

File Name: IND_102123_ART4

Event Date: October 21st, 2023

Location: Indianapolis, IN, USA

Participants:

ELIZABETH MITCHELL

CHRISTOPHER NEWELL

SAMUEL LEVI JONES

CIERRA JOHNSON

Length: 01:05:15

Preface

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

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START OF RECORDING

AJA SCARLATO: Okay, this is table four. Aja speaking. This is October 21st.

Crispus Attucks Museum. And ready to go? All set.

CJ: Thank you.

ELIZABETH MITCHELL: So, so yeah. If you don't mind, I'm-I just have one question. And this is a problem that I have had in Bloomington, Indiana. It's just 4 percent Black. Uh, I don't know the other ratios with other ethnic groups. But I put plays on, say—By the way, I'm Elizabeth Mitchell; documentarian. historian. I have a radio show that I anchor and co-host stuff. I wear many hats since I retired after thirty-five years in the postal services; the first and only Black woman in Bloomington at the postal service. So I am living my dream. Every day I wake up excited since I retired, traveling

the world and doing what I can do to research, share Black history by any means, except I'm not good at drawing. But I do everything else to get the word out. My question to each one of you, how is it to get Blacks to support, engage Black art? I put-I have a play going on stage next weekend. All of my plays are to sold out audiences. white audiences. Beg, borrow, and steal. I've even offered the school system--since they red-lined and put most of the poor Blacks into one school in Bloomington--free tickets; one hundred tickets to students and parents to come. Not one has taken up on me. So from each one of you, do you have that problem? Have you tried to solve that problem? That's one I want to know. Who wants to start? [Chuckles]

[Crosstalk]

CJ: Um...[Chuckles]

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CHRISTOPHER NEWELL: Mm, uh. I'd...I would like to. Um, so my name is Christopher Newell, and I guess after this we can do the introductions too. Um, but basically, I would say to get more of a Black audience, a lot of people my age hear a lot about a lot of different like Black-oriented like gatherings--or the concerts and things that happen in this area--but I think a lot of times being questioned and challenged on what that actually means to you. Raising that first eyebrow? Um, getting people interested in what it actually is, is probably the first step. 'Cause I think sometimes that with marketing--and um, trying to get like exposure on something--um, y'know it's hard to sometimes lead with, 'This is like a 'Black-lead or Black-owned thing.' Because that can also be a deterrence in some areas too. I don't know what it's like in Bloomington. I

personally don't have a lot of great experiences in Bloomington. I'm not from here. I've also not heard a lot of great things about Bloomington either. So, um I would say that is a pretty challenging place to be in. But challenging what indi-how individuals feel about that; what does that mean for them? I think that finding that avenue, or exploring that avenue, is like maybe the first thing to look into.

EM: Okay, so you think from what you've heard of Bloomington, it's not a great place for people of color?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CN: Not necessarily. Like, I know it's a college town because IU [Indiana University] is there; there's like forty-thousand stool-students that go there. However um, like it's kinda in this, in-not in the middle of nowhere, but there's not really much for Black individuals there from what I've heard. And from when I went there, the university is the only thing I've actually experienced. Like when I've tried to find like a Black-owned business. I think I found a couple, but there really wasn't like a lot; there wasn't like a lot of like, anything screaming out 'Black pride' to me there. Um... yeah. Um, I would say the other thing too, is you have to drive through Martinsville. And that's, heh that's probably the biggest thing that's like a deterrent 'cause I've had issues in Martinsville. Um, like--,

EM: Mm.

CN: Yeah, stopping through there, um, and whatnot; like I've been pulled over. Like just passing through to get to Bloomington twice. Yeah, I've also um—I was selling a laptop online in Martinsville, because this-a student who's going to a *University of Southern Indiana* wanted to meet me halfway. Well, it's not really halfway, but he wanted

to meet me, um closer to Indianapolis. Be-he, he didn't want to drive halfway; he doesn't know Indiana like that. And so he suggested Martinsville. And so I'm like, 'Well, gonna to bring two friends with me.' I did that. We stopped at a McDonald's to sell him a-a MacBook. And um, the workers at that McDonald's did not treat me kindly. Um, and in fact, one of the workers like started issues with me. And two-the other two people that bright-that I brought with me, had to like stand up to-for me. Because like, I felt like anything I said was a problem, or anything I called out was an issue. Um--...

[Crosstalk]

SLJ: How long was this?

CN: What was that?

SLJ: How long ago was this?

CN: Um, this was actually five years ago.

SLJ: Okay.

EM: Mhmm.

CJ: Mm.

CN: Yeah--,

EM: Okay.

CN: So--...

EM: Alright.

CN: Yeah.

EM: Okay.

CJ: Mm.

EM: Thank you.

CN: Yeah.

EM: I'm going to share that.

CJ: [Exhales]

EM: There are Black businesses, but we even created a Black business book-handbook. And of course--,

CN: Nice.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

EM: Since the population is so small, it's not that many, but we do gather. There is a-a large— Most of the people in th-the town, we had a gathering place, but that's gone because gentrification/redlining is gone. Since the population is so small, it's not that many, but we do gather. There is a-a large— Most of the people in th-the town, we had a gathering place, but that's gone 'cause gentrification/redlining; it's gone. Ooh-the Black side, where we all gather...gone. And those homes that were seventy-five to a thousand dollars--er, seventy-five to maybe a hundred-thousand--,

CN: Mhmm.

EM: In-in that area--they're now three hundred-thousand--,

CN: Wow.

EM: Or more.

CN: Wow.

CJ: Yeah.

EM: Yes sir.

SAMUEL LEVI JONES: So I'm Samuel Levi Jones. I'm an Indianapolis resident, mixed-media artist. And to answer your question, I think it's—I think in terms of, you know, getting someone's interest, you have to maybe appeal to them in a way which, um something that they can recognize with, if you will. Um, you know-it-it it's—I think generally speaking, if you're not outside of a large city where there's um, a larger sense of artistic culture, it's difficult. So I grew up in Marion, Indiana, and I had very little exposure to the arts. And took a photography class mm-when I was getting my first degree, and I was good at it. I enjoyed it. And then that's the-that was my introduction to the arts. I took-I took classes that were um, sort of mandatory if you will, um in school but it didn't appeal to me. And I think that, y'know you just have-we have to provide a broader sense of-of, um... [Pause] I guess, there must be an introduction if you will. You know? So I-I've been visiting home--Marion quite a bit, 'cause I'm working on a project there--and there's a young lady there who-who owns a gallery, a Black woman. And she's teaching an art class at one of the middle schools, Tashima. And, you know, she was talking about like in the first day of class, she said some of the kids said, 'Look, the art teacher's Black.' And so I think, you know, that sort of, you and—Growing up in a town where, you know, um most minorities—There were very few minorities that have blue collar working--,

[Crosstalk]

EM: Yeah.

[Crosstalk Ends]

SLJ: Positions. So you kind of identify with what you see if you will.

EM: Mhmm.

SLJ: And have an understanding of the possibilities only through what you've seen. Um, [Clears throat] and I think it wasn't until I left Marion, I think, got involved in the arts. And, you know, was in places like Chicago, or in California and seeing people of color who were, y'know physicians and lawyers, and so on and so forth. Um, so you have to create a space where young people can understand that there's a possibility.

EM: Okay.

SLJ: And—So, you know, it's interesting; I think—So this, I've been thinking of what, it-it hasn't come to fruit—It never came to fruition, but thinking about the all-star game that's happening here in Indianapolis this February. I was thinking about the idea of putting together an art exhibition that will sort of appeal to um, the culture of sports if you will. Because I don't think it just—It's not simply people of color, but like, in-in rural America. Like, there is an access to arts--, [Inaudible - 00:09:28] you're white, Black, whatever--you, you...if you don't have access and it's not part of your world-view, you're not gonna have an interest in it. Um [Clears throat], and there-you know, there are a lot of professional athletes--or former professional athletes--who are serious art collectors.

EM: True.

SLJ: Yeah. Um, and-and then so you know for a demographic who's paying attention to sports--and they may have an understanding or see these athletes, who are collecting art, and they're very serious about--then, they can-we have the potential to create, y'know a cultural shift. So, yeah, I think it's-it's providing a way that one can identify with something in order to have that connection.

