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Participants:
WEENTA GIRMAY
ABDI FARAH
RON BECHET
ROSEMARY REYES
DIANE JONES ALLEN
DONTE SMITH
Length: 00:58:56

Preface

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

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START OF RECORDING

JINA VALENTINE: (inaudible: 00:00:00) press record--.

Unknown: (inaudible: 00:00:04)

JV: Say what their name does. Um, so introduce yourself (inaudible: 00:00:12).

HH: Because we have to go and transcribe this, so make sure that you introduce yourself in front of every--. At, like, the first time you talk.

WG: Alright, it's on. Okay, my name is Weenta Girnay, I'm a videographer over here in New Orleans.

[Laughter]

ABDI FARAH: Uh, my name is Abdi Farah. I'm an artist in New Orleans.

RON BECHET: I'm Ron Bechet. I'm a visual artist and teacher in New Orleans.

ROSEMARY REYES: I'm Rosemary Reyes. I am an organizer, writer living in New Orleans on my way to New York.

DIANE JONES ALLEN: Um, I'm Diane Jones Allen. I'm a landscape architect and a painter.

HH: And this is table number 5.

[Laughter]

AF: (inaudible: 00:00:51).

DJA: Yeah, so we have to, um, go through these.

WG: I feel like- last time, I feel like, um, people just, like, flipped one over and then answered it, but I wanted to see all the questions. Like, I really was like, 'What if there's a better question we're not answering?'.

RR: Mm-hmm.

RB: [Chuckles]

WG: You know? If there's any one that, like, speaks to people.

RB: We shall get our answer.

AF: We have, uh, one more person at the table--.

DS: Yeah.

AF: If you want, give us your name and (inaudible: 00:01:25).

DONTE SMITH: Sure. Um, my name is Donte, Donte (inaudible: 00:01:29) is the name I go by. I'm a D.J., sound producer, writer, organizer.

WG: Okay. I wonder, is this stack different?

DS: Well…

WG: I think so.

[Inaudible due to volume: 00:01:40 - 00:01:52]

AF: They all seem like pretty good questions. I don't know, I feel we should--.

DS: We should do this like round robin, just, like, pick them randomly. Right?

Unknown: Um…

[Pause]

WG: Okay, alright, we'll do this one.

AF: Um, this first one says: *Does a sense of civic responsibility affect formal decisions made in your studio?*

RB: Hmm.

Unknown: Um.

AF: I-I would say yeah. I mean, I feel like, um, I feel like it doesn't guide, I don't think (inaudible: 00:02:27). I feel like the voices--. I feel like- I feel like everyone has an audience that has something that they would like to share with that audience. And I feel like that always does, kind of, stem from some sense of (inaudible: 00:02:39). When you as a person would like to add to (inaudible: 00:02:44) with, give to society in some sort of way, big or small. So I think there's definitely, like, some sort of sense of civic responsibility that goes in here, in stuff that I make and stuff that I do (inaudible: 00:02:56).

WG: I wonder if--. But, like, what--. I have an example I'm thinking of right now, I wonder if it makes sense with this question, but, um, so I-I'm not a--. I'm a visual artist--. I'm a videographer, I make videos, so I don't know about, like, my studio, but, like--. [Laughs] But, um, I was making a video for, um, a woman who runs an art space, so for an arts organization, um, to apply for this, uh, grant called ArtPlace America. I don't know if any of you are familiar with it, but it's, like--.

DS: I've heard of it.

WG: You know, it's a pretty substantial amount of money you could ask for through this grant and through my filming, I filmed, like, this duo, these two rappers --young rappers-- in the neighborhood, like, upper ninth ward. And they were a part of the video, like, they came to ask for the grant, saying like, 'We do work in the

community. We bring people--. Our space is open to people in this community. We want it to be, like, a multi-disciplinary space.' Um, and so I wanted to make, like, a second video just of their performance so they could have it as, like, young artists who wouldn't have access to video production services. Um, but she was with me as I was, like, looking at the visuals and she wanted the video to be titled like, 'their names: artists and residents at the ArtSpace,' right? And it felt very much, like, self-interested and, like, here's this, like, really amazing- these really amazing artists doing work in our space and, like- but here is a-a way in which I'm, like, using them to promote my space and not necessarily, like, thinking of their interests, like, what's in their best interests. So anyways- so I retitled it. I felt like I couldn't just--. It was a very small thing, but for me, like, I wanted it to look- I wanted to make them look bigger than they were and to just, like, you know, say, like, their- the name of their record label that's a production- their record label's production --like, this is who they are-- 'cause I feel like--. I don't know, that's like a little way that I can help somebody that wouldn't have access, right? But that's, like- what her mission is, is, like, to give people access that they wouldn't necessarily have and still, like --as a white woman-- maybe not [Laughs] thinking about- about some of those things practically speaking. I don't know. Sorry — so, anybody else, like--.

[WG intermittently agrees]

DJA: Yeah. Well, um, I'm a landscape architect, so — which is, you know, design, um, and that's what I actually do for a living. I have a- I have a firm, I paint, kind of, on the side, I guess, but, um, as a landscape architect, um, a lot of what we do is in the public realm, and, um, there are examples when you have to fight to get community input to get community engagement on projects; you have to fight the city or you have to fight the clients. Um, you know, and that's always- and sometimes I've walked away from jobs from that. I mean, um — or I was kinda disappointed 'cause there wasn't enough of that. Like, I just worked on a study about a year ago for taking down the Claiborne (inaudible - 00:06:17)- the bridge, and, um, there was a real lack of community engagement, and that is really gonna affect--. I mean, people were surprised that some in the community don't want that bridge down. It's ruined the community already, but once it comes down, they'll be all this, um, gentrification. So, um, and you have to fight with the comm--. You know, 'cause lots of times they have in mind what they want to do, and so they don't want the engagement, or it's just for show. And so, you really, you know, have to strongly--. If you really care because these kinds of public projects affect people in the long run, whatever they do; whether they take that bridge up or leave it down, it's gonna affect Tremé, it's gonna affect that community. And, um, so it's really important as designers to kind of fight so that the voice of people are kind of heard in these projects. In another project we're about to work on, is Hayden Plaza, which is on, uh, Oretha Castle Haley. And it's really interesting because that's an

example where the artist kind of got caught in not, like, doing this. Um, Frank Hayden, he's a sculptor, African American, he died, but he did — if you go up on Oretha Castle Haley, you'll see this kind of- it looks like an egg with hands, have you seen that sculpture?

