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Participants:
TODD OCHOA
MICHELLE LANIER
SARAH CARRIER
DEBORAH WATTS
LEO SADOVY
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Preface

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

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START OF RECORDING

Unknown: Okay, it's now recording.

Unknown: Hm.

[Pause]

SC: Shall we begin? Shall I start?

Unknown: Yeah.

SARAH CARRIER: I don't know if I had a chance to introduce myself. My name is Sara Carrier, and I'm the North Carolina research and instruction librarian at UNC Chapel Hill; I work in special collections. And I'm from North Carolina, uh, I'm from Raleigh. And, um, I've been at UNC for a very long time. I started there as an undergraduate in 1997, and, um, received a couple degrees from UNC. And then, um,

did go into librarianship and I worked in, um, special collections at Duke. Um, and I've been in the North Carolina librarian position since about 2015. So, my role is to teach and to support research related to the history of people and culture of the state. So that's my work.

TODD OCHOA: I'm Todd Ochoa. I teach, uh, in the Department of Religious Studies at UNC. Um, and this year, I'm a fellow with the institute, at the NHC (inaudible - 00:01:12) National Humanities Center.

SC: We're going around and introducing our--.

ML: Oh, okay.

LEO SADOVY: Yeah. Leo Sadovy. Um--.

ML: Thank you, dear.

LS: I'm on, uh, Leo 7.3. Maintenance release three, I'm working on 8.0, which comes out in Christmas 2018 when I finish my degree. But I put my three kids through college, all NC State grads, all engineering, and now it's my turn. But, uh, I'm a finance guy, spent twenty-five years in that, totally eliminated my company. And I moved into marketing. I work at SAS where I, uh, started, uh, a year — I've been there ten years, but eighteen months ago, I started the, um, thought leadership program there. And I run that now and I'm going to do that till I get my degree. And I'm here for the storytelling stuff, because I've- the-the emphasis of my program is to get our people to start telling better stories about what they do rather than put up spreadsheets and architecture diagrams. So [Laughs].

MICHELLE LANIER: So, I'm Michele Lanier. I'm the executive director of the African American Heritage Commission for the State Department of Natural and Cultural

Resources. I'm also an adjunct, um, professor at Duke Center for Documentary Studies. I'm a folklorist by training, which means I study culture. It doesn't not mean I'm a storyteller. Um, so I study, um, particularly African- people of African descent in the Carolinas, um, and the history and culture. Um, I'm a mom, my daughter's at Science and Math. She's a junior there. And my fian--.

LS: At-at where?

ML: North Carolina School of Science and Math.

LS: Science and Math, uh-huh.

ML: Yeah. And my fiance's actually a professor at NC State in, um, College of Natural Resources. Um, I grew up in Columbia and Hilton Head, South Carolina, and my ancestry is in North Carolina on both sides, um, Raleigh, Fayetteville, Goldsboro, Smithfield, um, Franklin county as well, so.

LS: If your daughter goes to college in North Carolina, she's going to be the hit of the dorm coming from NCSM. My kids always talked about, 'Oh, I-I have a couple NCSM people on my team, so we got it made.'

ML: Yes, so they--.

LS: Yeah.

ML: Yeah.

LS: [Laughs]

ML: O--. She'd be popular?

LS: Yeah, she'd be very popular.

ML: That's good to know.

LS: She can charge for it- charge for her knowledge I think, yeah.

ML: Oh, I'll keep that in mind. [Laughs]

DEBORAH WATTS: I'm Deborah Watts. Um, I worked with- I'm a partner at Broadband Catalyst, and we're a small group that works to ensure broadband is available in, uh, remote, rural, and disadvantaged urban communities, and that the people there know how to use it. And my background is I'm more of a science policy, science and tech policy person, which in-in the context of this meeting means--. A-and I'm also someone who writes a lot and is very verbal, so in the circles I run in, I'm usually the person that helps the math and tech geeks connect with audiences by putting pictures and words around what they think is obvious. You know, so there's- there's a lot of translation that goes on between communities, and-and I'm often that translator so this interests me a lot. And I'm glad to be here and glad to meet all of [Laughs] y'all.

[Pause]

LS: Should we look over the cards or...?

SC: Yeah. Is this all of them? And I'm Sarah, by the way.

ML: Hi, Sarah.

SC: I may have introduced myself to the recorder before you sat down, but I work at UNC Chapel Hill as, um, as a librarian and I work in Special Collections and- um, at the North Carolina circuit librarian, so I help with the research.

ML: Okay. Oh, well, then. Yeah.

SC: (inaudible - 00: 04:53)

[SC intermittently agrees]

ML: Yeah, then. I've worked- I've worked in the Southern Folklife Collection in grad school and I've deposited at the southern oral histories, um, and, um, I'm really interested in y'all's digital humanities, and-and your ma- your map collection.

SC: Yes. So, um, we--. Yeah, we can go in — I'd love to elaborate upon, uh, the--.

LS: [Laughs]

[ML intermittently agrees]

SC: The jewels in our collections. But yes, absolutely. So, we- we collect as much more Caroliniana as we can, in addition to um--. So that's maps, newspapers, photographs — we have over three million photographs. And so, we really try to look across the entire state, but partner with local institutions as well. So, you know, um, genealogy societies, high school Alumni Associations, and things like that, so we do a lot of outreach. And actually, I teach, um, a fair amount at, um, the public schools if I can go out. And so this the School of Science and Math has become one of my close partners.

LS: [Laughs]

SC: So I've been able to go over and visit, um, particular classes that are history focused, so. Um, with whoever is teaching humanities over there, so a big fan of the School of Science and Math, for sure.

DW: Well, you're from North Carolina, and you've got strong North Carolina links. What about the two of you?

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Are you a North Carolinian?

LS: Um, grew up in- born in Trenton, New Jersey, left New Jersey when I was eighteen and graduated high school, go back for weddings and funerals, but--.

ML: Where'd you go to- go for high school?

LS: Uh, little town- Allentown, New Jersey outside of Trenton that has its own exit on the turnpike.

ML: How long have you been in North Carolina?

[ML intermittently agrees]

LS: Um, two years for the first time, eighteen to twenty years old, was married at the Broughton High School, N.C. State grad. She's been here all her life except when she followed me to California and then we went to Texas. But I've been here since- moved here- back here in '98.

ML: Oh.

LS: Yeah.

ML: Like twenty years almost. Yeah.

[ML intermittently agrees]

TO: I moved here in 2008. So I'm in my tenth year. Um, I moved from California. But before that I've been in Atlanta, and before that I've been in New York. Um, I was a young person in rural Michigan, and a kid in Mexico City. And I live in Chapel Hill. Mm-hmm.

DW: Well, I'm--.

ML: Interesting geography.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DW: My-my family and my husband's family have both been here since the 1600s. We-we-we're just, as they say, "Eat up," with North Carolina, right? And we both come from really large families, so you do exponential math and east of 95, a big part of the state's related to me.

ML: (inaudible - 00:07:34) the Fayetteville (inaudible - 00:07:35).

DW: And we- we spend a lot of time traveling the state with our work. So I figured it out the other day and I've lived in fourteen different- I've lived in nine different- fourteen different towns and nine different counties in the state.

ML: Oh, that's rare.

MW: So it's-it's, you know, both a cursing and a blessing. But I go away and I come back and I go away and I come back and I just ran out of lea-reasons to leave. So are-are y'all gonna stay? Are you here for good?

[Laughter]

TO: Are you folks from down east? Is that where your f-families are from?

DW: Well, my husband's family's from the northeast and my family's from the southeast and they kind of meet in the middle and, yeah, we-we've got it covered.

TO: 1600s is really early.

LS: Yeah.

DW: Really early.

TO: I have a book I wanna recommend to you.

DW: Is it--?

TO: It's about- it's a- it's a dissertation that I-I think it was eventually published, but it's, um, it's about the really early life of North Carolina, which is eastern North

Carolina and the communities that existed on Albemarle Sound that had filtered through the Great Dismal.

DW: Exceptionally.

TO: Yeah, it's an amazing history.

DW: It's a-it's a--.

ML: Who's the author?

TO: Uh, Hugo Prosper Leaming, who was a descendant of white working class S-Southern Virginians.

DW: Mm-hmm.

TO: Who then--.

DW: Do you have the name of the book?

TO: It's-it's- I think it's called *Hidden Americans* and the basic--.

DW: Okay.

ML: Okay, is it a dissertation or--?

TO: It was a dissertation, which then was--.