EM: Okay.

SLJ: If that makes sense.

EM: Mhmm.

CN: Yeah--.

SLJ: [Clears throat]

CN: Definitely.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CIERRA JOHNSON: Um... Hi, I'm Cierra Johnson. I'm a mixed media artist. So, at the Harrison Center, I help run a program with THE GREATRIARCHS. And one of the ways we've been successful is by including them in the development of stuff. So instead of bringing them finished programming, everything we do, we ask them about it from like, the-the onset; from the jump. So that way, they're already invested in the project, even before it comes to stage or to the gallery. Their-it's already theirs, and then that makes them want to show up even more or invite their friends, family, grandchildren to said event. So kind of engaging them at the beginning is a good way, especially if people don't have access and they're not arts-minded. If they can kind of discover it along the way, then they'll be more apt to participate in the finished product, 'cause they're in that built anticipation, and right there already, like, emotionally invested; they want to see it succeed.

EM: Great.

SLJ: I-I also want to add, being that you're in Bloomington—So I was-I've spent a lot of time there recently. By um—In the process of in last year, I was in a um Artist-In-Residence program--,

[Crosstalk]

EM: Mhmm.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

SLJ: There at the school, finishing it up. But at the [Pause], the museum--the Eskenazi Museum [Eskenazi Museum of Art]--they actually have you know—I think sometime last year there was an exhibition on women artists, and and a lot of artists in there were artists of color. And I think, I think generally speaking, with universities they're, you know, very siloed. So there's the like, the *Black Cultural Center* there--.

[Crosstalk]

EM: Yeah.

SLJ: I don't know exactly what it's called, but it's right next door.

CJ: Yeah.

EM: Yeah, *Neal-Marshall Black Culture Center*.

SLJ: Yeah.

EM: Yeah.

SLJ: And it-and it-and I don't think that they—They're not aware of the programming and the exhibitions that happen in, in the museum. You know I have--,

EM: And they should be, 'cause there was a Black female director--,

SLJ: Mm.

EM: Joii Cooper. Her husband is in music, and has won five Grammys--.

SLJ: Yeah yeah yeah.

EM: So that's--,

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

EM: But there-I think...[Clears throat] Since the time I've grown up in desegregation, there's a disconnect. Where at one time we all knew what everybody was doing--and we all participated, and we all went out to support--now we're spread out. There's just that disconnect, and there's no gathering place. There's no pla—And the Indianapolis Recorder [Newspaper] doesn't come down there. I don't know if it's online now, but we don't have, like even an online place to go to. Or, we've been talking about it for the last ten years. How can we connect the Black community that's all over [Inaudible - 00:13:02] county? We don't-we haven't come up with that answer.

SLJ: Yeah, and even go on campus, just getting students in the-in the museum. But I've had lots of conversations with them about, you know breaking down those walls, and particularly getting students into the museum. And-and, you know seeing what's going on. That's...y'know that museum, even though it's not a broad--they don't have like a broad uh-uh...

EM: It's just a little place. [Chuckles]

SLJ: Yeah, eh-I mean it's like, they have a great collection. It's not diverse if you will, but they're working on, you know expanding the-the collection, and they're very intentional about it. Um, y'know, and working with the individuals that I've worked with. So there's-there's opportunity, there's possibilities, and there has been lots of changes. Just sort of, kinda getting over the hump if you will.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

EM: Mhmm. I'm surprised that they have that problem with students. Now, getting city folk, the residents over, there's always been that great divide: the town and down. Parking is a problem. And most of the Black residents, that 4 percent, are older. We're not gon' park two or three miles away and walk in; that's for the students--,

[Crosstalk]

SLJ: Yeah.

EM: So that's the issue.

SLJ: There should be a shut--,

EM: Well...

SLJ: Like a shuttle. With, eh-a shuttle services.

EM: Well...[Chuckles], we just don't take a bet—I don't go.

SLJ: Yeah. Yeah.

EM: I go to the--, if I'm around and available--to the *Black History Center* for their events--,

SLJ: Mhmm.

EM: And try to support the-the fraternities and sororities with...they do something. But, other than that, I could care less to go over to *IU*. 'Cause I'm not-I know *IU*'s history--,

SLJ: Yeah.

EM: Hasn't been all that great.

SLJ: Yeah.

EM: And hasn't been, and hasn't been great, period. So that's problematic too.

SLJ: Mhmm.

EM: And I know they're working on it, and I know things are slow to change.

SLJ: Oh yeah. I know. I've been here in Indianapo—I've been back here for six years now, and--,

EM: Yeah, I'm-things are slow--.

SLJ: And they're slow.

EM: Excruciatingly slow.

SLJ: [Laughs]

CN: [Chuckles] Yeah.

EM: And I, you know, I-I'm seventy, and I can't do slow right now.

CJ: [Chuckles]

CN: [Chuckles]

EM: [Laughs]

CN: Yeah. [Pause] Wow.

EM: I'll say, here's,—I don't know where you want to start.

CN: [Chuckles]

CJ: I w-um...

EM: That is the the questions on the card.

CJ: No...w-ss...

EM: Yeah, you just pick a card and we go.

CJ: Okay, let's go with this one. Oh. [Pause] Fun, um.[Chuckles]

CN: Cierra, did you introduce yourself?

CJ: Uh...

EM: She did.

CN: Did you say your name? I'm sorry. Okay.

CJ: Yes, I'll say it again.

EM: Yeah.

CN: [Laughs]

SLJ: [Laughs]

[Crosstalk Ends]

CJ: My name is Cierra Johnson, and I'm a mixed-media artist working out of the Harrison Center. *Discuss whether public art should be censored within the context of the controversy surrounding Fred Wilson's unrealized "E Pluribus Unum" sculpture.*

EM: Tell me about the sculpture.

[Crosstalk]

SLJ: Aheh.

CJ: Yes. Tell me.

[Laughter]

[Crosstalk]

EM: You know about it?

CJ: No.

CN: I don't either.

EM: I don't know about it either. Do I need to Google it?

CJ: I'm..eh [Chuckles] ...

SLJ: [Coughs and clears throat] I know about it.

EM: Okay.

CJ: Okay.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

SLJ: So—And I know Fred [Wilson], like I don't know Fred really well, but um...Meh—It was probably 2009 I believe. He first came to town and-to talk about this potential project that he was going to do. And s-so, part of Fred's practice is just sort of reimagining things. Um, and he has this project that he's done, called '*Mining the Museum*,' I believe is what it's called; that he goes into the Museum Archives, and he curates objects that are sort of problematic if you will, that don't [Pause] that may have been exhibited or shared in the past, that don't come out--so they may be like a, a Klan, you know, costume if you will--.

EM: Yeah?

SLJ: Yeah. So, the project—So downtown on the circle--the *Soldiers & Sailors Monument*--there is a figure, um, a slave figure that's sort of sitting subservient to white figures holding up the shackles. And he was going to recreate that figure. And instead of the figure holding the shackles, um, he would be holding a flag of African diaspora. And it was going to be placed on the [*The Indianapolis Cultural Trail*]. And a lot of people were opposed to that project on both sides. Um, [Clears throat]...and for—This goes back to what I was talking about earlier with the question that you asked, about the

issue of-of um, the lack of exposure to the arts. So, if you can't get someone in a gallery space, if you can't get them in the museum, you know, I-I I thought about how, y'know, what it would be like to be a young person, and sorta just like walking on the street comin' upon that, um, reading the didactic and getting an introduction to the arts, if you will. Um, [Pause]...so, yeah, it-it was—And-and that was the positive that I saw in the potential of that project. But it was shot down and it never happened. And I've talked about that project quite a bit, and it's really interesting that that was a first question.