Unknown: (inaudible: 00:07:36)

DJA: Okay, and it was done that-that (inaudible: 00:07:40) that's Martin Luther King, and so that was called "Martin Luther King Plaza." And, actually, it's interesting because the first African American — well, one of the first African American architecture firms did that plaza, and they hired the sculptor, and, uh, the- it was suppose to be- people thought it was gonna be a statue of Martin Luther King, but, instead, he did this kind of egg with hands, kind of representing, you know- uh, you know, his- kind of his-his vision of what Martin Luther King meant, and kind of, like, because there wasn't community input. Um, I mean, you can look at the records and it shows that when he pulled the — you know might know about this: when they unveiled it, there was, like, all this uproar, and that was because--. You know, and I feel- I feel the artist was kind of treated unfairly in the community because there wasn't this community engagement process. So, all that is to say is that I do feel --especially if you do art-art in the public realm, you know, if you're a sculptor, or if you're a landscape architect, or an architect, or a muralist, and you're doing stuff in the public realm-- you kind of have this obligation

to engage the community. And lots of times, you have clients that don't want you to engage the community because they want to do what they want to do. So, I have walked away or have fought [Laughs], you know. Yeah.

AF: Do you- do you think, um- like, have you seen any good examples of, like, times where, like, the project has, like, the right amount of people heeding it, like, building what the community wants and the community kind of wanting- having, like, a good of amount of say in it and, 'Like, they're kind of finding this middle ground? I-I feel like I've seen a lot of projects happen if you--. I-I-I lived in St. Roch for a while, there was a lot of open (inaudible: 00:09:22), but the same art market, of course, and it's still going on.

DJA: I see.

AF: Um, and I'm pretty sure they did all the things on paper to make it- like, they were, like, having (inaudible: 00:09:31) and they were engaging the community, and obviously (inaudible: 00:09:36).

DJA: It's true. [Laughs]

AF: Obviously, it seems like they kind of missed some of the- what the public sentiment was for-f-for them. They could, like, dot their "i" and cross their "t" and check 'em off and, like, pretend as if, like, 'Oh, we did everything, like, in accordance with that.' So, I see a lot of that, I see a lot of meetings, I see a lot of things and a lot of (inaudible:

00:09:58). You know, and, like, they kind of pat themselves on the back, like they have, like, upheld our sense of civic responsibility, like- or haven't seen it kind of work anyway, or, like--. I don't know, yeah.

DJA: Yeah, there are- and--. There are- there are, um, a lot of examples, not just in New Orleans, and across the country, when there's really good outreach when, actually, it's what we kind of call--. We make up this term in my office, what we call "Minding the indeginous," meaning that when you kind of look to the artists, or landscape architects, or p-people that are in the community when the client says, 'I'm gonna get someone, you know, who actually--.' Instead of bringing someone from outside. Not that it- not that a person from outside --I mean, I always have th--. Not that someone from a different culture, or a different community, can't design for that community, but it kind of works best even when you collaborate with artists that are from that community, you know, to really help shape because they have a better connection — and they also know better. You know, they can use better engagement techniques. You know, 'cause they're --like you said-- they are these kind of canned things they do: 'Oh, we pin up something and have people put stickies, or we--.' You know, and it's just kind of, 'I check off the list: I had community engagement,' as opposed when you use people of the community that kind of know the best way because people of different cultures are more- are comfortable, you know, expressing--. A lot of times people will come, especially African Americans. I've seen it, they'll come to meetings they won't

say a thing and it's because they're turned off, the engagement, you know, isn't. So, if you kind of get someone, you know, get the community to kind of shape the engagement. There you go, and it's usually better. And lots of times, if you can get the designer or the artist to be of the community, or collaborate, you know, in the process, you usually got better work. Yeah.

DS: Personally, this question- that question made me think about--. Uh, so, we're both events curators, we throw events — artistic events, parties and stuff like that. It just made me think of, like, the process of trying to create that stuff--.

DJA: Yeah.

DS: And the challenges, especially 'cause both of us are transplants, like, I've been here a year and a half, you've been here--.

DJA: The same amount, yeah.

DS: Yeah. And so there's, like, the challenge of wanting to, like, offer something different, but also, like, wanting to engage local artists: uh, local sounds, local D.J.s, and, like, trying to balance that. Also trying to make sure you're in a venue that's accessible, that people of color feel safe in. I think that it's- it's like a light- it's like a juggling act sometimes with, like, trying to, like, hold yourself responsible and, like- while at the same time be like, 'Oh, I just needed it to be fun,' or like--. But, I also feel like I have all these responsibilities to the community, to the artistic community.

RR: And yeah, and as a transplant I found that there was a great amount of resistance from the very community that you're trying to, you know, develop a better environment for, or create a space for because of- because of I'm not from here. So, that was like a- i-it was doubly challenging to navigate all of that on top of trying to organize something that there was clearly a need for without funding with a, uh… some kind of, uh, I don't know, a problematic stance on the role you're playing in the community that you may or may not be as familiar with. So, yeah, I think that's a really good point. And, you know, I--. Also, as a- as a writer, I think civic responsibility is constantly on my mind and, um--. Uh, you know, I was working for an organization here where I felt like --an art organization-- where I felt like there wasn't enough, you know, attention to civic responsibility and so I also decided not to work there anymore because of that, because it's- at a- you know, and especially in a place like New Orleans because of its history, because of this cyclical violence that it- that the- that this land has [Laughs] experienced, and the people of this land have experienced. It's- it's has- it has to be on the top of the list. There's no- I mean, there's no other way to put it, I think, but that's- you know, that's how I view it.

DJA: And I also think, you know, as a creative person, um, especially in, you know, in doing something like architecture or landscape architecture, or-or public art. Um, you know, I used to--. You know, you have this, you know, as a creative person, as any kind of, you know, artist- you know, it-it-it kinda comes from within, like the form

making kind of comes, you know, it comes from--. I mean, there's- there's a inspiring from outside, but anyways, so it's like you're creating this--. But sometimes I feel like I've discovered that if I open up and I use this collaborative process and listen to, you know, your community, sometimes it really, um, affects my form making in kind of surprising ways, things that I didn't really think of, you know. Um, you know, it k- it kinda inspires you in different ways because, you know, they have this other knowledge which can really affect your form making if you were just doing it, you know, from yourself. And especially, too, like, one big theme, um, in landscape architecture--. In ar- in architecture, we talk about is sustainability, that's like the big thing. And, you know, to me, you know, sustainability, it's not just environmental, but it's cultural and economic. And part of sustainability is, you know, the thing of will-will something last, right? So, like, even if I'm doing a mural work, or a piece of sculpture, you know, will it last if it sits in the community? And to me, the way you make things that are in the- in a public environment last if-if you can make people stewards of it, right? Like, 'I'm gonna take care of this piece of art,' right? (inaudible: 00:15:38) I'm gonna take care of a piece of it because either it reflects me, or I connect to it, or I was part of building it, you know? So, um, you know, I think that just has far reaching, you know, um, implications, even in terms of form making, you know?

