, but you need to figure out something, so it's not just like, 'Oh, I'm gonna sit here and just focus on graduating from high school.' 'What are your plans? Let's help figure out goals for your life,' so they have, like, a holistic curriculum, so it's like mind, body, and soul. What do you wanna do? What do you wanna accomplish and then we go from there. So if you tell me these are your goals, I'm gonna help you accomplish them.

MB: What age are you reaching? At what ages do you- do you start?

AS: Ten and eighteen- ten to eighteen.

[Crosstalk]

MB: 'Cause you gotta give them like--.

AS: Right.

MB: Teenage, but you live--.

AS: Don't--. We want them early.

LI: Till five to ten, that's who I teach.

RO: I agree with that, like kindergarten. [Laughs]

AS: We want to mold their minds as young as possible. I don't wanna go and get a little second grader, but fifth grade is-is awesome, 'cause you know what you want--.

LI: And they're also so aware at that age--.

AS: Yeah.

LI: Like, completely--. My kids, what?

AS: They're very educated, they want to know--.

MB: Yeah, they pretty much--. They know about (inaudible - 00:59:49) kids, but you didn't know--.

LA: It's these phones, man.

MB: No, it's business--.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

LA: It's these phones.

AS: The technology.

RO: Yup. Always that one.

LI: [Laughs]

AS: And Louisiana is number three in teen pregnancy, I don't know if y'all know that. So when I found out that Louisiana was--.

RO: We're not one anymore, [Laughs] yeah.

[Laughter]

AS: Number three in teen pregnancy, I was like, 'they don't--.' Louisiana. So I was like, 'so clearly, y'all don't have anything else to do besides getting pregnant. Let's figure out what y'all can do.' So--.

RO: Well--. Um, let's not get started on that. [Laughs]

AS: Right, but that's the focus.

RO: There's o- is there one--. There's, like, one Planned- planned Parenthood in town now. One.

MLH: One?

AS: And they wanna get rid of that one.

RO: They're trying to get rid of that one.

MLH: Mm-hmm.

AS: Yeah.

RO: Thank you.

AS: Exactly, because they feel like [Chuckles] it's not helping the girls. But they need birth control, they need some type of healthcare and nobody is teaching them in the schools about, like--. We don't have sex ed anymore, for one.

MB: (inaudible: 01:00:47) also teaching them.

RO: Well, let me just tell you, one- one medical fact. I'm a doctor before I changed careers. Right now, the-the, um, the Society of Pediatrics is advocating the, um, I.U.D. for teenagers.

AS: Oh, are you serious?

RO: I.U.D. It's not the pill...

AS: That's the thing that goes in--.

RO: Yes.

AS: Yeah. Okay.

RO: So it's not the pill, you don't have to sit there and remember to put thing- you know, to take a pill, all you need is an I.U.D. It's not gonna help you in terms of, like, sexually transmitted diseases, but it will help that one issue of pregnancy. And I don't think anybody knows that, I don't think anybody knows that- that the- that the, um, that's what they're advocating. And that is, like, a huge step. And I have two daughters and, yes, they have I.U.D.s.

AS: Check this out, 'cause I had an issue--. Well, when I was in high school, I was a senior, my mom tried to take me to the doctor to get on birth control and I wasn't having sex, and so I had an issue with even having the-the procedure done 'cause I'm like, 'I'm not--.'

RO: Well, yeah, that's a different situation, if you're having sex--.

AS: Well, a lot of girls are dealing with their parents, like, 'Well, I don't want them to get pregnant, so I'm just gonna- kinda get this because they're doing it, or, you know, like, advocating for--.'

RO: It has to be on an individual basis.

AS: Right.

RO: I mean, if your- if your daughter' is having sex, I don't think you should say 'Stop having sex,' you know, 'That's not right,' and then just close your eyes--.

AS: But then there should be more conversations in the home so that these girls feel comfortable with, you know, their sexuality and what they are doing.

RO: I mean, yes. I went with my daughter to have it done.

AS: And that's great, and I applaud you for that.

RO: Let's just take care of this. We're not gonna have--. That's not gonna be one of the problems we have to deal with. We have a lot of problems already, that's not gonna be one of them.

AS: Yeah, not that one. Yeah, it's taboo in the household though, talking about that.

RO: It is taboo. I know.

MLH: Yeah.

RO: I know.

AS: Yeah.

Unknown: Right.

RO: Well they taught me a lot.

AS: Well, that's what our program is for; we want to have--. So, like, you don't want to talk to your parents all the time, but at least you'll have somebody that's there

to, like, communicate with if you do wanna get birth control. Let's figure out the ways that you can do that or... So.

RO: And safely.

AS: Yeah. Everything.

RO: Yeah. If any of your--. I mean, I'm still practicing, um, medicine, if any of your--. Uh, if you guys wanna come over and visit my office at any time that's--.

AS: That will be great. Yeah.

Unknown: Five minutes?

RO: (inaudible: 00:03:21)

JV: We're gonna stop recording in about five minutes.

AS: Okay.