[Laughter]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

EM: I think we live in America, the land of the free, supposedly. And I don't believe in banning books, or banning art, or banning anything of any kind. 'Cause if you have done some art that I don't like and I don't care for, I don't go see it. But don't tell me I can't go. I don't want anybody to tell me I can't do something. I lived through that as a child; I'm not going back there. And I try to live a peaceful life, and I can handle anything you throw at me, 'cause you not-ca-you can't throw anything new. But if you're going to throw it at my grandkids, different story, not happening. So, I, because I lived through segregation in Indianapolis, where I couldn't go to the Circle Theater, we had one show, *Madame Walker*. All the Black kids, we walked in a group, walked over here. We walked on the other side to Douglas Park to go swimming. We had one place to go for skating with. We were told, 'No, no.' Riverside had a theme park; one of the first theme parks in the country. I couldn't go. So, I don't want anybody telling me I can't do something 'cause then I'm going to do it. In a land of the free, everybody have-or to have those opportunities to see, do, and read whatever the hell they want to. That I'll

go-I'll fight for. And if it means somebody's got to die for me to do that, so be it. That's me.

[Pause]

SLJ: Wow.

CJ: Yeah.

[Pause]

[Crosstalk]

CN: I'm still processing what you said, so--...

CJ: Eh-right...I mean--,

SLJ: [Chuckles]

CN: [Laughs] I don't know [Inaudible - 00:19:59-00:20:00]...

CJ: I'm-heh...[Chuckles] "Chewing on it?" Um, I mean, when it comes to public art, I think the-the purpose of art is to stimulate thought. So, I think when something is controversial--,

SLJ: And to challenge.

CN: Yeah.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CJ: Right, it is supposed to challenge you. I don't think, like, 'cause I'm an artist, I'm right. I'm like, I don't want anyone telling me what to do. Um, I think a question in public art is besides challenging you, like, is, how are we using public art? Are we using

it to challenge, to do, to challenge status quo and all that kind of stuff? Or are we using it to, like, just enforce whatever the state values are?

SLJ: Yup.

CJ: I mean, it's very easy to put up--right, we're in Indiana--to put up a bunch of signs that say that Indiana is a state that works. But that's just to tell you that it works. It doesn't actually ask any questions about the kind of work that's being done, and who it's working for. So, I think when you have something like this, *E Pluribus Unum*, you know, kerfluffle, that really starts to, like, let you know, like, who's trying to use art for what. And I think that's an important, like, discussion that needs to be had, right, not just amongst artists. Definitely amongst artists, but also with the public in general. What are they looking for from public art? Like, 'cause a lot of people aren't looking to be challenged. They're looking to be comforted and, like, just feel good about whatever's happening. And so then when you have something like this, it rattles them.

Um...[Laughs]...

CN: Yeah. Yeah.

CJ: Yeah.

CN: Um, nn-I I didn't do a introduction. My name is Christopher Newell, and I am a local Indianapolis photographer. Um, I think to like piggyback off what you're-you were just saying, um, intention is everything. And I think especially with art, um it's a-it's a really hard place to be, um especially as a-as a colored individual. Just because I think that—Dating back to my experience, I had took like, an African Studies class at *IUPUI* [Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis,]. And the woman who taught the

class said that if you're Black and you're an artist, you should be a committed artist. Being that, like, you should make art about Blackness or Black experience. And--,

[Crosstalk]

EM: Mhmm.

SLJ: What was the ethnicity of that, that professor? What...

CN: She was Black.

SLJ: Okay.

[Crosstalk Ends]

CN: Yeah. And I thought it was pretty interesting because, like, going into the Herron--Herron School of Art and Design--like, I didn't really know, and still trying to find, like, my artistic voice and, like, what I thought making art, like, what am I gonna thinking about making art about? And so when she said I had to be a committed artist, I was just like, 'Well then does err-everything else not matter?' And what does that mean? And um, yeah, intention has been, like, such a-a thing that I've been kind of challenging for myself, but also challenging, like, my perspective on other artists. So I think it's great that, like, this is the question asked, because it's...yeah. It's very interesting to see, like, how much you can change someone's perspective; putting up something that's controversial that could be very personal to you or non-personal, um, and so down the rabbit hole, y-yeah.

[Pause]

SLJ: I think-I kind of beg to differ, sort of on-on [Pause] the commentary of that professor.

[Crosstalk]

CN: Yeah.

CJ: Mhmm.

CN: Definitely.

EM: Mm.

CJ: Mhmm.

[Crosstalk Ends]

SLJ: You know we...It's-it's disappointing that we have that sort of that-that is an expectation? And it's, you know, from an individual standpoint or any given individual standpoint. You know a person used to be able to create um, for-from whatever means that they feel that they need to-to create.

CN: Yeah.

SLJ: Um, [Pause] Yeah, and it's-y'know that's putting-putting one in the box if you will. And if you w-one feels compelled to make work ri-in a certain way, they should-that's how they should do it. Sorta going back to what you were being told, a-how [Chuckles] you know, being told what to do and not to do--.

[Crosstalk]

EM: Don't wanna do it.

SLJ: Yeah.

EM: Been there, done that.

SLJ: Yeah. [Laughs]

EM: Yeah, that's-that got old.

CN: Yeah-ha. [Chuckles]

EM: I wanted to bring up a point--and I thought I was going to fall out of this chair when you mentioned the monument--'cause I was here earlier--,

SLJ: Okay.

EM: Ah, for the historian part of this and I found out something I did not know.

SLJ: Okay.

EM: That monument downtown, with that specific piece--,

SLJ: Mhmm.

EM: I don't know if you're all aware of Indiana was supposed to be a free state, that was only on paper. Indiana did not want Black people here at all, period. It was supposed to be a white state. They made it free on paper, so that slave owners could not bring slaves here, because they just didn't want Black bodies here--.

SLJ: Mm.

CJ: Mm.

SLJ: [Inaudible - 00:24:46].

EM: So there were a lot of Underground Railroad stations to keep you moving; you could pass through. "Don't stay."

SLJ: Wow.

EM: "We don't want you. Keep going."

SLJ: Wow.

EM: "We will help you keep going."

SLJ: [Clears throat]

[Crosstalk Ends]

EM: Then as Blacks started to settle anyway, because the laws changing in North Carolina, bringing-'cause they heard it was free. And any free people of color were going to become slaves in North Carolina. So with the Quakers, they came here and settled mostly Black settlements, which there were a lot in Bloomington. They kind of mirrored or settled near a Quaker group. Well, then they had to pay, money and sign the Negro registers, and go through all of this. And then at one point Indiana, you know, they helped create Liberia. "We will give you fifty dollars, hundred dollars. Get out. We don't w-we don't want you." But they-they came anyway. But that particular piece of that statue--I don't know what side of it's on--but a guy said, 'It is because of slavery not being here, and so many slaves are running here, white men made their money; A lot of money catching slaves.' So what you talked about, oh, here it is. "Dedicated to the South, the monument is dedicated to the South." And that piece is of a man being held down--the shackled man--'til the slave catchers came to get him.

SLJ: Mm.

CJ: Mm.

EM: That's what that indicates.

SLJ: Wow.

EM: And I did not know that; the history of that.

CN: Wow.

EM: So when you mentioned that monument, when you started, I go, 'Wow, I've heard it twice about that monument.'

CN: Okay.

EM: So there's probably other things about that monument I've never taken the time, um, to really do the history of. And I guess there's a museum inside...There's so much work to be done. That just wasn't on my radar [Inaudible - 00:26:46]. 'Cause they're not going to take it down.

SLJ: Mhmm.

CN: Oh yeah.

CJ: Um, no.

EM: Yeah, so I just wasn't going to worry about it.

[Laughter]

EM: But I thought it was interesting that today it was mentioned twice; once this morning, and you mentioned it.

CN: Right at the heart. Man.

[Chuckling]

CN: Wow.

EM: So anybody want to pick another card?

[Pause]

CN: Oh.

[Pause]

CN: *Who else would you like to see at one of these tables? What would their voice contribute to the conversation?*

[Pause]

CN: I wanna see Mike Epps at this table--.

[Crosstalk]

CJ: [Laughs] "I want to see Mike Epps."

SLJ: [Laughs]

EM: [Laughs]

CN: 'Cause I've-I, just believe it or not, I've ran into him so many times. Like--,

SLJ: Really?

CN: Yeah. Probably like eight times. Um, mostly because I worked at the Apple store, and he'd come in and we'd crack jokes or whatever--.

[Laughter]

CN: "Hey Chris. Hi Chris. Come here man, I got a iPhone I need to return. My wife ain't [Inaudible - 00:27:47]."