RB: And a sense- a sense of value and the next artist, I think, reflects their time, um, you know, what's happening in time. It's difficult to just have their work withstand

the test time. You know, from a viewing (inaudible: 00:16:12). You know, so- and so I think it's really important is this idea, like (inaudible: 00:16:17) understanding responsibility. We--. That's just one of them, civic responsibility. Also to responsibility to, um, the craft and the making of, you know, and (inaudible: 00:16:32 to 00:16:47).

DJA: [Laughs] I'm writing that one.

[Pause]

DJA: These are very art specific questions.

DS: [Laughs] *Local Arrests*, that could be fun.

WG: What?

RR: Mm.

DS: For referational artist collectives--.

RR: Yeah.

DS: I'm always interested to, like, hear all the other things people are doing here because I feel like there's so many different projects people are working on.

DJA: This is interesting, this one about post-Black, I don't think we're post-Black. They kept talking about that [Laughs] term with Obama, but--.

DS: I'm sorry (inaudible: 00:17:23) quick question, which is hilarious.

DJA: [Laughs]

AF: It says: *Black has a historical phenomenon, post-Black is a forward looking agenda; Where do you see yourself in ten years? Where are we going collectively?*

DS: Ooh.

DJA: I could just say last night, unfortunately, I spent too much time watching M.S.N.B.C. and, uh, where it hits with, um, with, um, the act of Trump, which lets you know that we are not post-Black or pro- post racial divide, you know? We're not. [Laughs] So… You know, unless that's- that's, in some other kind of way, I don't know. But anyway, go ahead. [Laughs]

AF: I would definitely agree with that. I feel, if anything, this, like, political season has, like, caused me to see that, like, America is still very much the America that it was in the 1600s and 1700s. And, like, there's still these roots that've- we thought they've kind of been eradicated, that've kind of been there for a long time. Um, but I will say that I really do think that we're in a post-Black world as it relates to Blackness being about one thing, like--.

DJA: Yes.

DS: Mm-hmm.

AF: Like--. I-I hate when I'm hearing things on the news where, like, 'Oh, yeah, Bernie Sanders is for the Black vote,' and like, 'Hillary Clinton is gonna get the Black vote.' (inaudible - 00:18:47) Like-like, there's no, like, one Black vote or Black--. Like, we

have different thoughts on money, economics, uh, reproductive rights, whatever. Like, it's--. Like, we have lots of different perspectives, lots of different minds, but that doesn't mean we can't be, like, still a very supportive and cohesive and, like, a loved filled group. Even if there is a plethora of different ideas and backgrounds within the community. But I don't think it's--. I hate when we're kinda reduced to, like, one thing, you know?

RB: Mm-hmm.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DJA: Yeah, I mean 'cause I think that, um, you know, the idea of Blackness is-is more expanded- it's more expansive than that. But then, I also think it kinda comes to letting other people--. Like, that's one one of the problems- issues I do think that we do have, is like we kind of let the greater community define who we are and what [Laughs] Blackness is and we kinda have to, y-yeah, stop doing that and be more expansive about who we are. I don't think we're post-Black, I think we're, really, a more expanded sense of Blackness, and we have to kind of really make that definition for our-ourselves. But, you know, just, um--. I think, you know, in terms of histor- the historical perspective, I just the problem with America is--. And it's the--. It's hard. It's just, um, like--. Which I think, like, for instance, Germany finally did, if you kinda wanna compare slavery with the Holocaust. They kind of finally accounted for it; you know, they actually gave

reparations to Jews, they kind of accounted for the- for it. And so they would--. I just think that America has never come to grips with slavery, and I just think once that happens, we can kind of move on, but until we're willing to do that, it's going to continue to be there. I just don't think we want to come to grips with our history. I think that's why there's foolishness going on about statues, okay, to get back to art. [Laughs] Coming down. It's because we just don't wanna- don't either know how to or don't want to deal with it. One way to--.

AF: And we're forced to.

DJA: Yes. And we either deal with it, like-like, with kind of Trump is doing, making the "other," like saying, 'Okay, this is real America and they are the "others." ' But until we deal with our history in some kind of concrete way where, like, other countries had to, and I look at Germany as an example --um, not that they still don't have issues-- but they kind of made- had to really come to grips with what they did. And I think it's made them a better country than we are because we've never come to grips with it. Yeah.

AF: Yet (inaudible: 00:21:16).

DJA: [Laughs]

RB: That Germany was made by other countries to deal with it.

DJA: Mm-hmm.

RB: We don't have that.

DJA: We weren't--. Yeah.

DS: Yeah, definitely not.

[Inaudible: 00:21:25 to 00:21:31]

RB: You know, remember the pope did it at the time, uh, did it, uh, with Africa- with divided up Africa, and said, you know, 'Okay, uh, this particular country gets this part of Africa,' and so it's always been, um, the pressure--. Um, African people have been disenfranchised for- uh, by European- by other people that aren't African for many, many thousands of years. And so--. I think, you know, we can't get past that and I think you're right. You know, um, one of the things for me that's really interesting and, uh, something to look at is now they found a connection, genetically, uh, to how oppression- people who are oppressed can be passed through generations.

DS: Their D.N.A., yeah.

RB: Their D- through their D.N.A.

DS: And causes trauma that manifests itself, yeah.

RB: Exactly, so a traumatic experience is passed on. And so when you think about that, and we haven't dealt with that trauma they we are- we're dooming gen- generations in front of us. You know, if we don't deal with this now.) And so how can we get past that?

DS: Mm.

RB: You know, so this idea of ‘Post-Black’, I can’t get past a post-myself.

DJA: [Laughs] Yes.

RR: Right.

RB: So, that’s- that’s (inaudible: 00:22:41) that we- when we had our Post-Black art movement. You know, Post-Black artists and, you know, um, and (inaudible: 00:22:49), but, you know, pushing this-this issue as his own. I-I just felt like, ‘How can I get past this when folks don’t let me get past it?’ [Laughs] You know?