ML: Became a book.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

TO: Published, but it was published after he died. And the story is basically that England had s-settled colonies in Virginia and in South Carolina and around Charleston and around Char-Charlotte, I don't know what the--.

ML: Charlestown.

TO: Charlestown in the South and-and there were governors in those places, but the North Carolina coast was under, what the author uses, --he's got nice language-- it's

called Tuscarora Sovereignty. And so that was indigenous people and the swamp served as this, you know, um, a filter through which first white indentured servants could escape plantation slavery in Virginia, and then African American- African and African American people could escape. And what it basically hypothesizes after spending two weeks in the swamp, you know, risking your life on all kinds of crazy things, you'd end up on the North Shore of Albemarle Sound in communities that were s-scrapping by and eventually became white working class European, uh, African American, and Native American in their subsistence.

ML: And then ultimately they- some of them were able to build great wealth.

TO: Well, they were crushed. He calls them the Albemarle community or something--.

ML: Mm. Oh, he's talking about a very specific commu--. Okay.

TO: It's a very specific period, late 1500s, early 1600s--.

ML: Oh, I see.

TO: And the governors of Virginia and the Southern Parliament got pissed, because some of the things that were going on out there were kind of like ship wrecking, for example. People living off of stuff that came ashore from the wrecks on the Outer Banks.

ML: Extra legal.

TO: Exactly. And so eventually they would- they sent political and military pressure.

ML: This would have been the Blackbeard era as well.

TO: L- earlier even.

ML: Oh, I would love to read that.

TO: Yeah, it's really interesting.

ML: 'Cause we- 'cause that's really a missing piece, 'cause we hear about the Spanish explorers in the 1520s.

TO: Right.

ML: And then you hear about, yeah, that Blackbeard era, and then, like, Tryon Palace in that colonial period right as it's moving into revolution, but that--.

TO: It was really early.

ML: Yeah, we don't hear about that.

TO: Yeah.

ML: That's good work. I'mma go real that.

TO: It was really--. I mean, in terms of folklore, and s-sort of North Carolina, deep North Carolina--. It's really interesting.

ML: Dismal Swamp. Did- was Dismal Swamp a part of the imagine-imaginary of your childhood, like were there stories that you grew up hearing.

DW: Oh, I have relatives who work in the Dismal Swamp and--.

ML: Really?

DW: I mean, you're talking about Native Americans and Blacks and the Quakers escaped to North Carolina--.

TO: Quakers.

ML: That's true.

DW: To the same area it's very very--.

ML: A lot of them were abolitionists.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DW: Very heavily influenced by Quakers. So, you have this, really one of the very first earliest melting pots. You know, and the idea is that the lost colonists actually merged in with tribes, they dispersed among the different tribes up there. And so there's- it's-it's a interesting region. There's a- there's another dissertation, now I can't remember the woman who wrote it, but it- she talks about Albemarle exceptionalism, because it is- it is people who were driven there or chose to stay there, but it- it is an exceptional region. And it was a place where there was a tremendous amount of self sufficiency and independence and that was part of the problem with Virginia and the problem with South Carolina, which is that they didn't- they didn't take well to--.

TO: To this autonomy.

DW: Ex-existential efforts to control what they did with their future, and that- I think that still defines people fo--. There-there's a (inaudible: 00:12:57) very strongly ingrained ethic of 'You can't tell me what to do.' And it doesn't matter what color you are, that's just the prevailing personality or that knee-jerk--.

ML: I actually think that- I actually think that's the state.

DW: There's a lot of it in this state.

ML: It's alarming- 'cause tho- our mountain people are like that.

DW: Oh, yeah.

ML: And, you know, Piedmont, I mean, the activism in the Piedmont. Are there s--? Are--? Do we have assignments?

SC: Well--.

ML: I mean, this has been a good conversation, but I wanna--.

LS: [Laughs]

SC: Are these all of the cards?

DW: Those are all of the cards.

SC: So, I guess that we could, like, just pass these around, or we could each take a chunk?

ML: Okay.

SC: I don't know how do we wanna--?

LS: Yeah.

ML: I don't know, how- I--.

[Crosstalk]

LS: What do you- What do you like out of there?

ML: I di--.

LS: Pick- start with one.

ML: Pass--.

LS: Yeah. [Laughs]

ML: Pass it?

LS: Yeah.

SC: We can each have our own pile and then we can see what--.

ML: Do you wanna grab--?

SC: One of these is blank, so...

ML: Do you wanna just grab one?

LS: [Laughs] That's the one we just talked about.

ML: Do you wanna grab one?

LS: Yeah, sure.

[Crosstalk ends]

DW: I wanna throw something out.

ML: I'll grab one.

LS: Oh, okay.

ML: I'm just gonna grab one.

LS: At random, I see.

DW: And it just picks up, um--.

LS: I wanna see what we got here, but I'll pick one at random.

DW: On yesterday's--.

LS: [Laughs]

TO: Go ahead. Hold on to it.

LS: Okay.

[Pause]

[ML intermittently agree]

DW: I go to too many meetings where we're talking about changing things and 95 percent of the people in the room are quite middle and upper class, well educated, you know, and I don't know how you have a meaningful conversation unless--.

ML: About changing things when the people who you're talking about changing it for aren't at the table.

DW: Yeah. And so that's, I mean, that's my first comment would be my comment again.

ML: The people--. So the people--.

DW: And it's also not binary.

ML: No.

DW: It's not black and white. There's- there--. It's a very diverse state, so why don't--. You know, and it- and we-we got the whole gender thing covered in here, but there's not enough attention to the other communities in our state that have (inaudible - 00:14:50).

ML: How do we recruit for diverse- to diversity?

DW: Yeah. And i-it's going to take a proactive effort to do this--.

ML: It does.

DW: Because you got to have a portal into the communities to even get--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ML: And for some communities, coming to something like this, you- they would- that would have to be subsidized, they would have to receive some sort of remuneration for their time to be here because taking off work is not an option or getting someone to take care of an elderly, loved one, or a special needs child, is- it costs money, and so I think that's something that does need to be infused in conversations of when you have gatherings, and you are curating for diversity of participation, socioeconomic, racial, gender, sexuality, language, diversity, you know what I mean? Like, you have to be so intentional. The Americans, uh, um, Americans with Disabilities activists, n- they have this phrase that I love, but I always make sure I attribute it because it's their phrase, "Not about us without us." Like, 'don't talk about us, don't create policy a-about us, don't,' you know, 'have roundtables if we're not at the table?' And I just love that phrase so much.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

SC: I think that, um, one thing too, is, um, the--. Actually one of my questions kind of gets at this issue of, um, the Triangle. You know, there's so much here, and that's really wonderful. We have so many resources here, but the challenge is, you know, this event is taking place in the Triangle and what about, you know, getting out beyond this-this area into the west and to the east, and how do you bring people together and bring them to the same table, um, physically and otherwise? Um, I mean, I'm, uh, I'm on the board of the North, um, Carolina Folklore Society. And that's a very, very old organization. Um, yeah, and so our challenge is even just getting people onto the board, and managing communication with people across the state outside of the Triangle, so--.

ML: As a volunteer?

SC: Yeah, I mean, it ends up being really, you know, I mean, we are physically close together, so you-you reach out and who's close, and-and we do have so many resources here, but we're constantly stymied by the fact that we-we don't have enough connections beyond the Triangle. Um, but then even when we do, the communication starts to become really problematic. Um, and resources are absolutely an issue. I mean, uh, who-who--. I was thinking about that. I mean, that's- actually a lot of my co-workers would then take off work. [Laughs] You know, I mean, I work at UNC, and a lot of people couldn't come today. So. you know, how do you manage that?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ML: And people who were here as presenters yesterday, who aren't here today, or had to, like, leave early or whatever. Yeah.

TO: My partner is an epidemiologist for the state, and she works on sexually transmitted diseases and H.I.V. And so a huge part--. And she's relatively new to that position, she's, maybe, the second year into it. And one of the things that she noticed was just this kind of breakdown was just, like, outreach to--. I mean, not just to communities, but even like to-to public health departments of certain counties had broken down from Raleigh out, you know, to counties, both up in the mountains and down east. And so, realizing that what was the source of that breakdown, and starting actually, like, to budget, you know, for next year's budget, to budget outreach, recruiting, and what we would call--.

ML: Smart

TO: Scholarship, which will mean like actually helping people drive into town, pay for their hotel.

ML: That's right.

TO: But it- like, the only way they can make it work, was to, like, start getting it into the budget. 'Cause in the moment, it was like, 'Oh, we need, you know, \$1300 to bring two people from wherever,' and it's like, 'We don't have it.' Well, because you should have been thinking about this last year.