[Laughter]

CN: No, I'm kidding. But--,

SLJ: Does he live here?

CN: Yeah, he still lives here. Um, he's--,

SLJ: I did not know that.

EM: He-he and his wife are doing some housing projects, or--,

CN: I think--,

EM: They're doing something to pay back.

SLJ: [Coughs]

CN: Something like that. I think—I don't know where his show is being filmed, but it might be here. Um, It might not. But um yeah, I--,

SLJ: [Clears throat]

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CN: I know he-I know he lives here. Um, and so it's just interesting because I think a lot of his colleagues--um, people he's acted with and worked with--like, they're either back, like, live in California, they're living in a different country, whoever he's like, acted with. And, so it just kind of begs the question of, like, 'Why are you still in Indianapolis?' Like, there's so many conversations, you know, like we've had in—At the historian meeting earlier today, um there was a lot of conversation about, like, Indiana, trying to keep people here. I think Indiana has a lot of great things, especially for the people that are getting kicked out of the West Coast, like all the people of California who have money--,

[Crosstalk]

EM: Yeah.

CN: Who're now, you know—The gentri-gentrification stuff you're talking about, like, they can afford those houses, so they're going to go and buy that, plus add two to three acres.

EM: Yeah. They are.

CN: Yeah.

CJ: Mhmm.

[Crosstalk Ends]

CN: You know? And so, Mike Epps is one of those people that's like, 'Great, you're here. We get to keep you. But like, why?' And so I think he just would have, um a lot of interesting things to say, or at least I would find them interesting.

EM: I find that interesting that you brought that up, 'cause here again at our table--table number one--one of the persons sitting there said he would like to see Mike Epps, Babyface--,

[Crosstalk]

CN: [Laughs]

CJ: Mhmm.

EM: Vivica Fox--.

CJ: Yeah.

CN: Yeah.

SLJ: [Clears throat]

EM: Um, I think the other one-person died, someone else. But all of those artists that came from this area, to create an endowment for more artists, to create something for kids, whatever that endowment would encompass--,

SLJ: Mm mm.

EM: But they have the funds to get together and do that.

CJ: Mhmm.

CN: Yeah.

EM: And compared to living in California, it would be a piece of cake for some money--and they specified exactly what it want to do, if it's for the arts or maybe a

portion of it's for the arts, and a portion is for this--but it's all about the youth and in getting, I thought, 'Oh man, that's a great idea.' So again--,

CN: Yeah.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

EM: Heard his name mentioned. But I think he is doing something about housing. So, even though we'd like to tell people what they should do with their money, whatever he decides--as long as he's given back--I'm cool with that. But I think it's really important to give back, even if you don't have enough. I think of the story in Florida of a washerwoman, giving a little bit of her money and then it created a university. Is that Mary McLeod Bethune?

[Crosstalk]

SLJ: Oh. Okay.

EM: Was-was that...?

SLJ: I'm not sure.

EM: Well somebody in that-it still exists today.

SLJ: Yeah.

EM: She didn't have any money.

SLJ: Mhmm.

[Crosstalk Ends]

EM: This was during the times she couldn't do nothin' but wash people's clothes. And so we—Everybody could do a little bit of something, but certainly you've got a lot, like they have, that I'd like to see a chunk of that.

SLJ: [Clears throat]

CN: Yeah.

EM: At least help the youth out, because I-the youth from, from when I was growing up, things has changed so much. We had so many rules to abide by. And now it appears to me everything's kind of loosey-goosey. Um, if we had helped them focus on what they need to do. And like I said earlier, growing up in segregation, it was great for me; I was grounded from that.

[Crosstalk]

SLJ: Mhmm.

EM: I have, you know, my ethic, my work--,

SLJ: Commun-strong community.

EM: Yeah.

CN: Yeah.

CJ: Mhmm.

EM: And I had—I was surrounded by love.

SLJ: Right.

[Crosstalk Ends]

EM: I didn't know hatred. I didn't know about racism. And it was wonderful. And to get out in that world--and not-and your parents didn't tell you anything--you just

experienced cold turkey, and you had to learn to toughen up, get tough, or we figured the world would eat us. So you had to change a little bit. I used to cry all the time. I don't cry no more. Somebody gon' cry, but it's not going to be Liz.

[Laughter]

EM: And that's from experiences.

CN: Yeah.

EM: I had to change, to make it; to survive.

CN: Wow.

EM: So I'd like our kids, if they understood what it's like, that togetherness, and-and not to knock integration, I think that's really important. Because what I went through to integrate schools, the kids now enjoy that. The problem is, they think the playing field is level. They don't know it's not. It's still not.

CJ: Mhmm.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CN: I have one thing to add on. Um, actually, two people, to add on to this list. My parents, I want to see them at this table. I think that they would be also, it-also would also be very interested to see what they would say. And it's sad, because I don't know what they would say. Not really. Um, so I know they're not like artists, but in this situation at this table--in this building, like having these types of conversations, like--I never really had them with my parents. Um, I was told by my mom to toughen up, and not by my dad. Dad's white, mom's Black.

EM: Yeah.

CN: Y'know, it's very like, they didn't really have a whole lot to say, or stand up for me. 'Dad, what do I do when someone calls me a Oreo?' 'Just ignore em son. I mean, you know... That, that's what we do.' I'm like, 'No that's what you do.'

[Laughter]

CN: 'What-what're you talking about? My skin is dark. Hold on...' So it's... Yeah, so, and, you know, my mom's in the corner like, 'Just beat 'em up. I don't know.' Like...

[Laughter]

CN: 'Beat 'em up? Great. Now I'm gonna be the ang...'--,

[Crosstalk]

SLJ: Flip a-flip a coin.

CN: Yeah. Flip a coin. [Laughs]

CJ: One or the other.

EM: And I kinda we-I kinda went with my system be-between the two.

CN: Mhmm.

EM: As long as no one puts their hands on you--,

CN: Yeah.

EM: Words don't mean nothing. They call you "N-word," so what? Tell them to find another one. That don't mean nothing--.

CN: Oh man.

EM: But if they put your hands--,

CJ: Pfft.

EM: And-and, in the school I sent him to, they said, 'Mrs. Mitchell, you can't tell him that.' He lives in a different world. If you touch me, it's on. I'm going with you. But if you're talkin', talk on. No problem. "N-word?" Okay. I'm one. My granddaddy's the same as your granddaddy--,

CJ: Stop it.

EM: He love "N's."

[Laughter]

EM: That's how I...And you see sheep-people shut up then. I tell, 'He loved em. A Black woman. Oh.'

[Laughter]

[Crosstalk Ends]

CN: Oh man. Dig. I woulda broke my neck lookin' at you, if i heard that the first time. [Laughs]

EM: You see, eh-come see my play if you wanna see me really act up. [Laughs]

CN: Yes, yes.

EM: I'm doing women's suffrage, and all about women's rights next weekend.

CN: Nice.

EM: Tellin', tellin' it like it is. Tellin' some stories about Susan B. Anthony, that my white audience is going to get a earful. [Laughs]

CJ: [Chuckles]

CN: Ooh.

EM: But I get their money first; they buyin' tickets first before they walk out.

[Laughs]

CN: [Chuckles]

SLJ: So who would you like at the table?

EM: Oh, man. [Pause] Well, since I-I'm-I'm doing this show, and talking about wh-ss-what-a-many subjects, I would like to bring back Susan B. Anthony, to explain to me since I found out a lot of stuff doing the research for this play. And then Francis Harper [Frances Ellen Watkins Harper]. I'd like to see the two of them together, interact about women's suffrage and women's rights, and healthcare rights for women. All the stuff that we're battling today--,

[Crosstalk]

SLJ: Yeah yeah yeah.

CJ: Mhmm.

EM: They was battling the same stuff a hundred years ago.

SLJ: Right right right. What do you think that might look--...

EM: So we stepped forward and then we ran back.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

SLJ: What do you think that might look like if they were here, at the table?

EM: Mm.

SLJ: Or you're not sure?

EM: I'm not really sure, but, you know, un-unless they know, unless they do their homework comin' from their era--and do the homework, what's going on now--all they could talk about is what they know.