DJA: And what- and what is wrong with embracing your Blackness and still be accepted as a citizen, you know? And let somebody embrace their whiteness or their Jewish-ness or their bi-racial — whatever, what’s wrong? Why do I--? You know, why-w-why-why can’t we be what we are? You know, that- we had always… [Laughs]

DS: I think for Black artists is so tricky. I mean, this--. So I don’t know if anybody had a really entertaining Black History Month, but mine was.

[Laughter]

DS: Like-like, with the Superbowl, with, uh, Kendrick Lamar, and just, like, all these things. Like, all these Black artists making, like, very visible, loud statements about their Blackness. But last year has been interesting about the identity of Blackness, like Rachel Dolezal--.

AF: Oh, I love her.

[Laughter]

DS: Uh, even Zoe Saldana playing *Nina* right now.

WG: Yeah.

DS: But no, like, I think that there's this in--. We're--. That- that's part of--. And having Obama as President has kind of sparked all of these conversations about racial identity and artistic expression and who gets to do what, I'm just kinda nervous about what happens when he leaves. Like, will the momentum still be here, right? Like--.

AF: (inaudible: 00:24:07)

DJA: But, um, I think--. But I think that's--.

DS: I mean BlackTwitter will still be here, but--.

[Laughter]

DJA: But I think what's happening- I think what's happening with the Trump supporters is actually related to that.

DS: Oh, yeah. No, they're totally related.

[D intermittently agrees]

DJA: I think that's why they're in such an uproar, because there's all those things you mentioned, you know? There's this--.

DS: I agree.

DJA: Yeah. [Laughs]

AF: It has this perceived lack of, like, loss--.

DJA: Like of getting upset.

AF: Of something of, like, America wasn't always was and always is. I think it really ties into, like, these things you're talking about. Like, I don't know, I-I personally don't see post--. Like, anyone who's talking about post-Black or post-race has, like, this idea that race does not exist or that, like, everything's going to melt into one thing and then we'll be, like, cognizant of race or ethnicity or culture. And, like, that's just ridiculous--.

DJA: And do we want- do we want that to be? We want a varied palette.

AF: Yeah, culture and difference and, like--.

DJA: Do we want to be? [Laughs]

[DJA intermittently agrees]

AF: To, like, every specific thing is like so beautiful and-and (inaudible: 00:25:00). Like, why would you have (inaudible: 00:25:01). Um, and a thing, too, like, (inaudible: 00:25:05) like so many great examples of, like, just how, I don't know, how great culture can be, you know? I feel like that does scare people who have seen their culture be the dominant culture for so long. It's like we're no longer, like-like these things that used to be, like, number one or no longer number one. And it does cause people to hark in for

something, like, that will bring that back, which is scary because anyone can just embrace the- wherever it manifests itself, like (inaudible: 00:25:39). That was, like, one of the more troubling thing about the Obama Presidency, like-like he's your President, too, like why don't you enjoy [Laughs] this, like. Like, he really does want to read your cross, like, to have- whatever, like, 49 percent and not vote for him. Like, (inaudible: 00:25:55) any person, is the person who's, like, 'Really, vote for me. Like, I'm still (inaudible: 00:26:00) to, like, certain communities, you know, instead of what he have now. And, like, other politicians who could care less about the people who don't vote for them. It just doesn't make any sense at all. (inaudible: 00:26:10).

[Laughter]

RB: You know, it's (inaudible: 00:26:12) I like that you brought that up, you know, the issue of power. And-and-and the fear of losing the power, you know? I think it's, like, manifesting itself as we see in media (inaudible: 00:26:26). Yeah, it makes no sense, but-but I think we see it, um, with Obama. You know, um, and what's going on with that. Here in this city, you know, that it's a- it's- it's a manifestation of-of people who have power feeling like that they're gonna lose it, and, uh, they feel threatened.

DJA: I also think they als- there's also this fear that--. You know, because, as human beings, for reason --especially as Americans-- we all- we think of things --and this is something I fight with all the time, personally-- we think of- we think of things

through our own, um, experiences and perspective. That's just how we do, you know? [Laughs] It's- it's always hard to put yourself in others' shoes, so I really think that the fear that the majority who are not really--. I mean, when you combi-combine the Hispanic, the Asian, and the Black population, they're really --really their numbers-- they're really not the [Laughs] majority anymore. I think they're fear is that- that the people that are now in the majority will treat that- treat them the way they treated the minority, because they see things through their eyes, so they'll- they're- they're not seeing that, 'Oh, now we're all- appreciate their thinking just like we suppress the people of color, now the people of color are going to suppress us.' 'Cause they see things through their eyes. I think that's their greatest fear. They think they'll be discriminated and suppressed because they'll be the minority, because they see things the way they did. You know, and they have no understanding of, you know, [Laughs] people of color. That's probably not what we're gonna do, 'cause that's really not the way we are. Right. [Laughs] Yes. They're afraid.

AF: Like, people- people respond to him, like, they that as, like, (inaudible: 00:28:13) like of being on point, of being uninformed, of being- completely lack of (inaudible: 00:28:20) a bad thing for him.

DJA: They love that. [Laughs]

AF: They really, like--. They don't know why they love it, but they- they love it, they don't have a less- 'cause that's who they are. You know, it's like revealing a lot of, um, like, people (inaudible: 00:28:32).

WG: I think they also love him because he represents capitalist America. Like, and just, like, wealth and power and, um, what people want out of like- they want America (inaudible: 00:28:49) country. So if there's a bully (inaudible: 00:28:52) prestige and has a huge empire behind him, like wealth he's accumulated through the capitalist system, gone bankrupt a couple of times if not, like--.

[Laughs]

AF: It's like this or that, yeah.

WG: Like very seductive, I feel like.

AF: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. That explains a lot.

WG: [Laughs]

RB: Yeah. Like, (inaudible: 00:29:12) a joke about, um, Donald Trump. Um, going, uh, if he wins the presidency, he said, well--. The joke is that, 'Well, he's used to throwing Black people out of houses, right?'

[Laughter]

DJA: There's that Beyonce question. Somebody--.

RR: Yeah.

DS: Oh my God.

WG: Beyonce (inaudible: 00:29:33)

RR: Used to, yeah.

DJA: It's the bibliography.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

WG: Yeah, we talked about this actually, recently. This was the same- this was in the last sta- uh, first round. Um, and--. Well, a couple things, right? So she wasn't actually here to filmed all of- all of that stuff. Like, it's like outtakes from somebody else's documentary. So that's one thing, uh--.

DS: Which is a beautiful documentary.

WG: Yeah.

DS: It's really good.