JV: So, if there's other cards that you wanna get to, or if you want to do the rest of the deck, that's--.

[Laughter]

LA: You wanna do, like, a speed read?

[Laughter]

RO: One minute.

LA: Alright.

MLH: Let's find the hot ones. Yeah.

SA: One word answers. It's all you get.

[Laughter]

RO: Yes. Yup.

MLH: (inaudible: 01:03:40)

AS: They said we can write new ones, right?

RO: How's your--? Okay, I-I have a question. Um, *How has gentrification impacted Black communities here in the past decades?*

AS: Yikes.

LA: I just moved here, I wouldn't know.

MLH: You just moved here? So you're a gentrifier.

LA: I am.

[Laughter]

LA: Well, wait. I'm not changing stuff, I'm like- I'm just--. I'm-I'm-I'm joining in with people I know, but, like, I like this.

RO: Where are you from?

LA: Alabama.

RO: Alabama?

LA: Yeah.

MLH: Mm-hmm.

MB: Um, (inaudible: 01:04:12) pushing people out of their original homes and their communities. Um, it is--. People from new Orleans do not mind different people learning and growing in the culture, we have a problem with people attacking the culture as well as trying to replace the culture. Uh, that's the issue with that and also respecting the culture. Uh, you understand that different people want to come, different people have always come; French, Spanish, German, Indians--.

LA: Alabamians.

[Laughter]

LI: Put your plug in there.

[Laughter]

AS: Right. [Laughs]

MB: (inaudible: 01:04:49)

[Laughter]

MB: But we have people who have always come through New Orleans and stuff that added or take and whatnot, but when y'all have the disrespect of things that are culturally New Orleans (inaudible: 01:04:59), but gentrification is a serious issue. But the major issue is the price of the housing and rent. The rent is too damn high--.

MB and LA: The rent is too damn high.

AS: Rent is too damn high.

LI: And it's only gonna get higher. [Laughs]

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

LA: My rent is kinda high right now.

MB: (inaudible: 01:05:20) in the city to live in the city. Uh, (inaudible: 01:05:24) New Orleans. Ever. Uh, poor Black people, rich white people --even poor white people-- poor Black people--. Poor white people and poor Black people live together in New Orleans for centuries. I'm talking about (inaudible: 01:05:35).

LA: You can just tell.

AS: Yeah.

MB: (inaudible: 01:05:38) always living by each other. So, um to this thing where, now, rich people become the ultra, like, (inaudible: 01:05:45) the prices are moving people--. They can't afford to stay in these communities, is something very new to New Orleans and (inaudible: 01:05:52).

LI: That's happening- that's happening globally too, like the neighborhood that I- I grew up in, Hoboken, New Jersey, it's like this little city right across from New York.

SA: Oh, yeah.

LI: Originally, it was like, um, a predominantly Latino and Black community, um, and then like--. While I was--. It's like com- it's like completely gentrified now, [Laughs] like, it's like so white, the culture is completely stripped out, and like--. Yeah, it's so- it's like ridic- it's an extension of Manhattan now, and it's like I see the same patterns happening here in New Orleans. Like, it's in it's earlier stages, but like, it's like how do you fight that system that's so big?

MLH: We're- we're sitting here in the Joan Mitchell Center.

RO: Yes. [Laughs]

LI: Yeah.

AS: [Laughs]

MLH: And, like, how do you--? How do the Natives feel about Joan Mitchell setting up the center here? And, you know, was--? I'm sure all the properties around here have just gone through the roof.

LA: Yup.

RO: It's beautiful.

MB: (inaudible: 01:06:50) New Orleans is also a city and (inaudible: 01:06:52) uh, and it's also what you do and how you give back, and work with the community. And now all these people want to give back but not really give back, and it's like, 'Oh, we're helping them,' but, you know, power (inaudible: 01:07:07) with the community, so.

SA: A friend that's an urban planner was actually making the point that the most drastic change when gentrification happens--. To him, gentrification was the moment where somebody looks at the resources a neighborhood has and says, 'I'd like to take those rather than, like, I'd give- like to give back to them.' Uh, my wife and I, you know, listen, we were one of the people who moved in from Brooklyn four years ago, she was doing work, uh, with a bunch of different community groups in the lower Ninth, we chose the lower Ninth because there was a housing stock from derelict houses, the population was half what it was pre-Katrina, but we also know by fixing up our housework, we're contributing to the higher, you know, housing rates. And it was, I don't know, one of those--. There's never a perfect answer.

RO: Yeah.

MLH: How do the neighbors feel about you?

AS: Like Catch-22, do you fix up your house? Or do you just kinda live in it, or..?

[Laughter]

AS: What are you suppose to--?

RO: You don't need plumbing.

AS: Yeah.

RO: It's overrated.

MSY_031216_PPL1

MLH: It's like--.

LA: Peace out, y'all.

MB: You know, but I don't think--.

Unknown: Thank you.

MB: I don't think it necessarily--.

[Audio cuts off]

END OF RECORDING

Transcribed by Andres Molina

To be copyedited.