SLJ: [Coughs]

EM: And, [Pause] what they know—Susan B. Anthony, you know, they wanted to put her on some money. They really celebrate her as great women's suffrage. And her friend--um, what was her friend name?--um, um...Cady Stanton. Elizabeth Cady Stanton helped slaves escape. They stayed in her house and all of that. So here these women are celebrated, but they wanted rights for white women. And they wanted it before you got it.

SLJ: Right.

CN: Mhmm.

EM: And they said, 'It's better for you to be enslaved by educated white women--that's best for you--than by ignorant Black men-ig-ignorant men; Black men are ignorant. They're not ready. We're smarter than that. Give it to us first.' And that's not in anybody's history books.

CJ: Mhmm.

CN: Mm

EM: They didn't want that out.

SLJ: Right.

EM: Well when I put something on stage, I give talks. I put it out there, both the good and the bad. Yeah, she done some great things, but did you know about this? And

I actually turned to the audience and said, 'Do you know about this? Were you taught that?'

SLJ: Mhmm.

EM: And I—Everything I do is pretty much in a teaching mode, so that you come away with something you didn't know. And I always do Q&As. Always. So that we can have a conversation. My husband is a retired policeman. He's at every stage. So if you actin' crazy, you...And he's a big guy, and he doesn't say anything. He's that quiet, deadly type. So a look...'Are you good?' He don't have to say—He don't have to put your hat; he don't say nothing. Just...[Pause] [Inaudible - 00:37:28-00:37:29]. [Chuckles] There's a couple of times he may ha-he's has to-asked people to leave. Oh, I find that white men that wanna fact-check me; they've got their phones out. When I was talking about the, the uh, what is it, the...slave act. There were several of them passed. And this guy says, 'Well, I know about that one. I know about this one.' I said, 'You think I'm lying? I'm standing up here. I don't know what I'm talking about?' And he goes, 'Oh yeah.' And then he wants to show me.

SLJ: [Laughs]

EM: I get that too. So, um it's-when that happens, I try to...[Pause] Okay?

CN: It's the look that gets me first. It's the glasses halfway down their nose. They're like looking at you. Looking at their phone.

[Crosstalk]

EM: Yeah.

CN: And the phone's massive. And they're like, ' Yeah I found it.'

EM: [Chuckles] Yeah.

CN: And I'm like, 'Okay bud.'

EM: And then he goes, 'Show me.'

CN: Yeah.

EM: 'I just told you, but you go...' [Chuckles] Yeah.

CN: Yeah.

EM: It's-it's interesting.

CN: I used to get that look at the Apple Store, um all the time. Whenever I tell 'em something new that their device can do, or like the history or something--,

EM: They don't believe you.

CN: Yeah. No. They don't believe you.

EM: So if you white, they would believe you.

CJ: Mhmm.

[Crosstalk Ends]

EM: You think that?

CN: Yup.

EM: Without a doubt?

CN: Yeah.

EM: Yeah. Now why do you think that is in this day and age? Is it because of your hair?

CN: Uh I think it's a multitude of things. I think that my speech is a part of it. Like if I sound like them, it's like, 'Oh, you think you're inquisitive? You think you know what you're talking about? We'll make sure I've put you in your place.' And then when it turns

out I'm right, like, that sucks. It's also kind of like a, as ego, like diminisher a little bit. I think another thing too, is um the hair as well. Um. I think my experience--if that is brought out in conversation as well--I think that's also something that's like, 'Really?' Like, I think that's like...well now that I know that you've experienced this, then there's kind of like this um, [Exhales] what is it called?--there's kinda like this expectation that's then made in their head about me, and like all these different things that I should know or not know, or-and vice-and vice versa. Um, I think the only time I wasn't challenged in that light, was when I was working at Salesforce surprisingly, and it's not really like a big, like diverse place to work. So it was, also it was just very interesting. But um, yeah. When I was at Apple, it was just a lot of that; a lot of executives would come in, um and they would like want to buy like fifty ipads. And I'd tell them about it. And they're like, 'Yeah, is your-is your like manager or something around?' 'Well, my manager sent me to sell-sell all these to you, and talk about how it's going to work for your business.' 'Really, why is that?' 'Because I'm qualified.' 'Oh, well y-you don't have like a leadership or anything?' I'm like, 'Is what I'm telling you not proficient enough, or do you just not like that I'm telling you? Like I-I just want to know. 'Cause I got like five years under my belt, and I've been like—I-I'm going to sell another seventy after you leave, so it doesn't matter if you get it from me or not.' But yeah. It's very interesting.

EM: Do people want to touch your hair?

CN: Oh that's definitely happened. Yeah, I've had like—It's usually old white women. They'll walk up and they're like, 'Oh my god. I love your...'

[Crosstalk]

EM: They don't ask.

CN: They don't ask. They just walk up and touch, and I'm like, 'Excuse me, are you okay? Like, why are you touching me?'

EM: [Laughs]

CN: She's like, 'I used to date this Black man in '79? He was beautiful.'

SLJ: [Laughs]

EM: [Laughs]

CN: I'm like, 'And he-he, Is he still alive? Does he have hair you can touch?'

[Laughter]

CN: 'Why am I being touched right now?' I'm like, it's...

SLJ: Have you ever tried to do it to them? Just be like...

[Laughter]

CJ: 'My god, your hair.'

CN: I kinda want to avoid [Inaudible - 00:40:57.]

SLJ: I mean...

[Laughter]

CN: No, fair, fair. Fair.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

EM: I've had people do that...Y'know like I told you, when I [was] hired at the post office, I was the first Black—and only... In fact I was the only Black woman the entire time I was there.

CN: Oh yeah.

EM: When I first got there, I would-I had to say--I had to get mad quite a bit--, 'Do not touch my hair.' Well, one girl [Laughs] snuck it by me, and she gasped, and everybody turned around. And she said, 'It's soft.'

SLJ: [laughs]

CN: Oh my goodness.

EM: And another thing that would piss me off, eh—Don't touch my hair, but do not touch my son's hair. Do not touch my grandson, 'cause I'll smack your hands off. Don—that is offensive to me--,

CN: Yeah.

EM: The touching of the hair. 'But I just, I just want to know.' I think I told you my husband is very, very fair.

CN: Yeah.

EM: Well, and he's, he's got what we'd say "good hair."

[Crosstalk]

CJ: Mm.

CN: Mm.

SLJ: I have no hair, so...

[Laughter]

EM: A lot of people--,

[Laughter]

EM: And I like that too, and he does that now too. [Laughs]

[Laughter]

EM: In fact, I cut all mine off. Hair's overrated; I don't want it anymore. But people would come up to him, 'Black or white, what are you?'

SLJ: Oh I get that.

CJ: Mm.

EM: 'I've been looking at you, what are you?'

SLJ: Mhmm. Yeah yeah.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

EM: When we travel—I travel the world; we've been everywhere. 'Wha-what are you?' And so my husband doesn't answer. And the ah-old British guy kept standing there, and I'm watching--.

SLJ: Yeah.

EM: And I'm thinking, 'I know what he's thinking.'

SLJ: Right right right.

EM: 'I didn't ask you something. You and you not an...' My husband never—He just, he'll look at you, and finally the guy walked off. But he stood there—He had asked that question, and he expected to answer. And he wasn't getting it, and he wasn't moving.

SLJ: I think—You know I-I've heard this--when I've heard it through a friend, and I've heard it recently--um, and-ah the idea of, of-of answering the question with a question. And so I've-I get that a lot--in terms of people asking what I am, and like where I'm from--from all different likes--,

EM: Yeah, he does too.

SLJ: And I, you know—And I have-I-I think a lot about how I may change that, in terms of [Inaudible - 00:43:08]. And I don't know if it's like, 'Well what do you, what do you need me to be?' Um, or 'What you do want me to be?' And um, but it-it's it's-it's really interesting that you know in our so-in our society, [Pause] we're just like the-the human make-up is like, we have this way in which everything needs to be defined--.

[Crosstalk]

EM: Yeah.

SLJ: There has to be--,

EM: You gotta be put in a box.

SLJ: There has to be a category.

CJ: Mhmm.

CN: Yeah.