WG: And, like, I talked about just initially being excited to see New Orleans represented. It was a question of, like, how is New Orleans represented in the Black--? Er, how Blackness is represented in the media and sort of just seeing New Orleans being represented in-in media. I was e- I was excited initially and then I re-watched with a friend; they saw it once and just initially, like--. My reactions were, 'Great. New Orleans,' like, you can see what (inaudible: 00:30:28). But the second time around with the friend, it was just, like, he was an artist who was, like, looking for something more

radical. Like, I was like, ‘Wow, what’s considered radical to, like, mainstream America is so--. Um, it’s actually, like, fluff, like--.’

[Laughter]

RR: I-I feel like a lot of artists--. I mean, I have — whatever, I have my own opinion about Beyonce, but there is--. [Laughs] There’s a lot of, like, taking Blackness a la carte, and, like, taking what’s convenient and-and, like--. That’s-that’s the- that video was that to me. When I saw it, I was like, ‘Oh my God,’ like--. [Laughs]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DJA: Yeah, the thing she does at the Superbowl--. I mean, being the age I am, I know people that were in the Panthers who were quite--. You know, Panthers are (inaudible: 00:31:14) you know what I mean? To da- take that- though- that thing a la carte and all of a sudden (inaudible: 00:31:18) so I’m represen--. You know? Like, what does she really know? Does she really care about them? Does she understand the struggle they went through? And those that are now in their 60s and 70s, what they’re dealing with and to take that? I love that; but to just take pieces and you know? So--.

DS: I think it’s also, like, part of her identity as, like, a mainstream pop artist. Like, she’s not Angela Davis to me. You know, I’m not expecting--.

WG: Tough snot.

[Laughter]

DS: I'm not expecting Beyonce to do that, you know? I'm like, 'You're a mainstream pop artist, like--.' You know, I represent your lane is like a lot of money and being, like, someone who can reach a large audience, but I still respect, like, certain efforts to, like, connect to Blackness, stand up for Blackness, like, probably proclaim that even though it, like, hurts your pocket book or cops boycott you. Like that stuff, I'm kinda- I'm kinda here for, and as like a Houston- Houstonian and a Creole person, I'm kind of- part of me wants to, like, really be into it, but there's some really problematic shit with that video. That's my challenge, is that it's just, like, real- really problematic, like — traumatic, like, just knowing people who survived, like, I'm like, 'I can't.'

WG: And it's just those images are so triggering for people still. And for her to be glamor--. Like, glamour shot on top of a cop car, N.O.P.D.--. It's ridiculous. It--.

AF: It's something (inaudible: 00:32:35).

WG: As like, you know, one of her fans actually could've been very, very, like, traumatized from just rewatching that image with just without warning. I don't know. And so there- there is, like, a lack of sensi- of senstivity in-in using such a tragedy and then--. Such a clear example of, like, you know, just this--. Again, this encyclical thing that it--. The cyclical monster that devours Black bodies on this land for the sake of entertainment. Yeah.

DS: And, like, I feel it's a very New Orleans thing to eat Blackness. Come here to eat- some here to eat Blackness; Black food, Black culture.

WG: Yeah.

RB: As a (inaudible: 00:33:13)

DS: Yeah.

RB: (inaudible: 00:33:15 to 00:33:25). Beyonce's this generation's, um --uh, what's her name-- um, The Supremes?

DS: Oh, yeah. She's totally Diane Ross. Totally, 100 percent.

DJA: Because, I mean, she has a--. I mean, she has us--. She's probably so happy because she did that, like, what she did in the Superbowl and the video, we're talking about her. She probably sold fifty more albums and, you know, 500,000 albums or whatever, you know? But, it's like, you know, does she really care? And does she really take responsibility?

DS: She's not even coming here on the tour.

DJA: Yeah, and does she really take the responsibility for what she's done? Yeah.

AF: I, um, (inaudible: 00:34:00) about Beyonce because--. And I think it--. I don't think she has any- I don't think she has any bad intentions with that video. I think her-

where she rests, culturally, is in a really strange place where, like, she has so much of, like, popular America, this, like, crazy (inaudible: 00:34:17).

DJA: She's so crossover.

AF: Yeah.

DS: Yeah.

AF: 'Cause--. Yeah. And--. 'Cause she really doesn't ever have anyone challenging her to, kind of, trouble her very, like, simplistic ideas of, like, what is (inaudible: 00:34:29). You know, so when she does, like, the video, she's, like, 'Oh, we're gonna make this really powerful video. Like, we have this director.' She's throwing all these images out (inaudible: 00:34:38) and there was never that moment of like, 'Oh, did we cross this line? Is this, like, tasteful? Is this even good? Is this interesting?' Because, for the most part, in her ear, it's just like, 'Oh, this is great, this is great, this is great.' And I just wish we kind of had a larger ability to hold our popstars to, like, a higher standard, like on a higher scale. Yeah, I see it in, like, visual arts as well where, like, it'll be artists who are doing something that's almost good and it's like 'It's a beautiful thing,' but we're just so happy to see, like, a Black (inaudible: 00:35:16) and it's just like you don't want to challenge it to be just a little bit more thoughtful. So I kinda see that voluntarily.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DJA: Well, one person that really, you know--. I-I always get people upset and I have fights about [Laughs] it with some people, one person that I feel is like that, I don't think a lot of it's good, and it's-it's Spike Lee. I really hate that *When the Levees Broke* is a terrible film. And the second one was even worse. It was done really quickly, and the Levees didn't break, the flood walls burst. You know? [Laughs] And he did really quickly, and the second one was really horrible, but he did that really quickly. And then *Chi-Raq* was, like, a mess. It was a mess and it was because he did it too fast. He had a really great movie bear. The sensitive thing, you know, with um--. And her- where her family was actually killed in Chicago, the singer, um--.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Jennifer Hudson.

DJA: Jennifer Hudson and then the thing about the g--. But then, instead, he puts naked girls and he just puts everything in the world and every video technique he knows, it's just- it was a mess. So he drives me crazy, because I think that--. Yeah.

AF: And he used to be a good director.

DJA: It's that he wants to do--. His ego is just- he wants to just do it all and some of his stuff is crap. [Laughs]

WG: (inaudible: 00:36:26) *When the Levees Broke* was terrible?

DJA: Because it was done really quickly, it didn't really deal, like, with the real issues of what really happened. The second one kind of glorified naked, right? Which is

horrible, those people had mortgages, half of the people who were living there aren't- are not --they were living there before-- aren't the ones back. They were in worse shape- they were--. Brad Pitt did not help them, he actually harmed them, you know? Um, and he glorified — tha-that was the second film. The first film, he didn't take the time to really understand, Katrina was complicated. You know? And so it was just like, 'I'm Spike Lee, I'm gonna hurry up and make my money off of this, and come down and throw this stuff together.' You know? And the second--.