SC: Wow.

ML: Yeah. And I think it's because the older generations who are doing this kind of work, there was this kind of gentleman's, and then later gentlewoman's, code that your institution would pay for this, you wouldn't- you would be subsidized by your family to do certain--. You know? You have your own--. 'Oh, don't worry about it, I'll cover the cost of my--.' You know, and that's just not feasible. How do you a--?

LS: Your-your comment about the, "Not about us without us." That-that's something that jumped out at me yesterday--.

ML: Oh, wow.

LS: Uh, when I was, you know, it's a- it's a mixed panel. And, you know, I have- my life is, you know, i-it-it's broad enough, but still, I don't know what I don't know. So to hear two out of the four of your --maybe the three-- out of, say--. I- I- it's- it's not that the Confederate flag is maybe disgusting, or whatever, it's a non-safe, it's- it promotes fear and terror. It's like, if that doesn't--. You know, it all of a sudden--. And you don't get that and I-I think about all these stupid panels you see on T.V., oh, it's all men talking about women's health. It's all whites talking about, you know, 'L-let's talk about, you know, Black- Black rights,' and it's an all white guy thing, or the Saudi, you know, 'Let's a--.' The-the women's rights conference with all the Saudi men. I-it's not only- it just- it's ridiculous, but the fact that it happens, says, you know, in other words, why isn't there one of these guys that says, [Laughs] you know, one of these, either white people or the- or the- or the men to say, 'You know, if we had one here,' and it would, it would change the whole dynamic to have--. Because I don't know what I don't know and all of a sudden, it's like, 'Oh, [Laughs] now I know. And I can't--.'

DW: Well, you have to start with really wanting to know.

LS: I can't deny it anymore. Yeah.

ML: "Wanting to know," I love that.

LS: Yeah.

ML: I love that.

DM: 'Cause in--. I-I don't think that's--. You know, it's a lot of going through the motions, but to be authentically interested in-in changing things, when you're already at the top of the heap, that takes a special kind of--.

LS: A little--.

DW: Insight--.

LS: Yeah. And little things, too. Like, I've been on to criminal juries. And if they weren't mixed, um, y-you know, o-of a mixed population. I- there's one defendant I would have felt sorry, for I think he had gotten a guilty verdict via on uninformed--. But just to sit and hear the-the different--. I go, 'Whoa, I-I never thought of that this could be the situation and-and all, and--.' Yeah. [Laughs]

TO: I would just add the--.

DW: So I would argue--. I would- I would say that so much of the policy is made in-in Raleigh and Charlotte, and, the-the-the power centers are there, and the money is there, the decisions are made there. And they have absolutely nothing to do with the rural parts of the state, you know, when you look a legislative leadership, and none of whom are native North Carolinians. The one who were appointed to Bill Friday, and Frank Graham, and Jim Hunt, the people who made North Carolina a-a progressive island in the- in the South, they were all people who felt a responsibility to their cousin back home who was still farming pigs and never graduated from high school. And they got that-that need to, that viscerally felt need to, be responsible for the whole state and not just themselves. I-I think that's dis- I think that's dissipated. I don't know that it would come back, so we got to find some alternative way to make- make us responsible for something rather than our (inaudible - 00:22:31).

SC: Well, I guess that that's really--. Yeah, that's really the crux of it. I mean, how do you make people care? You know, when it's really not in their best interest, you know, in some ways, like, 'Well, I'm already white, and I'm already rich, and I already have my job and already have my house,' and, you know, how do you make them care? I mean, I, um--. Like, my family goes back pretty far, and, um, my mother's family, they're all from (inaudible - 00:22:56) Carteret County. So yesterday, seeing the panel of, you know, the-the-the, you know, talking about fishing, the fishing industry, and how important it is, you know, to our culture and our heritage, and, you know, just livelihood and just being able to survive, and this disconnect between policy and legislation, and the day to day lives of people who are really on the very, I mean, they are like literally on the very edge of-if our state and how easy it is for people to forget. And, you know, but then like, you know, the exhaustion of having to constantly be visible and, like, to remind people, you know, because that really seems to be the burden, is to just, you know, be constantly saying, like, 'I'm here,' you know, 'listen to me, like, this is important.' And-and-and, you know, so yesterday, one thing that I was thinking a lot about was how, as Triangle residents, how can we make sure that we're paying attention to and advocating for these people who, you know, are-are talking and they are- they want to be heard, but they just are not--? You know, they're intentionally being ignored, because, uh, it's really not a priority, but, you know, and then, what does that entail? Like lobbying? Does it entail protesting? I mean, the frustration, I think is, you know, being visible and protesting and participating more than one day, and-and, you know, and they're still not listening.

DW: 'So, what?'

SC: Yeah, I mean, they're like literally, like laughing at everyone for their signs and mocking them and belittling them, and it's-it's awful. I mean, and I--. I don't know, I guess it [Laughs], you know, that's where it gets really--. You know, it's so personal and it's so--. I mean, this is about, like, staying alive, it's about safety. It's about our people and, um, there's the powers that be. Um, it is truly cruel, um, the-the way that things have shifted, and what (inaudible - 00:24:55) was saying earlier about, you know, graduating from high school in the 70s and feeling this hope, you know, and, like, 'things are definitely changing, and I'm a part of it.' And then, fast forward to now where it's like--. I-I just can't believe. I mean, I can't believe how awful things are. [Laughs]

TO: Another thing is that--. I don't want to sound like a --I don't know what-- like, a hard ass or something, but, like, this is just a lifetime fight.

ML: It is.

TO: It is.

SC: Right.

ML: I-I totally agree.

[Crosstalk]

TO: It-it's for- it's for life and--.

ML: I'm so over the chronology of progress, like, it's just such a myth--.

TO: And I mean--. And it kind of sucks--.

ML: It's hu--. Yeah.

TO: To say, 'Oh, man, I'm exhausted.'

ML: Mm-hmm.

[Crosstalk ends]

[ML intermittently agrees]

TO: And we do get exhausted and taking care of yourself is really important. But since I was in college in the late 80s and early 90s, the progress has been made in some dimensions, like gay rights, has been inspiring. And the erosion we've had in other directions, like civil rights, has been heartbreaking. And sort of getting energy from the winds and knowing that the losses are going to be lifetime struggles, it's--. I don't know. [Laughs] That's kind of where I've gone to.

ML: It is a lifetime struggle. And I don't think that that's--. So, here's the thing, I don't- I feel like we have gotten to a place you know, as-as people, as society, where talking about public health issues, or, you know, health in general is, like, not as taboo, you know? It's not taboo for women to talk about breast cancer. It's not taboo, you know--.

LS: Or even breastfeeding. Yeah, yup.

ML: Or breastfeeding, or like, or for people to say, you know, 'Oh, your- you got to be careful about your nutrition,' or, you know, 'Go out there and exercise.' Like, that's been something that people have been ta--. So, physical health. So, when we--. So I don't--. And--. So, I feel like just, like, that has become common lingua franca, like everybody can talk about health. Race should be the same. You know, class should be--. You know, I feel like we could. It's- it's possible for u- it--. We--. I always tell my daughter when she- when she first learned to write the ca- a capital letter "N," it broke her to- down. She had a mini breakdown because of the diagonal line between the two parallel lines really messed with her. And it- at, er, up until that point, the alphabet had been really easy for to- her to learn. And then she got to "N" and it just was a-a crisis.

And she was like, 'I'm so dumb. I'm so stupid. I will never ever, ever learn to write that.'

And so then I said, 'Yes, you will, and there will come a time where you will do it effortlessly. And anything we do a lot, we become good at.' And so I think the more we make time to intentionally talk about the things that are hard, then it becomes easier. Like I had to make a decision to dive into a conversation about transphobia with some of my African American women friends, because my alma mater, Spelman College, which is a his-historically black college for women, just passed a trans student policy saying, 'Yes, trans women can be admitted to Spelman and biological women or assigned women who are- who are--.'

TO: Goosebumps.

ML: 'Who are--.' Right. 'Who are now, uh, then transitioning into male or- can still graduate.' So, trans on- in-in any way. Um, and I was delighted, I knew that there would be a lot of [Pause] confusion and fru-frustration and transphobia. So I immediately dove into the conversation at the very beginning to say, 'I'm hoping that we can all stretch ourselves to be curious and open and--.'

TO: That was like an alumni list or something--.