EM: Yeah.

SLJ: You know?

EM: Yeah.

SLJ: And...

EM: So I can feel comfortable--.

SLJ: [Clears throat]

EM: So I know, where you are.

SLJ: You have to identify something like that--,

EM: Yeah.

CN: Yeah.

SLJ: It's like, I think it's so...like, what's so wrong with like not, y'know, not identifying something--,

CN: [Coughs]

EM: Yeah.

SLJ: And just it being a mystery or whatever.

EM: Yeah.

CJ: Mhmm.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

EM: Now one time he did ask a-a Black woman, and she kept insisting. And he said, 'Why is this so important to you?' 'Why I just gotta know?'

SLJ: Well I think in a situation like that, just sort of like, do you-do you realize that you're sort of perpetuating a problem, that's like y'know also posed on you? You know? That woman is-a perpetuating...

EM: Yeah.

SLJ: Yeah.

CN: Yeah. You know it's interesting, uh the question with a question, or just answering something that would be unexpected. Like, I know that um, one of my grandmother's friends, uh she was very fair-skinned, but she was uh, like her parents were pretty fair too. But, she was mixed. And when people would ask her like what she is, she was like, 'Oh I'm a Christian.'

[Chuckling]

CN: And, they're just like, 'Oh, that's not really what I meant.' 'But that's all you need to know.' And I'm like--,

[Crosstalk]

EM: Oh, I love that.

CJ: [Laughs]

CN: 'Well oh, whoa.' I'm like, 'Okay wow.'

CJ: Yeah.

CN: So I mean, I haven't found out an answer for myself, but y'know--,

SLJ: Yeah.

EM: Yeah.

CN: It's--...

SLJ: It's-it's about sort of shifting the power dyna-dy, the power dynamic. Um, when you know-when she does it, she-she owns the situation--,

EM: Yeah.

SLJ: She takes control.

EM: I like that.

CJ: Mhmm.

CN: Yeah.

[Crosstalk Ends]

EM: Yeah I like that. I had someone tell me when my son was little, 'Liz, you make sure he marries within his race.'

SLJ: Mm.

CN: Mm.

CJ: Mm.

EM: And I said, 'I will. I'll make sure he marries somebody in the human race.'

SLJ: Mm. I love it. Yeah.

EM: Yeah, but I was told that by an older white lady.

SLJ: Mm.

EM: 'Make sure he marries within his race.' [Chuckles]

CN: Oh man. That just reminds me of uh, my girlfriend's grandmother. Um, she automatically assumes that like we want kids; the whole nine yards. Um, I'm not really planning on it right now so, y'know, whatever. But, she's just like, 'Oh so what does your boyfriend look like?' Find out what I look like before she met me. She's like, 'Oh I feel so bad for the grandkids.' And I'm like, 'Aw that's "cute".' Um--,

[Laughter]

CN: And then her friends also said that too, and I'm just like, 'Well, yeah I mean...I-I don't really know, like, if you want me to give a response to that, or you want me to acknowledge that you said that?' But it's also just very interesting. Uh...like, when people put you in a box--like we were saying--like, immediately they already think they know what they're going to get, what they're going to have, um the "XYZ." I remember one time I was working at the Apple Store, and I had the Afro I was telling you about--,

EM: Mhmm.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CN: Huge. Like, really like 60s, late 60s, early 70s huge.

EM: Yeah, love that look.

CN: Yeah, yeah.

EM: [Laughs]

CN: And, um... I had a—But it was so, like I didn't have a pick; there was a lot goin' on with it. So I put a beanie on. And, there was a old white couple that mistakened that as like a turban, ho-for whatever reason. I asked them if they needed help, and they were like, 'No. We don't need your help.' They walked away. Then my managers are like, 'You didn-you didn't check on her? Like, go check on her. Like ask her if they need help.' I'm like, 'I did. She said she didn't need my help.' 'Okay, go ask again.' So I go, and same answer. And then um, I was like, 'Is there—Did I do something? Is there something wrong?' 'Cause of the way she said it, I like called out her tone of voice in the manner. And, then she started to get loud. And she's like, 'I don't want your help.' Goes ov-they walk away. The couple walks away. Goes over to one of my white employees, and they're asking her for help. And she's busy. She's like, 'Well, looks like Chris is available.' 'I don't want Chris's help.' 'Is every...'

SLJ: [inaudible 00:47:07] store.

CJ: Mm.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CN: Yeah yeah. Well, so here's what happened. The Black manager--senior manager--walked up to me; asked me about the situation. And we walked into them together. He's like, 'Yeah, so is everything okay? Like, you know, they can just do something wrong?' 'We just don't want his help.' And I was just like, 'This is so dumb.'

Like, immediately I'm just like, 'They have something against Black people.' Take off my hat, and I'm like walking away, 'cause I'm like, 'I'm going to go on my fifteen minute break.' And she's like, 'Oh, oh...wait, is that, is that an Afro? Oh, I thought you were Muslim. Sor-sorry sweetie.' I'm just like...[Exhales] --,

[Crosstalk]

SLJ: Islamophobe.

CN: 'And that makes it better?' She-and they--,

[Laughter]

CN: Then he told her to leave the store--.

CJ: Leave the store.

CN: She's like, 'No you gotta leave. Yeah, you gotta leave.'

EM: Yes.

CN: Um, 'cause she wasn't given any type of answer up until that moment. I'm just like, 'This is so sad.' Like, I had a b--,

EM: Because she thought you were Muslim.

CN: Yeah. I had a big beard too. Like, yeah. It was...

EM: Oh, wow.

CN: Yeah.

EM: Yeah.

CJ: Wow.

EM: Yeah.

SLJ: Who would you like to see at the table?

CJ: Um...

SLJ: Would you have a...you can pass.

CJ: Eh-no. Um...[Chuckles]

[Laughter]

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CJ: Oh uh, I'm always interested in who's financing art. So, the people who pay for exhibitions and things, I would like to ask them some questions. Um, no. [Laughs]

[Laughter]

CJ: But-or know them so they can finance me.

SLJ: Yeah.

CJ: Um, I think that's an important conversation to have, especially when you're trying to get, like, community engaged in the arts. I don't even want to use that word, like, 'Community,' but, you know, 'Underprivileged,' or whatever the terminology you want to use. If you're trying to bring arts to those communities, then you definitely also want to be talking to the people who pay for it, because kind of from the first question, it's a question of, like, what-the arts you're choosing to display, what are you using it for? Are you using it to challenge, to cajole? Or are you using it to, like, reinforce, like, pre-existing notions? So I'm always interested to know, like, where the money comes from and how they got there--.

CN: [Inaudible - 00:49:13-00:49:14 - whispering under breath]

CJ: Um, so I think that's an important part of it, especially if I'm trying to make a living as an artist. And um, I—yeah, so that's an important part of the conversation for me. But I think, I love all your points; I like listening. [Chuckles]

[Crosstalk]

[Chuckling]

EM: Yeah.

CN: N-yeah.

CJ: I mean...

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

EM: I ha-I find wha-with what I do with um, with stage work, um my financing comes from white organizations. A lot of the churches in Bloomington now have formed racial justice task force. Black churches don't support us financially. A few of them come out, but the base of finances for me, come from white churches or just white people in general. That's—I help restore the colored church in West Baden, Indiana. The-the last structure in the whole county, left from a African American community, that made that community wealthy--.

[Crosstalk]

SLJ: Oh yeah?

EM: French Lick West Baden--,

SLJ: Yeah?

EM: Wha-predated Vegas--,

SLJ: Okay.

EM: And everybody from all over--gangsters--,

SLJ: Are you guys familiar with the hotel?

EM: Everybody, came there on the trains.

CN: Which hotel?

SLJ: In West Ba-the waden, The Baden Ho- West Baden Hotel.

EM: The West Baden Hotel. Well, one block from the hotel--,

CN: Mm, I don't think so.

SLJ: You should check it out.

EM: Is that church--.

CJ: Mm.

SLJ: I didn't know that.

EM: Yeah, one block.

SLJ: It's a--...

EM: And that community made these guys wealthy--,

SLJ: [Clears throat]

EM: Made the whole community-,

SLJ: I didn't know that.