RB: And he didn't talk to anybody.

DJA: And he didn't. And the second one was even worse. You know, Katrina was complicated. You should at least wait a year to really do your research. talk to people, come--. And he's Spike Lee--.

AF: (inaudible: 00:37:17)

DJA: Yes. He's Spike Lee, he can hurry up and throw this stuff together and that's what it looked like. If you go back and look like it- and look it at now, you'll say, 'Oh my God, all this is misinformation and this is not what was really happening here. This is not [Laughs] what it was really about, this is not--.' You know? It's bad. Well--.

RB: With Spike Lee--. I'm sorry.

WG: No, no. I was wondering, like, from the ask- from the outsider's perspective, like, I watched that film, and it took a long time to watch it 'cause it's like the--. It was in

four parts, like, like, like, a couple C.D.s, you know. And, um, I didn't see anything wrong. As somebody who was not here to experience it, like, he had, uh, governors, mayors, like, in his film, and I felt like it was very fortunate that he was able to talk to those people 'cause they were right in the center of it all. So, I'm curious about, like, if there's one moment that you remember from it that you feel like--. From an outsider's perspective, you would take it, like, at face value, but from somebody that knows a little bit more about the inside politics of New Orleans, do you feel like it's misinformation?

DJA: I mean, I really think he didn't deal with--. And I just think he didn't have time. Some of the best things on New Orleans, all of a sudden in the tenth anniversary, there about four, or five, books that came out. They had, like, ten years. So he didn't really t-talk--. You know, he didn't really deal with the fact that, you know, Road Home basically stole people's houses. And the- and right now there's suit, because there's a difference in people who can — who are wealthier and could come back, and put their kids in private school, and take their money and build their house, and somebody else who only got $75,000, and your kids in Mississippi are- er, are--. Recovery school district closed down the schools, fired all the Black teachers — all those things are not covered in there. Yes, he had those people who were so soon a very reactionary. And there was a whole lot of stuff that really happened, and then he went back and did the second film, and it was even worse. It was even shallower. The second one is really bad, and the first one, yes, but it didn't really deal--. And I think part of it is because he's

Spike Lee, he could come down and get governors and people to talk to him really quickly. But if you had been here- but if you had been here just in the last five or ten years, you could really see what really happened. And-and a lot of those issues are not- they have more clarity about the terrible things that happened in Katrina and the aftermath of it. I mean, right now in the lower ninth ward, there were 18,000 people, 6,000 people live in the lower ninth floor. And Nora basically took, with Road Home, all those 700 lots, which they know are- putting out R.F.P.s for developers. I mean, there was meaty stuff that happened and Spike Lee missed it in that film, beause unless he was just trying to make a quick film, which it seemed like, and get this reaction about Katrina now, but he really could have done some good. [Laughs] Really made something. If he had taken at least five years, or two years, or made a film that really dealt with the real issues of displacement, how all these--. The p--. Tearing down the public housing here and all those people being pushed out of New Orleans east, you know, where it used to be the Black middle-class haven and now it's the section eight voucher haven. You know, he didn't really deal with any of that stuff.

RB: Or school system.

[Crosstalk]

DJA: Yeah, this goes--.

DS: That's not a- that isn't--.

DJA: A lot of meaty stuff he didn't deal it.

[Crosstalk ends]

RB: (inaudible: 00:40:38) you know, it was just, like, um, glorifying some of the issues about education and the charter system that just--. I'll just leave it at that. And so those are some of the issues that--.

DJA: Yes. Yes.

RB: And one of the things, too, that, uh, I-I guess I find fascinating t-to talk about is, with Spike Lee and with Beyonce, is this oversexualization of women. You know, I wonder how the ladies feel about that. You know, it's like they're (inaudible - 00:41:12) it's like this is what they're using to--. Uh, there's no reason for it, let's put it that way. You know, uh, I could see it if there was a point to be made, but Beyonce, you know, uh--. I guess--. I, you know,I don't look at this stuff a whole lot, but I've never seen her wear an outfit that wasn't, you know, plastered on, or painted on. It's- it's--. You know, it's, uh, over-over the top, you know? And it's used to-to, um, for another reason other than, um, being able t-to draw attention to you. She's actually trying to (inaudible: 00:41:52) and talk about it in her art. Uh, and that- the most obvious thing that anybody says is that the sexual aspects of (inaudible: 00:42:00).

WG: Well, in the way, like, her beauty is described, or perceived, it's- you know, she's a Black Barbie. So, a Barbie is white and so her beauty it- the standard for beauty

is still a white standard for beauty, even though she may be Black, that's not what people are seeing, you know, so. The fact that (inaudible: 00:42:23) if you, um--.

RR: I feel like also, when I think about somebody like Beyonce, the stakes are so much higher for her a-and for what she represents because there's only so many representations of Black female beauty in the media. So, like, you have Beyonce, Rihanna, and Nicki Minaj, and all three of them are really overly sexualized and the problem with- with, um--. Like, there's a- there's a, uh, pool to criticize them for that because, like, we only have a few people that are representing us in the media, whereas, like, your- there's so much diversity of whiteness in the media because there's so many other representations of it, so they- you can have somebody who's, like, I don't know, who's like an overly sexualized white woman, like, in the media, like--. And it doesn't really matter, the stakes are so much lower, because there's so many other examples of whiteness. You know?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AF: That i- that is the part where, you know, we do put so much burden on them. Like- like hold the- Spike Lee to such high standards, but like with what you're saying, but then it's like who--. Where's the- where's the other Katrina documentary? Like, no one else has really made it. Like, so we're kinda relying on these people to make these things- and it should be, like--. Like, Katrina is one of the biggest events in American

history in the last twenty years, and there's maybe one mainstream documentary about it. Like, that's insane. That's- there's like twenty about the financial crisis.

DS: And movies and plays about that shit.