ML: It's like--. Yeah, exactly. And then I kind of backed up, and then it got real intense real fast. And, um, I thought, 'I can't look myself in the mirror if I don't say something.' We're trans allies all through my fa- you know, my nuclear family. And I have been so- I have been so impacted by trans people in my life, that it felt like a betrayal to not say something. And so, I-I said something, and then it actually got easier to say it again and to say--. You know, so what I'm saying--. I-I--. We just have to practice. I- you know, that's all, you know?

[ML intermittently agrees]

LS: I was thinking about what you've said, Sarah. I-I-I-I was--. And I-I came at this from the storytelling angle, why I'm here, was listening to some of the things yesterday, and, like, how do you--? And, you know. I kind of--. W-what kind of structure can I put it, 'cause sometimes it helps just have some structure. And it's like, well, you know, one thing, it's just making the- there's the unknown unknowns. Okay, at least it's known. And any example might be, do-do you know how --I'll just say, you know-- that-that Black people are being followed around in stores as-as if a potential shop leader- shoplifters. And you know, someone like me, if that's not brought to my attention, I don't live that. So now I'm at least aware. But then you know, my first reaction is going to be --I'm just- I- stereotyping myself here-- denial. Well, so the next thing is present evidence: stage two, d-dash cams, body cams are excellent for that. It can't be denied any more. And then it's like- but there's still- people will still not do--. Okay, no action is being taken. I can't deny it, but no action. What's next? And I go, you know, you start telling the stories about it, it's like, what's going on in Puerto Rico? You know, okay--. Or anything, Sally Struthers on TV with the starving kids, but do I know any of them? And you notice that--? And I think we can get somewhere when we get- if we could tell stories about the end of it, make connections, and it b-builds the empathy. It's like, as soon as you, you know, y-you hear so many families that are- 'I don't- I can't handle that.' This, you know, the trans, uh, sexual anything--.

ML: But do you know any of them?

LS: And all of a sudden, when you know--.

ML: That's it.

LS: When you have a-a gay nephew or gay grandson--.

ML: That's right. Changes everything.

LS: All of a sudden, you know, now some people--. Okay, for religious reasons, disown them, but I don't know. So I think there's something in the storytelling--.

ML: About relationships.

LS: Of bringing people's stories out just like fish.

TO: Yeah, you have a- an interesting thought.

LS: [Laughs]

ML: Yes.

TO: Um, after Charlottesville, one of the kind of memes that went around in my world was, you know, 'It's time to fuck up the barbecue.' Which--. I don't know if y'all heard that.

[Laughter]

ML: I-I didn't, but I love it. [Laughs]

TO: "Fucking up the barbeque" means, like, you're there at the barbecue with all your relatives, and no one's saying anything.

ML: I love that.

LS: [Laughs]

TO: And it's just time to say it, and it's gonna fuck up the barbecue. Say it.

SC: It's gonna ruin Thanksgiving. [Laughs]

TO: And-and-and-and where that meme dies--. Exactly.

ML: It's time. It's time.

TO: Where the meme dies is when you say, 'I don't know how to fuck up the barbecue without really fucking up the barbeque.'

LS: [Laughs] Yeah.

TO: But you're suggesting a good way, like, giv- arm people with stories.

LS: Yeah.

TO: So that fucking up the barbeque is actually a story that draws people in and isn't just like, 'Mom, you're a racist.'

LS: Yeah. [Laughs]

TO: You know, like--. [Laughs]

[Laughter]

ML: No, right. That's not the way to--. [Laughs]

SC: Sometimes you wanna say that though. I don't know, it gets, like, so
(inaudible - 00:32:18)

ML: But the stories, when you can say--. And that's actually what got me into my work was watching people be divided and going, 'Do you know each other?'

LS: The other thing I noticed on the panels — and I- and I noticed that among the good writers, I will- I will write a letter to the editor about once a month, and I'll get published about once a quarter.

ML: Look at you. [Laughs]

LS: And-and I know why I don't get published--.

SC: Is it (inaudible - 00:32:44) Observer? Because I--.

LS: Because I--. Again--. And-and--. No, no, no. I'm- I'm--. Yeah--.

SC: No, I read the (inaudible - 00:32:47)

LS: The last one was Bannon's plan of fear that was a j--.

ML: Okay.

LS: I haven't been--. And the re--. Actually, this is the longest gap. I haven't been published by them, but I know why; it's because, I'm- my stuff is coming across almost, if the sarcasm is th-through, and it's so--. And it's getting to the anger, but I go, 'You know, I-I'm tired of--.' But at the same time I watched you moderate the panel and at the panel, you are so restrained, and so many of the good writers are so — except Charles Blow is starting to lose it, but [Laughs] which is good. But you're--. And-and it's like--. I--. Okay, step back and you're gonna have to a--. But I don't know, I-I don't know. Part of me--.

ML: It's creating a safe space.

LS: It's like--. Yeah.

SC: Yeah, for a conversation so you can find those commonalities.

LS: Yeah.

SC: Like you're chatting--.

ML: Mm-hmm.

LS: But--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

SC: That's how the storytelling — like, it brings people in, you know, and it personalizes the experience so you're like, 'This is a person in front of me, and that's real, and has a different background, but I connect with them. We have commonalities and pointing it out--.'

[LS intermittently agrees]

DW: I think you have to go beyond the stories, though. People have to actually rub up against each other. And there has to be some Brownian motion when you're bumping into things randomly or deliberately. And there's a reality to it, because otherwise, it can remain a story. And you can support a story in the abstract, but we don't live in the abstract, and-and we've got to make it concrete and tangible, and-and we do that by-by meeting people, you know, by knowing people.

SC: So, how do you do that in your work? So it sounds like--. Do you go out into communities and you talk to, like, the business owners?

DW: Absolutely.

SC: And do you connect them with (inaudible - 00:34:27)--?

DW: Absolutely. And we have- we have- we do a lot of community planning, and they bring the community together. And-and I will say, when they're putting together their invitations to- their invitations, you need to have someone from the faith community at this meeting, you need to have someone from the minority community, and, uh, we need to identify the opinion leaders, and that's who we want here because--. I-I did one in Alabama and there was this --you know, you're in Alabama-- and there was this town — and they're in the middle of nowhere and they have no connection and they got two restaurants in town and one of 'em's barbecue and the other one is Mexican, right? And so they have this inclusive community meeting and they get fifty people in there. And every single one of 'em looked like me. You know, and I said, 'Y'all- you not gonna get anywhere.' I said, 'The people who understand the technology are thirty years younger than I am. Where are they? You know, but the people who need to use it--. Your restaurant is a Mexican guy; he wants to be on Facebook, he wants to be on the

internet so people can find him coming down the interstate. W-where is he?' And--. You know, you-you just--. There are things that are--. Your probability of success is lower in some places than others, but we-we are such--. We have been a more inclusive diverse state than many in this region of the country. So we--.

ML: 'Til recently.

DW: It's not- we're not having to invent this wheel here, maybe we just need to grease it a little bit. And-and that interaction is part of it. So I love the stories, you gotta tell the stories, but they're not sufficient. They're-they're-they're part of it. It's part of it.

ML: I'm-I'm gonna be honest, I love North Carolina.

DW: Yeah.

ML: Deeply.

DW: And it hurts you doesn't it?

ML: It does, because, I mean, I grew up in South Carolina because my grandpa was m-military, and he retired at Fort Jackson. And my grandmother will always say, 'We live in South Carolina, but we're not from here. We're from North Carolina. We eat potatoes, we don't eat rice.' --And-and I know some North Carolinians do eat rice.-- But--. And then, she was always telling us all these stories about, 'Well, this is where so and so, and this is in Goldsboro, and we're related to the Scott's Barbecue people, and your grandpa went to Palmer Memorial Institute in Sedalia and he was born in Wilmington, and so and so was- grew up in Durham, and great great grandpa moved the- his barber shop during Black Wall Street sur-thriving days.' You know, so we're stitched all through. And my whole driving force between helping to get the law passed to create the African American Heritage Commission for the state was how alive I've-

have always felt hearing those family stories, and I mean it was my medicine growing up was living in South Carolina that my grandma's like, 'We are a proud, noble--.'

DW: 'We're better than that; we're North Carol--.' [Laughs]

ML: 'We are--.' Yeah.

LS: [Laughs]

ML: Well, she's like, 'Don't-don't look at that confederate flag on that dome and think that- and shrink.' This is- and so stories always relate to place. And I'mma be honest, I thought I would be here forever and always and I'm about ready to go away for a little bit. A- I am.

DW: Well--.