EM: And they all left.

SLJ: Okay.

EM: Well, who's there now are islander-people, from the islands--,

SLJ: Okay.

EM: Are doing service work.

SLJ: Okay.

EM: So I did a story tha—In fact, I just had a premier there at that hotel a few months ago--,

SLJ: Okay.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

EM: And it's—Well I'll show it here, *Indiana Landmarks* in February. So-and I'm talking about the restoration of the church, but there was so much to talk about individuals in that Black community, and how intelligent they were. And it-it it was too much to tell. *West Baden Colored Church*. It's been in the news, and magazines, and everything, especially since I was working on the restoration. So, part of the job I did--other than research, and then I did most of the photography and videotaping--was interviews and fundraising. And my money was white money. One guy, he was pissed about the sign. He said, 'They've renovated West Baden and French Lick.' I don't know if you knew that. Bill Cook renovated those two towns. They were in the ground. *West Baden Hotel*, birds and animals were living in it.

[Crosstalk]

SLJ: Oh I know. Yeah.

EM: It was tr...--,

SLJ: I know.

EM: You know?

SLJ: I've been there, and I've stayed there.

EM: So he renovated both towns, everything, except--,

SLJ: The church.

EM: The church.

SLJ: Mm.

EM: So this one white guy--,

SLJ: [Clears throat]

EM: He said, 'Did they not renovate that because it says "First Baptist Colored Church?" Well, I'm pissed. How much money you need?'

SLJ: Yeah.

EM: And I go, 'Whatever you want to give.' Every time I ran low of money, he would call me and give me ten thousand in the pocket.

CJ: Mm.

SLJ: So is the project done?

EM: Like he was giving me candy.

SLJ: Is the project done?

EM: It's done.

SLJ: Is it? I want to see it.

EM: You've ever heard of Teddy Pendergrass?

CJ: Mhmm. Yeah. [Chuckles]

CN: Oh absolutely.

SLJ: [Laughs]

EM: His-his cousin is preaching down there at eleven o'clock every Sunday.

SLJ: Really?

CN: What?

SLJ: Okay.

EM: Robert Prender-Pendergrass.

CJ: Mm.

CN: "Mr. Soul" himself.

EM: Oh yeah--,

CN: Ohh.

SLJ: [Laughs]

EM: Now, Robert don't sing that good, but he kinda--...

SLJ: [Laughs]

CN: Okay, okay.

CJ: [Inaudible - 00:52:38-00:52:39]?

EM: But eleven o'clock Sunday, if you not doin' nothin', head down that way, and you'll meet Robert Pendergrass--,

SLJ: Okay.

EM: And that's who's holding services there.

CN: Listen, my grandmother loved Teddy Pendergrass so much, I would have thought that man was my grandfather.

[Laughter]

CN: [Inaudible - 00:52:53].

EM: And he coulda been. [Laughs]

CN: He could-he could have been. It was crazy.

[Crosstalk Ends]

EM: Anybody want to pick another card? We've got two. I don't know how much time we have left.

CN: Oh, yeah. Go for it.

CJ: I don't know.

SLJ: We have about seven minutes according to that.

CN: Oh man.

EM: Yeah, the church is beautiful. Really proud of it.

CN: Wow. And it's West Baden? Or Bate-in?

EM: West Baden.

SLJ: B-A-D-E-N.

EM: Yeah.

CN: Okay.

EM: Or 'Bye-din,' 'cause it's from-it's taken from German.

CN: Okay.

EM: West Baden, and they have the hotel. There's a lot to do there now, so go ahead and walk around and check it out. But please go by the church. It's open every Sunday.

SLJ: The hotel is kinda like bein' on like a *Titanic*.

EM: Yeah.

CN: Wow.

CJ: Hmm.

SLJ: [Clears throat]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

EM: A lot of artists just went down to do renditions of the church. I've got...they give me all these pictures if you want this, of the church. It's-it's beautiful now. From where I-when I first stepped into it,'cause it wouldn't go to make it. It was falling into the ground.

SLJ: Pick a different card.

EM: And now it's up and running.

CN: Nice.

[Pause]

EM: [Laughs] You can do that.

SLJ: Um...Wow. This question is, '*What type of public art has had the biggest impact on...oh, in Indianapolis?*' *What type of public art has had the biggest impact in Indianapolis?*

[Pause]

EM: The-Whoever did that *Love* sign?

[Crosstalk]

SLJ: Mm. Robert Indiana?

EM: Who was that? Um...

SLJ: Robert Indiana.

EM: Yeah.

SLJ: Yeah.

CJ: Mm.

EM: Don't you think?

CN: That's a big one.

SLJ: [Clears throat]

CJ: That's a big one.

EM: Yeah. I mean, there for a while... That was...everybody knew that.

SLJ: Yeah. [Pause] Yeah, that's like--,

EM: I can't think of any other artist...Uh, wait a minute. Written art. Kurt Vonnegut?

SLJ: Oh.

CJ: Mm.

SLJ: Well, this is-I mean this is a public, so that would...

EM: Okay.

SLJ: Yeah.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CJ: The downtown murals of like Marnie Evans [Mari Evans] and Major Taylor.

Um--,

SLJ: [Clears throat]

CJ: But I--when you--you first asked the question, I thought of *The Eighteen* [Art Collective] mural on the street. In terms of like impact, an' like more things happening after that.

SLJ: Yeah yeah yeah. Okay.

CJ: That's one that I remember, like in my recent memory. That's from my like, adulthood, is like that whole set of events has kind of changed culture in Indianapolis.

EM: Mm.

SLJ: Okay.

CJ: Um, like there wasn't any Black art stuff. Like If there was--of course, 'cause there always is--but not like...you go from moments to a movement in a concentration. Like then. Like everyone starts paying attention. And it's at that moment.

SLJ: I mean, in--that goes back to the importance of public art.

CN: Yeah.

SLJ: Because it's the visibility.

CJ: Mm.

SLJ: And it creates an ex-an experience.

[Pause]

CN: I think the mural on the *The Stutz* building, um, of like...Mike Epps is also on there too.

CJ: [Chuckles]

CN: But they-other individuals? Like, unfortunately, I can't think up off the top of my head. Um, which is, I think, kind of like something that's part of the point too. Like, if you don't recognize them, and they're like on a spotlight--like, who are they, and why are they important?--and I think that that's like an intention piece. An-for me, that's just like, 'Oh, okay.' Like, these people were probably from Indianapolis too, and they've brought like a s-significant like, um amount of value, um to the city, or to the culture here in some way, shape or form. So I think like, you know, also just kind of knowing how that plays into--,

CJ: Okay.

CN: Oh nice. Plays into your experience of like, you being Indianapolis residents, and the story that you can tell when you travel to places, or people come to visit you. So on, so forth.

CJ: Yeah.

EM: I'm not going to use these cards--,

SLJ: Okay.

EM: Because you brought up something that--,

CJ: [Exhales]

SLJ: Okay.

EM: Thought about me. Like I haven't been here in Indianapolis for forty-five years, but I like-I like the murals that I see going up. If-especially if they're depicting African Americans, because that's what I'm all about. Tell me about the street work when they did the Black Lives Matter writing, what was the heart of the Black downtown--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

EM: Somebody comes from somewhere--they didn't like it--to destroy it. That just...I still can't get over that.

CN: Yo.

EM: It-it wad'n bother'n [wasn't bothering] them. It wasn't in their neighborhood. So tell me, uh-you know about the creation of that, the street [Pause] pavement, and who did that and-and what was the problem?

SLJ: I think it was [Inaudible - 00:57:19].

EM: I mean... [Chuckles]

CN: Mm.

CJ: Oh, that we were outspoken, outside living our lives. Like they just wanted to destroy what they were doing down there. Like it wasn't, um...And I think that's part of what you...Like, I hate that it happened, because they should have been able to say what they were saying in peace, and have it exist as it-as intended.

EM: Mhmm.

CJ: But also I'm glad it happened, because it showed that people would still get mad about us living in peace and expressing ourselves.

CN: I agree.