AF: Yup. Movies, fictional things — like, whatever. And then, like what you were saying, uh, about there being these, like, two or three Black women that are, like, they're held to carry and represent all the Black women. Like, there's so many Black women who cannot look at Beyonce, or Rihanna or Nicki Minaj and see themselves at all. You know, but they're meant to kinda represent all of them. So it is kind of a lot to put on them because they're all like in their twenties or younger and it's like I can't imagine, like, me having to think about all that stuff, but then there is a part where there is--. It goes back to that civic responsibility of--. They are smarter than we think in that they're- they've learned capitalism, and they've been told that this works, and they've been told that if they don't do it, the next person is right behind them and are willing to do it, and it's like do you--? As an artist, there's always like 'Do you want to do everything that comes with being that biggest person?' Are you okay with that being, you know, like, cultural zeitgeist carrier for-for forever? You know, are you really willing to make the sacrifices for some sort of--? Yeah, I don't know. Like, personally, I don't mind there being like one (inaudible: 00:45:11) sexualized figure. I feel it. Like, if that's what you want to do, like do it. But there does become a problem when (inaudible: 00:45:20) and

so what to be seen as this, like, champion of, like, purity and goodness and, like, Black greatness, [Laughs] you know? Like, those things do not, like, go hand in hand.

RB: I think about, you know, Josephine Baker and, uh--.

DS: Have you seen that--? Quick reference, have you seen the picture of Beyonce, she referenced that in like a performance in where, like, a banana- skirt?

RB: No, I have not.

DS: This is, like, earlier on the carer- her career when she first went solo.

RB: Wow. So she's conscious of it?

DS: That's--. Yeah.

AF: Somebody--.

RR: Someone--.

DS: Somebody was.

RR: Yea.

DS: She's well curated.

RB: Help- help me out, y'all. I'm old, okay? Um, uh, Mississippi goddamn.

DJA: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

DS: Nina Simone.

RB: Nina Simone. Do you equate Ms. Simone with, you know, a Josephine Baker? Um, and just like today we only have- there's, uh, Josephine Baker because, like--. And Nina Simone, the one who's civically connected, uh, and who's trying to make a difference and, uh, and say something positive about Black people, especially Black women. Um--.

DLA: Well, I think that you do have the other, it's just that the other doesn't get the backing, the public--.

DS: Radio play.

DJA: Okay. So, 'cause it- I was having this, you know, I was having a big fit about the fact that they picked Zoe Saldana, and I'm like, 'Okay, even if we've got a say, we gotta have a name--. Or maybe they wanted to have, you know--.' It was about her talent, but I was saying, you know, I remember seeing *Twelve Years a Slave*, and not Lupita, but the other young girl, the one that kept crying, do you remember that? I can't think of that actor. She was in *Piranha* also.

AF: (inaudible: 00:47:01).

DJA: She would have been?

AF: She was younger?

DJA: Yes, she would have been a great Nina Simone. I could think of--. And if you wanted an older person, the one that was in *The Help*, not the one that one academy award, uh, she has a T.V. show--.

DS: Viola. Viola Davis, yes.

DJA: Yes, I could think of a hundred--. I could think of, like, India.Arie. You know, India.Arie, I could think of a lot of people that are singers, that are- have the color, and have the weight--.

WG: That actually might look like her a little bit.

DJA: And it wasn't just a co--. Yes, have the weight of her because I just saw the documentary. They did--. You know, there was a documentary, if you look at that documentary, it's like what were they thinking? And some say, 'Well, they wanted a name,' I'm like, 'But they're--.' So, it's-it's really about--. There are those people like that there, but they don't get chosen, they don't get the avenue. That's what, um, Viola Davis had said several times when she got the award, that she shouldn't--. You know, there's a zillion other actresses, but they don't get the opportunity.

AF: The sad part is (inaudible: 00:47:59) for maybe, like, two or three that you can have, like, a Black story. And then you go back further beyond that, it's, like, why are there only two or three, like? 'There are only this many layers, da, da, da, da, da,' and then you go back on (inaudible: 00:48:19) Like, who are these historical figures that

(inaudible: 00:48:23). And that's because a lot of our historical figures have been written out of history even before that. Like, fifty years or more. So, there are all of these, like, pairs and then it goes--. Like, I feel bad for Zoe Saldana, I'm sure sh--. Like, as a working Black actress, she's like, 'Hell yeah I'mma do this.'

DJA: Yes, she wanted to work. She wanted to work.

AF: Now Black America is mad at her, like, white America (inaudible: 00:48:43).

[Laughter]

AF: [inaudible to volume: 00:48:45 - 00:48:50] So there are five movies about, like, amazing Black women coming out in 2016 or '17, like no one would (inaudible: 00:48:57 to 00:49:03). Like, I'm pretty sure there are plenty of, like, biopics about, like, white people where the person doesn't look exactly like that person. And they dodn't care, it's like, 'Who cares? We'll have another one next week.'

DJA: But--. Oh no.

WG: But I feel like there's a lot of- more of like claiming ownership over the image of a Black person, or, you know, er, over the white person because there's a dime in a dozen and like--. [Laughs] But, like--. Yeah, so that's another thing that complicates it, it's like, 'Well, yeah, it's actually what's (inaudible: 00:49:33). Who has- who can claim this-this, like, artist's image? Like, you know, is it- is it public--? Can the public, or is it, you know, does the Black community? Is it just her family? You know, it's like who-who

has ownership and, like, why, out of nowhere, all these people have a stake in it, you know?

RB: (inaudible: 00:49:55) this discussion, just bringing it back to the visual form. Uh, what about Kara Walker's *Sugar Baby*?

DS: I'm kinda in love with Kara. I think she's, like, one of my favorite artists. I didn't get to see that collection, but I'm in love with everything.

WG: I volunteered in the space for weeks, so I spent a lot time with that work and saw a lot of people's reactions and--. I mean, I love her work. Yeah, I-I think she's a genius and, um, but it-it def- it did feel like she was kind of playing a joke on-on the visitors that were, like, you know, posing in front of it, and Instagramming, and, like, you know, buy- buy, like, you know the Sphinx vulva and--. You know, and like--. So I feel like there was a lot of maybe- she was, like, maybe fond of--. 'Cause she knew it was going to become this huge thing, there are a lot of tourists. A lot of the- the majority of the people that went, from what I saw, were mainly European tourists. And this was in the summer time in July in New York and, you know, they wrote about it in Time Out and whatever. [Laughs] You know? But--.

AF: It's tough for me, like--. Visually and, like, viscerally, I appreciate Kara Walker's work, and I think she's--. Where it's like how you're saying, she's in on the joke as well, and it does trouble me though--. It's kind of a catch-22 'cause she's- in her

work, ‘cause she’s playing with it, but for me, it’s always troubling that her’s is the work that is so, like, venerated by the larger world, in the larger art world as, like, a paragon of, like, Black artwork. And it just so happens it’s kinda like this s-self repeating thing that it- it happens to be on slavery, it’s all on old stuff, it’s about like--. It’s just- it’s this lane that white America is very comfortable with us making artwork about. And that’s not her fault, she shouldn’t have to make work that she’s--. She shouldn’t have to make different work because of that, but it is--. And I think she’s in on the joke, but I wish, like, along with that *Sugar Baby* (inaudible: 00:52:00) as an artist who is thinking about something completely different, who is also getting that level of Black funding and financing and backing. And it’s kind of there to kind of show something else. Like, it shouldn’t just be, like, one--. Yeah, for me--. Yeah, it’s always--.