ML: I'm 'bout ready to go away and come back later, 'cause I'm exhausted.

[Pause]

DW: I don't- I don't--.

ML: And visit for the holidays.

DW: I don't know, you know, unless you're gonna--. Wh-where would you go?

ML: Well, I mean, there is- there are places that I feel more safe as a Black woman. Um, y-y-you know, I feel safer in the northeast right now, as a Black woman. I- it's not home, but I don't feel like I'm being r-ra- as racially--. There still are racial slights there — not that Northerners are in-innocent at all around racism, they sometimes--. That--. It's like, nerve gas, you know? Northern racism is like nerve gas, it's there.

LS: [Laughs]

ML: And the next thing you know, you're twitchin'. So it's there, you can't escape it. It's a global disease. I was in South Africa and — L-Lord, you know? Um, Canada is

a little better, but I- you know, I--. I'm not tryna- saying wherever you go, you are, you take home with you. But, I mean, I literally have felt unsafe, literally. Like, people dropping confederate flag stickers on my front yard, you know, having to ta- have a guard walk us to our cars after work 'cause of the stuff that's going on. You know, a big old transport truck behind m- on my tail with the big confederate flag. You know, i-it's-it's scary.

DW: You're describing an exaggerated version of what I feel just as being female. So that's--.

ML: Yeah, and I'm both.

DW: Yeah. So, I'm-I'm--. And-and I also--.

ML: Yeah, as a female I feel that, you know--. But yeah, so you feel what it's like.

DW: Yeah.

ML: So the intersection — imagine layering on another layer of that, or--.

DW: Yeah. But I don't honestly know--. I mean, when you- if-if get outside of uber liberal bubbles, I don't know--. I-I spent a lot of time travelling around the country--.

ML: But you want to at least try to take a break from it.

DW: Yeah, I don't--. I believe you.

ML: [Laughs]

DW: Vacation, but I don't think anything we experience here is different in kind that might be different in degree in what's truly across the country.

ML: No, it's a- it is a global --it's not just the country-- it is global.

TO: We were at a--.

ML: It is global.

TO: Table here and one of our fellows is from Mississippi, she's an African American woman, I think she was one of our fellows, and we're sort of talking about this, kind of, you know, the felt racism geographically--.

ML: Mm-hmm.

TO: In the United States. And as an academic, she'd been all over, you know, as--.

ML: She's been--. So what is her assessment on--?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

TO: Her assessment is Mississippi's everywhere, and that's what she said. You know, we were like, 'Oh, didn't you like living in Ann Arbor? Better than livin' in--?' And she's like, 'Oh, no. Mississippi's everywhere.'

ML: Right. Yeah.

DW: My son works in New Mexico, every summer at a big Scout Ranch out there. So, we usually go and visit him and... Yeah, there-there's nothing that minorities experience here that isn't amplified towards the, uh, Hispanic community there.

ML: Where is that?

DW: In New Mexico.

ML: I bet.

DW: Yeah.

ML: I bet it's horrible.

[ML intermittently agrees]

DW: And it's-it's really poor. It's really rural. And everybody resents the hell out of everybody else. I mean, I just looked at that and I think, 'I couldn't live there.' But you

know, we had places in the state that are just as bad. It's just not- it-it's vivid areas more than isolated areas, so I don't know.

ML: Yeah, I think North Carolina is phenomenal. I mean, it makes me--. I'm always like, 'Yup,' telling the world, I'm like, 'Every single amazing thing that has ever existed probably came from North Carolina or had a tie.'

LS: [Laughs]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ML: I mean, I'm real serious about that. And it is my holdout prejudice. I mean, when I meet--. It's just the one I don't let go. And I'm always--. When I went to Spelman, there were all these women from Mid-Atlantic, and the North, and the West, because it attracts people from all over. And that was the first time I saw, um, anti Southern prejudice up close where people- where Black folks were calling s-other- mid-nor-northern Black folks were calling Southern black was like "Bama," "backwards," and things like that, and I was irate. And I think that what they did was fuel my career because I'm like, 'I'm gonna spend the rest of my life rubbing your nose in your grandmother's slip, which is from A-Alabama, North Carolina, South Carolina, Mississippi, and Georgia. You know, and so I never let go of that. It just hurts.

SC: That's so interesting.

ML: It hurts so bad, though, to watch what's happening right now, though.

SC: And I- I don't wanna just focus on this, the use of the term "Bama," but I had never heard that before--.

ML: Really?

SC: Um, but my partner is from, um, he's from a town in between Baltimore and DC. And he lived in DC for a long time--.

ML: Oh, that's a very DC thing.

SC: Oh, yeah. And he--. It's a DC thing.

ML: It's a DC thing.

SC: And he said it one time--.

ML: I can't stand it.

SC: And I was like, 'What did you say?' [Laughs]

LS: [Laughs]

SC: He called someone a "Bama."

ML: No, I can't--.

[ML intermittently agrees]

SC: And I was like, 'What is--?' And he always jokes that he's, like, not Southern. 'Cause his family is all from Pennsylvania, so sometimes, I do give him mess, 'cause he- he lives down here now, but he loves North Carolina. You know, and there is this kind of, like, you know, people who move here, I think that they do pick up on that and they start feeling proud, too. But interesting conversation, he was like, 'Oh, you know, they're just Bamas,' or something. And-and I say, 'Define that for me. I don't understand that.' And he said, 'It's a person who moves here from another place,' or something like that, but it ha--. I was like, but it has this connotation that they come from the South, that they're ignorant, that they're, like, backwards--.

ML: It's like callin' somebody hillbilly.

SC: Oh, yeah.

ML: I-I can't. And what--. And my partner's from Birmingham, so I'm real sensitive. [Laughs] Yeah.

SC: It was just really weird to me, because, like--.

ML: I think it's mean.

SC: I-I- this is a person I love--.

ML: Yeah.

SC: And we work through it is just--.

ML: It's so colloquial.

SC: You know, he had been immersed in this, like, language, or he, you know, where they just sort of tossed that word around.

ML: It's a way for a DC to say, 'We're not Southern. We're not Southern.'

SC: Exactly. Exactly, so there's this like, you know, yeah, like, snobbery going on. I was like, 'I can't b--.' You know, it took a--.

ML: Meanwhile, they had slavery.

SC: Wha--. Exactly. And I don't know, I just, was--.

[Laughter]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

SC: But I--. It was not until like, maybe two years ago that I ever heard "Bama." And I got--. I mean, it was like, 'Don't. Don't do that.' Like, and I you know, I definitely, I mean, my thing is--. I mean, I am from North Carolina, and I-I definitely didn't stray too far. I mean, I-I don't know where else I would live to be completely honest. I mean, I-I've never lived--. Well, I majored in German, so I lived in Germany, so that's weird. But to be honest with you, I'm not very well traveled in the United States, and that's mainly

because of logistical reasons like money reasons and stuff like that. And I-I've been, you know, up and down the East Coast and like a few places out West, but I'm not well traveled. I-I don't know where else I w- I would live, and I do love so much about North Carolina, but I also have recently been thinking like, 'Maybe what it--. Where would I live if I lived outside of North Carolina?' Like, I could live in Atlanta, you know.

ML: Eh.

SC: [Laughs]

ML: I've lived in Atlanta and I'm like--.

DW: Me, too.

SC: I can't imagine another place--. I'm like, I don't know where else I would live.

ML: But you know what's funny? Recently, I was in New Haven for doing- during work at Yale and the reason I felt so comfortable there — you know where all the Black people were from?

SC: Were they all from North--?

ML: They were from North and South Carolina.

LS: Oh. [Laughs]

ML: Their grandmas, their aunties, they were born there, but they mo--. And so what's interesting, because of Great Migration, when you find a little cohort you can sometimes find home as like a refugee camp somewhere else. Um, so it, you know--.

SC: That's interesting.

ML: It's like an annex. There are places around the world that are annexes of other places, like you hear Little Italy, little this; it's like Little Rocky Mount up in New Haven. [Laughs]

LS: [Laughs]

DW: Yeah, I look for Little Redneck South everywhere I go.

ML: Come on. And you find 'em. You- the minute you hear someone say 'grits' or 'biscuits,' you're like, 'You my friend,' you know?

SC: Right.

ML: 'Let me hug you.' [Laughs] [Pause] 'Cause it's home. When I came back from Ghana, West Africa for the first time, I heard a man with a --a white man-- with a southern accent in the airport, and I almost hugged him.

[Laughter]

ML: I was like, 'Home.'