CJ: And so, then right there, that's the moment right, where it comes in. And then more and more people start to pay attention. Because if it had just like, been a mural on the ground until whatever said date, It'd just happened and we went on about our lives. We all like kept cashing our, was--were we getting stimulus checks at that time?--um, but you know, we just went on about our day. It a-happened and we moved on. But because there was interference, it like sparked something like, I feel like that's bigger than, um, right, that's like a movement. Especially in the Indianapolis area, to have more Black art, and to be more visible; more-even more outspoken than that and to have it continue past like, you know, that very specific moment of like pandemic and civil unrest ,and have it go forward. Because then you saw that there's a need for even more of this. Like if they don't even want us [to] do this in this time, then we have to keep at it. It can't just be like us protesting this moment. It has to be a more concerted effort to always be visible, always be at the forefront. Um and hopefully it get to like exist as ourselves so that we don't have to like be "Black artists." We can just be artists, but we got to go through some stuff to like get there. Like, [Chuckles] I would love to just be existing as myself out here on the planet, but it seems nearly impossible to not talk about the fact that I am of African American descent, all the time. Like [Laughs]--,

EM: Yeah.

CN: Yeah.

EM: Yeah. Yeah.

CJ: Like, if I don't go ahead and say it, somebody's going to ask me about it. So, I might as well just go ahead and like--not make it my tagline--but go on ahead and just like address it in the work, or like as I go on existing. Um...[Laughs]

CN: Yeah.

CJ: Yeah.

EM: Do they have fairs or something, where Black artists all get together to exhibit? That's what that is.

[Crosstalk]

CN: Hold on.

SLJ: [Laughs]

CJ: This—Oh they got jackets?

CN: This right here--,

CJ: Ahh.

EM: Ahh.

CN: The--,

CJ: With the Letterman.

CN: *The BUTTER Art Fair*. Yeah.

EM: And when is it? It's here in Indianapolis?

CN: Yes, yes.

EM: I've never heard of it.

CN: So the Black art fair is ran by *GANGGANG*, a cultural firm that developed here. [Pause] Oh yeah yeah; I'll let you write it.

EM: [Laughs]

CM: Um...

EM: No, I'm keeping up. Okay.

CJ: I didn't know they had Letterman jackets--,

CN: Oh yeah yeah.

CJ: Or else I'd have been even more thirsty to be in this show.

SLJ: [Laughs]

CJ: Letterman's are a thing that we're into. Um...[Laughs]

EM: Okay. So I'm-I missed it this year, I suppose.

SLJ: I need-I need one of those so I can wear it around--,

CN: Yeah, yeah.

SLJ: The world.

EM: So it's ran by *GANGGANG*?

SLJ: Mm.

CN: Yes, so-a Black cultural firm that developed here, a couple-couple a years back.

EM: Wait a minute, Black cultural firm? Uh-uh.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CN: Mhmm. Um, and they basically—And you should look into them, 'cause they do more than just this fine art fair that's for Black artists. That is a big emphasis as well. So, the biggest thing for them is the *Black Fine Art Fair*. And this started in 2021. Um, I

was in the show this year--2023--to show three self-portraits that I did along with fifty-nine other artists. There's another artist that was in the show, just on the other-one of the other tables here; I think it's table one. Um, and it is, um [Pause] it's an art gallery that's been hosted at *The Stutz Building* all three years now. It's only gotten better every year; It's a huge event. Um, very--,

[Crosstalk]

EM: It gets bigger and bigger every year.

CJ: Every year.

CN: It gets bigger and bigger. Let me tell you something--.

SLJ: [Clears throat]

[Laughter]

CN: There is a VIP night, the very first night. So--,

CJ: *Preview Night?*

CN: *Preview Night*, yes. *Preview Night*--,

CJ: I got to go this year.

CN: It's insane.

CJ: [Chuckles]

[Crosstalk Ends]

CN: It was, it was very big. And *Preview Night* is interesting because all the art collectors and investors come in, and those are the people who are buying the art out at first.

EM: Yeah?

CN: So that was the most I had ever sold my art, ever. Um, and it was insane.
Um, actually like I won't like name the person, but um--,

EM: Yeah.

CN: They own like, they're a relative of someone who owns like all the Simon
Malls [Simon Property Group, Inc.]. And it's--,

CJ: Mhmm.

CN: Like it's huge that like somebody with that name would come and, 'Yeah, I
want your art.' N-She-she was initially, like, gonna only buy one. She's like 'No, I want
all three.' Like, that changed my whole world--.

[Crosstalk]

EM: Yeah.

CN: Um, and like--,

EM: What--,

CN: And that's just one person.

EM: Pumped you up?

CN: Yeah.

EM: Yeah.

CN: That's one person. Like--,

EM: When is this fair?

CN: So it happens ah, it-like kinda like late summer every year; it's already
happened.

SLJ: It's Labor Day weekend.

CJ: Right, that's a Labor Day weekend.

CN: Labor Day weekend. Yes.

EM: Labor Day weekend.

[Crosstalk Ends]

CN: Um, And it was, yeah, it was just...It-you know when you said that like, you've had better times when you like were living through segregation, and it was just like-felt like a community; "I felt love". That's like, how that ff--,

[Crosstalk]

EM: Just being in here with your people--,

CJ: Mhmm.

CN: That's h--,

EM; And being with your artists; being with fellow art...just being with, yeah, with your own.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CN: Besides, yeah yeah...Besides the segregation portion of it, like, that's-it is all love when you go there. Like, you feel very, like a part of everything that's happening, and there's people all walks there. I mean, it's huge. Um, and I think like the biggest thing to take away from that is, um that we can have something like this. A Black, fine, art, fair. I've never—Black art fairs are one thing--,

EM: Yeah.

CN: But like, a fine art fair? Like, it's professionally like, a gallery that people have put tog-a team a [of] people've put together. And artwork, Black Art, sold for thousands of dollars; hundreds of thousands. Yeah--,

EM: Yeah.

CN: Like it's, it's insane. So um, yeah you-I'm definitely gonna see you there next year. That's what's gonna happen.

[Crosstalk]

EM: Oh yeah, I'm giving you my card.

SLJ: Hmhm.

CJ: [Laughs]

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

EM: I want you guys' information, 'cause as I said, I wear many hats. I'm an anchor for a radio show in Bloomington called *Bring it On*. For and about Black African Americans. People in Bloomington need to know about you guys; They need to know about that hair. So I can do you individually, or have sep—Maybe the three of you on at the same time, to talk about art.

SLJ: You know I wanted to talk about the earlier question of who [Pause] y'know, could be...Oh I guess we're gonna stop.

[Pause]

EM: Oh.

SLJ: Maybe not.

[Crosstalk]

EM: We--,

CN: But who could be--,

EM: We got three minutes.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

SLJ: Okay...who could be at the table. And, I think it may be a bit of a, a larger context if you will. Because I um, I was recently in Cleveland Ohio--at the Cleveland Art Museum. They had some openings, some gallery openings, because they have a new director. Black woman by the name of Brooke Minto [Executive Director and CEO, Columbus Museum of Art (CMA)]. And she, she's from the east coast; she spoke on, there being a regional, [Pause] there being a regional sort of connection. Um, so whether it be like...and I think regional in terms of just you know, whether be, y'know talking about Columbus, Cleveland, Chicago, Indianapolis, Cincinnati. Um, I don't know. I want to have a conversation with Dave Chappelle.

[Crosstalk]

CN: Yeah. [Laughs] Yeah.

CH: Mm.

SLJ: Um, so...

CN: Definitely.

[Crosstalk Ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

SLJ: It's-it's even though we're in Indianapolis—A-and, y'know, I go to Chicago. I go to a lot of—I have an art gallery that's in Chicago. Um, [Pause] but I...Yeah. It's-it's, i think, not just within the city, but it would be nice to see, you know, to be able to interact and engage with y'know, other locations that are within two or three hours driving distance.

EM: Mhmm.

CN: Agreed.

SLJ: Yeah.

[Pause]

[Crosstalk]

AS: All right, I'm gonna jump in--;

EM: Okay.

CJ: [Inaudible - 01:05:12].

AS: Interrupt everybody.

EM: Yeah. We're ready.

AS: And we are done.

END OF RECORDING

Transcribed by C. BAY MILIN 04/08/2024

To be copyedited.