WG: That’s not how it works.

AF: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, you’re right, you’re right. It’s not.

[Laughter]

WG: I’m sorry, but Creative Time is a non-profit, but it’s an institution. And like it- it-it-it works under an institutional model, a capitalist model, so of course they’re gonna get the biggest name they can to work on a large scale exhibition, you know?

AF: But it’s like why is she the biggest name? Like, does she--? Is she the most talented Black artist of alive? Like, I don’t think so. You know? It’s not like… [Laughs]

WG: She got in mixed--. So she--. Yeah, she's has name prestige behind her name and--.

AF: Sure.

DS: Yeah.

WG: That's also--. You can question that.

D: She's controversial.

AF: (inaudible: 00:52:54)

WG: Yeah.

D: She's unique.

AF: I'll never be (inaudible: 00:52:57). That is interesting that it's like--. It has--. It's just, you know, it seems like it just has to be a lot of like--. They're always, like, fighting each other, where--.

RB: (inaudible: 00:53:08) is acce- it's accepted because of the energy of white folks--.

AF: It's comfortable (inaudible: 00:53:19) it's comfortable because it's (inaudible: 00:53:21 to 00:53:29) it's definitely not--. Yeah, I--. Yeah. [Laughs]

D: Okay, to play devil's advocate here, and this is something I've been thinking about- it's something I think about a lot, being someone who's a transplant here, but has ancestry here…

AF: Sure.

D: Uh, it's like the idea of rememory and, like, remembering and recreating certain events, actions, cultural conflict issues, I see that in Kara with *Sugar Baby*, I see that in- with Beyonce with Messy Mya and all these different artists who are in that- in that video. So I guess it's this question of, like, how, as a- as a Black artist, like, what- how important is rememory and, like, tying in that sense of history, herstory, to your work, um, while at the same time, you know, managing that with, like, your values, like, your marketability, your, like, need to make a living, like, how- how does that play out for people?

WG: Resources.

RB: Yeah.

WG: Mm-hmm.

D: 'Cause for it happens in lots of different ways, like depending on the media, like, if I'm D.J.ing, it might mean that I'm just gonna play something that I don't necessarily like but I know people will dance to if I- if I really need that money. Or if I don't care, I might just play some disco all night and say, 'Fuck it. This is what I want to hear.'

AF: I mean, I think that goes down to the scale of the artist. Like, I-I think we also live in an interesting world where, like, once an artist becomes, like, at a certain echelon, they can no longer, like, make a bad piece. It's like- like--.

DS: [Laughs]

AF: (inaudible: 00:54:58). Yeah, we love Beyonce, but this isn't a great piece. Like, why is that not okay? When instead it's like, 'Oh, did Beyonce like--? Is Beyonce a traitor? Did she, like (inaudible: 00:55:11) I think we should, like, kinda reclaim that idea that artists are always growing, they're always evolving. They make mistakes, they make things that aren't as good as things they used to be, where it's like--. If we had troubling things towards, like, Kara Walker and *Sugar Baby*, it might not just be like her fantastic thing, you know? And, like, I just think that's- this has some issues that need to be resolved. And to have that conversation instead of, like, thinking Kara Walker is Kara Walker (inaudible: 00:55:39). That's probably not the question, and I don't think Kara Walker--. It- it's- it's like how is this piece succeeding and failing just on a (inaudible: 00:55:47) like, culturally, like. I think we should talk more about that instead of, like, these more philosophical ideas. Like, we still have to make a piece of art, we still have to make a song. Like, Kendrick is (inaudible: 00:55:59) but he might just be doing it a bit- at a better level than, like, someone is doing it at a (inaudible: 00:56:07). I don't know.

[Speakers intermittently agree and laugh]

DJA: I do think though that in the greater society, you know, greater capitalistic, white society [Laughs] in terms of artists and designers, there's a quota when it comes to people of color. We can celebrate two or three at a time and that's it. [Laughs] You know what I mean? You have the Black artist, you have the Black filmmaker, you have the Black dancer, and the Black--. You know? We can't self--. You know, so as artists you have to decide, 'Okay, is that my market? Is that where I want to be or am I making- am I gonna, you know, make my art? And maybe it's just accepted by my, you know, people at a, you know, another level of the Black community who I--?' You know? 'Or do I want to wait until my turn comes because there seems to be a quota?' Their brains can only take, you know, Beyonce and, you know, their brains can only take Zoe Saldana and Halle Berry, you know, at a time? You know? They can only take Sidney Poitierand so-and-so. You know, they can't five or six or seven, so as an artist do I feel like I'm a success? Only one--. You know, I get into the quota level or am I a success because I'm reaching the wider Black community, or people at--? You know? Cause I- that just seems to be the way things seem to work. And as an artist, I think you have to kinda deal with that, 'cause there might be somebody that's not Beyonce, you know, who's, uh, really making really good music, or really good art and they might not be showing at M.O.M.A., or N.O.M.A., or whatever. They might be showing at the neighborhood gallery, but they consider themselves a success. [Laughs] Yeah.

[Pause]

DS: Do we want to end in one of these questions?

WG: Um, I guess we might have like five minutes left maybe.

AF: [Laughs]

WG: I feel like… [Chuckles]

DJA: Let's find a good one.

AF: In five minutes, can we talk about--.

WG: What about this one? *What keeps you in New Orleans?*

DS: *What keeps you here?*

WG: *Are you from here?*

DJA: Okay.

WG: Like, why do you stay? Um, I feel like this will be a good one for Rosemary, she's moving. She's--.

[Laughter]

DJA: Yes.

DS: Is she moving? Is she going back to New York?

WG: Yeah, it's for her job. Um, I moved here a year ago on a whim, and I feel like I really enjoy my time here. I feel like the things I was looking for in a- in an American

city to move to with, like, a sense of place, a sense of culture, a sense of diversity, um, and that it was affordable. And the last one is why I came here and not other places.And I feel like I could go live in Portland, but I don't want to be the only Black person in my, [Laughs], you know, in my circle. So that's why-why I'm still here. Um--.

JV: I think that's a good place to end.

[Laughter]

END OF RECORDING

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To be copyedited.