SC: Do you feel, uh, any affinity for--? I know we've been just talking about North Carolina and this, like, identity for so long, I'm wondering like, you know, what the panels this morning made me think of it, like, 'I'm not a North Carolinian writer. I-I'm not a North Carolina writer, I'm a writer in North Carolina. And this isn't really my home, my home is elsewhere.' I mean, do you feel that?

TO: I got terrible whiplash when I came here. I came in the fall of- summer of 2008.

ML: That's a strange time to come here.

TO: And I came from Berkeley.

ML: Oh. [Laughs]

TO: I had only been there- not at Berkeley, I've been there for three years, but, boy, did I feel comfortable — I mean, talk about going somewhere comfortable, like--.

LS: Yeah. [Laughs]

TO: White liberal paradise.

ML: You were with your people.

TO: I mean, you know, like vegetarian, organic, vegan joint on every corner. And so, we came in 2008. And I have to say, I mean, I had my prejudices, right? Like we had lived in the South, we have lived in Atlanta, my partner and I, and we loved Atlanta. Loved it. Um, and but, boy, in North Carolina, in this little town in Chapel Hill and — what is gonna happen? And, you know, like, the recession hit, which I had no idea how that was gonna trash our world. But then Obama, the state went for Obama. And I remember being so--.

ML: That was so cool. Yeah.

LS: Yeah.

TO: Proud. I was so proud, and I was proud of the state and proud of--.

ML: We were so progressive then.

TO: Everything. And I'd go, you know, to my family convergences, where everyone goes like, 'Huh, what's it like to live in the South? And I'd be like, 'We-we-we carried the state for Obama.' And then 2010, it's just like, wham, you know? And, oh, it's just been so hard ever since.

ML: Did you--? I ha--. This is a random question. But di-did you work on, like, political campaigns and stuff around that time?

TO: Not in a--.

ML: Like, were you like doing calls and stuff?

TO: For the Democrats.

ML: Did you call--? Did you happen to, like, call people in, like, around 2010?

TO: Yes.

ML: I feel like you called me.

[Laughter]

TO: It's possible. Eh, m-maybe not.

ML: I do. Like, no, there was a guy who called me and this is so--. He haunts me.

There was a guy who called me in 2010 from the Democratic Party, and I had volunteered heavily in '08, and I was like, 'I just can't volunteer. I really can't give--.

There's a lot going on in the family right now. I'm sure ev--.'

DW: So you're the reason.

ML: I'm the reason.

LS: [Laughs]

ML: I was like- I'm like, 'I'm sure everything will be fine.' I mean, I voted. You know, I voted, but I didn't volunteer. And this guy who sounds- sounded just like your voice said, 'This is a really important election if people don't pay attention, this could be really bad.' And I didn't believe him. It haunts me.

TO: It could have been. I-I usually do Spanish outreach.

ML: Okay, so maybe it wasn't you. I'm be- like- I keep imagining I'm gonna run into that guy.

[Laughter]

ML: And be like, 'You were right, I'm so sorry.'

DW: Let me tell you, you're living with it.

ML: Everyday.

DW: Everyday.

ML: Yeah.

DW: Does anybody want some water? I'm gonna (inaudible - 00:48:53)

ML: Oh no, I'm good.

TO: Yes, please.

LS: Yep. Grab a bottle for me. Thank you [Laughs].

DW: That's one, anybody else?

ML: Did you want to--? I'm sorry.

TO: I want to be--. I-I--. There's just so many things I like about the state and-and it's been--. You know, and I think about it. The- you know, since 2010, it's been depressing and just more miserable by the day, and when I think about what's made me fall in love with North Carolina, it's getting out of the Triangle, getting out to the coast, getting out into Carteret county and getting up into the mountains and seeing just how beautiful and big it is, how different it is, how diverse it is. Like, I can- I can connect to all of that. Um, I just wish it would be easier.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

SC: You know, I think that- I think that what you're getting at is something that really cuts me really deeply is, uh, you know I'm from- [Mic movement] I'm from Raleigh and I- my father's family has deep roots out in the West, so Buncombe County area going way back, 1700s, and then my mother's family they're all from Carteret County, so two very different experiences. But I also have ancestors who were Quakers who came down from Pennsylvania and they settled in Orange County, in the 1700s--.

ML: You have literally all three regions.

SC: I--. You know, you said- y-you're like, you're kind of connected everywhere. Yeah, it's like it's--. So I feel all those stories, you know, and I try to tap into all those stories, and like, I try to travel outside of the Triangle as much as possible. And, I felt this horrible shame and disappointment in 2010. Like, what has happened, you know? I feel like when you go outside of the Triangle, like you connect with your people, like, it's-it's real. I mean, you you have these great interactions and conversations with people. And then, it's like, what- and then they went to the voting booth, you know, and it's like, 'Oh, we are totally different, actually.' I-I mean, I feel like being a North Carolinian is so ingrained in me that's like everything, you know, my whole world, and that moment was--. I-I felt guilt and shame and disappointment, and I-I really f--. You know, but then at the same time, I felt like, that's so condescending, too, like I'm casting blame on them. Like, maybe I didn't try hard enough, like, maybe I misunderstood. You know, like, I need to get back out there and work harder. And, um, you know, but it's hard not to have an emotional reaction when you're like, 'I'm like--.' You know, like, 'We're all the same. Like, why did you do that?' [Laughs] You know? Like, how could we have turned that so badly? Turned it such a wrong direction.

[SC intermittently agrees]

ML: I think people--. Yeah. I think people felt so left out. I really do. I think that the people who voted the way they voted in 2010 and 2012 and the recent 2016 — I think they just felt left out and invisibilized and scared and like, 'Okay, this train that's moving forward that everybody- y'all are calling 'progress,' I don't see myself on that train.' I think that's the people who voted in the ways that they did, I don't think that they saw themselves included in the picture of where our nation wa-was trying to go.

SC: Yeah. And it made me feel like I- I have lost, you know? I'm in this bubble, in this Triangle bubble. Um, and I- I lost that connection or-or something, you know? But, I feel like that's going to continue to be a tension and the challenge, which is to bring us into these communication channels, where we can find that common ground so that, you know, we don't, I don't know, have leaders who really don't represent us, and really don't care about the well being of our people in our environment, and--.

DW: Well, welcome to their world. That's the way they felt for a long time, right?

SC: Right. Well see, that's the thing is, like, maybe that is, you know, that's my bubble is, like, maybe I just didn't...

[Pause]

LS: I'm, uh, I'm two years older than Jill McCorkle, and I had the same feeling growing up was, you know, I watched--. You know, I was--. Formative years going through the assassinations, and the civil rights, and coming on, it's like, I--. You know, 2016 was just a-an absolute shock, especially after 2008. I'm raising children, thinking, yes, thi-this is progress. My mother was a second wave feminist and --low key-- but just, hey, you know, divorced my dad and-and made a life and, and I think, 'Okay, we're progressively gettin' better, it's not going to be easy.' And- and, you know, George Bu-W. was only kept in power from the Florida debacle and all that. And- and then, yeah, you get Obama and you're raisin' kids and all of a sudden, you know, you know, 2016 happens. And you just--. And-and-and then you step back and go--. But, you know, part of you has been right all along, this has been a backlash to the Civil Rights Act of '64, and it's just getting more organized, but then another piece of it, you know, you go, 'I can't give up the hope.' I got three kids. So it's like, you know, [Laughs] what do you--?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DW: I'm- I'm with Todd. In-in science and technology, you study trends and phenomenon. And there's- it's a pendulum. You know, we've changed things and when you change 'em past the point of comfort or tolerance, then it gets pulled back, but it never gets pulled back as far as started and it swings out again.

ML: That's a great one- metaphor.

DW: So I mean, when I try and- try to talk people about how can we be optimistic, I think- because you look at his- you look at history, you know, you look at the humanities, and humanity as a group, the progress has been steadily forward, you know, on-on so many fronts, it just gets-. There-there are periods where there's an adjustment because you're moving too fast. It's an absorption rate issue. You know, you can't--.

TO: And the--. It used to be--.

DW: You can't s--.

[ML intermittently agrees]

TO: I mean, one of my kind of wake up lessons from college was that none of these gains are just handed to anybody. It's- every one of them is a fight, and it's a long, long fight and--. You know? W one and W two, W two was- or George W was like- like my first big fight. And then, this is another--.

[Crosstalk]

ML: And now we miss him.

TO: This is another--.

LS: [Laughs]

ML: I miss him.

TO: But- I- the--.

DW: He was just a bozo, he wasn't malicious.

LS: Yeah.

TO: Just- but we--.

ML: No, I admit, I-I'd like anything to have him back. Like, I'd be fine, totally fine.

TO: [Sighs] And the point is--.

ML: It's like--.

TO: We got a- we got a nasty, nasty fight--.

ML: Right.

TO: On our hands.

[Crosstalk ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LS: What gives me hope is some- what keeps me hopeful, though is things like prop- the backlash to Prop. 187 a-and Governor Wil- Pete Wilson in California, you go- you know, ca- that can happen and that can happen in certain places that are important: Virginia — the purple states: Virginia, North Carolina--. Georgia has the possibility of going that way, too, because of Atlanta and the-the huge population--.

ML: A-and they're sprawling which is not a bad thing

LS: And then- you know. And- but to see Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, Michigan go the other way, you go, 'Whoa. I have been comp--.' You know, and the media completely missed it and--.

ML: But where do you think the people fro-from purple are coming from?

LS: [Laughs] Yeah, yeah.

ML: They're co--. There's a reverse Great Migration.

LS: Yeah. Migration, yeah.

DW: Well, open the doors. I'll welcome 'em, if they [Laughs] if they want to bring that with them.

ML: 'Hey,' right? Our-our famous hospitality.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

DW: Well, if women can drive in Saudi Arabia.

LS: Arabia [Laughs]

ML: C'mon. Can we celebrate that?

DW: Yeah. There-there-there are hallmarks. They're-they're quiet, but they're there and you look for 'em and it gives you reason to--. I don't know, I-I have four kids, and I'm gonna tell you there's a- there's a pessimism that permeates their attitude.

ML: Yeah.

DW: That is really disturbing.

SC: Yeah. And it seems pervasive.

DW: It is.

SC: I mean, I- just the pervasive pessimism of the political cultural climate and negativity. I mean, this really, a- this absence of hope.

DW: 'What's the point?'

SC: Right. Yeah.

DW: 'What's the point in,' fill in the blank, and i- and it's--. You know, I listen to them, and I listen to their friends, and they're twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-five,

twenty-eight, you know, they're-they're at a point where they should be--. They're-they're making decisions based on situations now that may not persist, but it will influence what they do the rest of their life. And I- you-you-you sit there and you say, 'Well, things will get better.' And they're just like, 'Yeah,' you know, 'blah-blah-blah-blah-blah,' you know, the Charlie Brown Mom, you know, just ignore that.

LS: [Laughs]

DW: [Clears throat] But--.

ML: Yeah, I--. You can see it on the countenance of people's faces, there're- there are moments where I was like --I guess as a folklorist, I'm a trained observer and maybe a natural one-- I'll just stop and kind of look around me, whether I'm at an airport or grocery store, and I'll just notice how grim. Like, if--. There's like a collective grimness to people's faces, the driving has become a little bit testier and a little fussier, and people just look grim.

DW: 'And I'm gonna disconnect and put on my earphones.'

[SC intermittently agrees]

ML: Exactly. Or just be like this, because 'I can be- that's my little safe haven or--,' you know, pacifier or whatever, but, um--. I try to make myself at meetings smile a little bit, not a fake smile, but just as, like, 'Let me lift,' because I noticed that around the room, everyone's doing this. I'm like, 'Oof.'

SC: So you're g-gonna model positivity. [Laughs]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ML: I'm like- I'm like, yeah. I'm like, 'Is this what we look like?' Or if I catch a stranger's eye, I try to smile like--. Like a stra- a stranger, a white woman at a Laur- at

Lauryn Hill concert who look more like- like, if I had to say 'who is this character?' I'd say, 'Oh, she's probably from Johnson County, and she probably ca- like, ma- you know, is the woman who will take care of the books for the dry cleaning shop that her parents have owned for two generations.' Like, that's what I would- the story I would tell. And she was a Lauryn Hill, a Black, you know, progre- you know, activist, ephemeral, Nina Simone of her generation, you know, concert. And for some reason there was something about this woman that made me want to chat with her, and so we were like- I was like, 'So yeah, you know,' like, I literally just started chatting with her like, we were in mid-sentence, so she just like started chatting to me me and so she's like, 'I love Lauryn Hill.' I was like, 'Well, you know, I'm excited but I'm, like, managing expectations because I haven't seen her in, like, twenty years and she's changed.' We were just very chatty. We get up — she's in front of me in line for concessions at Red Hat Amphitheater in Raleigh, and she's like, 'What do have?' And I was like, 'Oh, I'm gonna get some pret- a couple of pretzels.' She was like, 'Yeah.' And she paid- she bought me pretzels, this woman whose name I don't even know. And I said, 'May I hug you?' And she said, 'Yes.' And I said, 'Thank you.' And I said, 'I'm gonna pass it forward.' And I decided that moment, I'm going to pick someone white or Latina or Latinx or some other ethnicity other than me and ask them to pass it forward to someone of another identity and just--. I just feel like those small acts of kindness--. Like, it's the starfish story, you know? I don't know--. It's like, I just have to do something little every day.

SC: Yeah.

[Crosstalk]

TO: You know, it's kinda--. I mean--.

ML: Like that.

TO: But what is so interesting about what you're sayin' because--.

ML: I just have to, just to stay sane and helpful.

[Crosstalk ends]

TO: There's that kind of pop psychology truism that i-if you smile, you'll actually feel better.

ML: You do feel better.

LS: Mm-hmm.

SC: Yeah.

ML: And other people feel better around you.

TO: And you know, I go into meetings sometimes that I'm just like, 'Why- this meeting is gonna just suck.'

[Laughter]

TO: But--.

ML: And you come in with your little like--.

TO: But I'm like, I'm going in there cheerful.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm-hmm.

TO: Like, my first job is to go in there cheerful.

ML: Good job, Todd.

[Laughter]

TO: And you see what- you know, at least I can do that.

ML: I love it.

SC: Yeah, it sounds effective. I mean, that was a-a really — I mean, that affected me to hear that, like I want to experience [Laughs] something like that, you know? Like--.

[Crosstalk]

DW: Give her a hug when this is over.

SC: Group--.

ML: I'll give you a hug.

SC: I think we should all do a big hug, like if we could just, like, be in a circle and just sort of, like, cry for a little while.

LS: [Laughs]

TO: Table seven hug. On three.

SC: I'd find that really cathartic, honestly.

ML: We should. Can we--.

[Laughter]

ML: Let's- y'all, let's hug when we get up and it'll freak everyone out

LS: Yeah. [Laughs]

ML: They'll be like- they're gonna be like, 'What did they do that we didn't do?'

LS: 'What card did they get?'

SC: That's the best group right there.

ML: I'm serious, but that-that's our little performance art.

[Crosstalk ends]

TO: You guys are gonna think this is naive, but being at Chapel Hill and just thinking- just suffering the whole thing around this Confederate monument--.

ML: Oh yeah, and Silent Sam.

SC: Oh.

TO: And how... I-I hate to say the word "weak" because she's the first female chancellor at the place, but how weak Chancellor Folt- it's just--.

DW: Oh, she's a tool.

TO: How weak she's been--.

DW: She's a total tool.

TO: And thinking about how she just--.

[Crosstalk]

ML: You okay with that?

DW: I'm fine with that.

ML: Okay.

LS: [Laughs]

TO: Thinking about--.

DW: Let me spell my name for you.

LS: [Laughs]

SC: As a state employee- as a state employee just know that I'm nodding my head in agreement but I'm not verbally [Laughs]

TO: I have tenure. [Laughs]

[Laughter]

TO: Chancellor Folt, you're a weenie.

SC: Good for you.

TO: Um--.

[Laughter]

LS: It's in the archive.

[Crosstalk ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

TO: But-but-but I thought, you know, this-this person has come here and from day one, she has been gettin' Boston bullied by the you know, by-by-by Raleigh, but- by the Board of Trustees, this progressive- regressively moved conservative on her. And she's just--.

DW: But she knew what she was getting into.

TO: So--.

DW: This was a conscious choice on her part.

TO: And-and she just is being played, and I thought to myself, 'Well, how would I do it differently? And If I was--.'

ML: If it was you?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

TO: If I woke up Chancellor in the morning, the first thing I would do is I would get in my car and I would drive straight to the State House, and I would walk into the office of all these nasty grumpy Chapel Hill haters, and I would just go straight at 'em with a big old smile and I say, 'I--. This is who I am. I know who you are. I know there are serious issues that divide us, but I'm here to stay.' A-and you know, and that would be it. But that's the thing about cheerfulness, I wouldn't go in there like, 'We hate each other. We can't cut a deal. We can't do any of it. I'm afraid of you. I-I--.' No.

DW: But see, she's not Southern, if she were Southern--.

TO: I'm not Southern either but-but it is part of the code here.

DW: She would do that.

ML: It is part of the code.

DW: It is.

TO: It is.

DW: My mother-in-law taught first grade for thirty years, and she's from Wilson and she's this southern belle, you know, homecoming queen and a Christian. She's-she's that person. And I can remember when my son was born and we're in a restaurant, you could still smoke in a restaurant back then, and somebody next to us lit up a cigarette, and she gets up and she walks over there and she goes, 'Do you see that little baby over there?' And he said- she said, 'That's my first grandson and I know you don't want to be putting smoke in his face. You don't look like that kind of person.' And-and-and she said, 'And you know, you're going to put it out right now aren't you?' What can he do? You know, if she'd gone in and done what I would have done, I would've said, 'Put the damn thing out.' You know, you know, it wouldn't've worked.

SC: Well, that's how I mean when we're, like, 'Just take down the damn statue.'

[Laughs]

DW: Right, but you- but you--.

SC: 'You know you want to keep us safe.'

DW: You manage it. You manage it.

SC: But I think that that's really interesting. Like, you know, you want to approach these people, like human beings, like we are a part of this community. We have a voice, we have a right to say, like, 'We feel unsafe.' Like, our students feel unsafe, our staff

feel unsafe; they have to walk by this statute every day. It represents violence, it incites violence. And one thing that's happening now is that the conversation is, 'Well, we'll just move it to Wilson library.' I don't know if you've heard that. That's the new thing. We had two Board of Trustees members come by--.

ML: Archive it.

SC: Earlier this week to check out our facility to see if Silent Sam could be moved into- inside of Wilson library, so they're going to--.

ML: Can it?

SC: Well, that's what I'm afraid of, because the law says that you have to m- if you move it, it has to be moved to an acceptable--.

ML: Oh, I know.

SC: Right? Like, place of honor.

ML: I'm just curious, is that even a possibility?

SC: Well, that's what I'm really, really worried about because I-I can't do my work, none of us can do our work as is. But I mean, for us to--.

ML: Why would you not be able to do your work with that statue in your building?

SC: Because it-it is disruptive, it is- it incites violence, it--.

ML: So where do you think you should go?

TO: To a foundry.

LS: Yeah.

[Crosstalk]

ML: Really? You think it should go--? It- and I--.

SC: Unfortunately--.

DW: The important thing (inaudible - 01:05:45)

ML: I don't want him to be totally destroyed.

DW: I don't either.

TO: Oh, I do.

DW: I honestly think--. You got--.

TO: No, at all.

DW: That's back to the story, you want contextualization.

ML: I want--. Yeah, but you heard what I was saying yester--.

DW: Yeah.

[Crosstalk ends]

ML: I take my daughter to those places and I'm like, 'You see this--?'

DW: I think could--. Yeah.

ML: 'This is what our grand- my grandmother survived was becau- you know, was in the face of--.' Like, I need this to--. I need for- to be able to say, 'You see this flag?' Now, but in a- in a safe place not on top of--.

SC: Yeah, I mean, I feel like--. I mean, the conversation about the ones in Raleigh--.

LS: Five minutes? That's it? [Laughs]

SC: Oh, I will- I will just say I've- the ones in Raleigh, they're talking about moving to Johnson County--.

ML: Yeah, Bentonville Battlefield.

SC: Um, you know, something like that. But I--.

ML: It's- there's a battlefield there.

SC: Yeah.

Unknown: Oh okay.

ML: There's a civil war battlefield.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Oh.

LS: I'm getting a--.

[Crosstalk]

SC: But see, you know, 'We'll just dump it on Johnson County--.'

DW: Eh, but you know there's a whole Ku Klux Klan in the state, why don't we move it there?

ML: Right.

LS: [Laughs]

SC: But I--.

TO: It's like toxic waste.

SC: I will say that at least for--.

ML: No, it's a huge battlefield, yes.

[Crosstalk ends]

SC: At least for, um, to speak up for, you know, uh, you know, like people who have studied at UNC who work at UNC, who work at a university as librarians, I mean, we have all of the documentation, we have all the information, you know, we are always trying to say, 'Learn. Learn from the materials that we've collected about this university.' Like, we don't need Silent Sam's body to-to tell the story--.

ML: Well but so--. But as a museum professional, you collect artifacts.

SC: Yes, we do have--.

ML: The three dimensional--. But I'm just saying, I know that is the line between, I feel, like in archiving and museums.

SC: We do have a little gallery. Um--.

ML: Yeah, I know. Y'all have stuff.

SC: Yeah, we have a gallery. Um, I guess that, without belaboring it too much--.

ML: I- no- I'm really intrigued by this.

SC: When- one thing that I will also say is, that is a statue that's intended to be outside.

ML: It's big.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

SC: And so, people don't usually move outdoor sculptures inside. It's- so for maintenance purposes, and storage, and things like that, i-it's unfeasible. But I will also say that I think that we would actually require some sort of security, like we don't have security in the building. And I think that it--. Like, we- Wilson library is a teaching facility. Like, we're one of the entities that teaches on campus.

TO: It should not be Wilson.

SC: And we have--. What was that?

TO: It should not be Wilson.

SC: Well, I mean, we've had students come in so that we can have a safe place for them to learn.

ML: Right. I know, I've used that place.

SC: Right. And so- and we also have rare and unique materials that, I mean, I'm worried that it's going to be a mecca for white supremacist--. I mean, we already are a kind of a--. I'm not saying we don't already have white supremacists in the building.

[Laughter]

SC: I'm just saying--. They're coming to use our stuff. I'm just saying, it's-it's like martyring Silence Sam. And I-I can't have that in my workplace.

ML: This is--. I just--.

SC: I can't- I can't have that.

ML: I hear you.

SC: That does a disservice to--.

[SC intermittently agrees]

ML: No, yeah, I'm laughing over here just because I'm- I'm a veteran of the American Civil War. I spent a decade by like, planning and commemorating the sesquicentennial. And, um, so I have a different kind of, I don't know, energy. I-I ju- I swim in these waters every single day. I work at- I work--. I was at the meeting where they were--. You know what I'm saying, so this is just my, like--.

SC: So you can move silent sam just not in Wilson--.

TO: So when the- when statue came down in Durham were you just like, 'mistake'? 'Cause that statue was destroyed, I don't know if you saw the video, but it--.

SC: It got all crumpled.

LS: Yeah.

TO: There was no- there was no straightening that thing out.

ML: No. I was, um, I had a visceral reaction of awe. I was like, 'Wow,' that was- I was just like, 'Wow.' It was n--. So it was just 'wow.' It was just kind of like, look, that is the folklorist gaze, is it- for those times I can pull back enough and go like, 'This is a moment that needs to be witnessed.' And so, it's more- it-it was less of a going jumping to what is my opinion about this and it was more of a, as a witness going, 'Oh my.' And, um, and knowing that after Charlottesville, everything did change and knowing that this is- the we're in a season, where all of these things have to be contended with. You know?

LS: I opened up with how r- you know, restrained you seemed on the panel yesterday. And I'm- I'm with Todd. It's, like, foundry to me. But I think it's the context. If these were monuments that went up in 1866 to commemorate something, I'd feel differently than something went that up in- that--. You know, along with--.

TO: 1913.

LS: Um, yeah. Yeah [Laughs] So--.

DW: I live in Holly Springs and we have one--.

LS: So I'm with the Lenin [imitates statue being pulled down] t-topple 'em.

[Laughs]

SC: Oh yeah, that's right. Holly Springs does have a confederate monument.

[Crosstalk]

DW: We did have one but-but what- what they what they failed to say--.

ML: North Carolina has some of the most in the country.

[Speakers intermittently agrees]

DW: Was that that is a monument to the town's war dead and they had in the names of the ones who were in the Spanish American war, and they also have World War I, they- you know--. And so it's- it-it is not a civil war memorial as such that's why it was put up, but it has been treated over time as--. You know, so I can't argue for--.

ML: You- but you--. You can't--. Mississippi's everywhere. You take the statues down and the- and the-the hate that we fear around it actually goes up, we take the flags down, and they're up everywhere. All those stories I told you earlier about the flags I'm seeing everywhere, I didn't see as many of those flags in-in--.

TO: You know, like, when, you know, Julian Carr--.

ML: Oh my God.

TO: Put that statue up there in the middle of campus, I mean--.

ML: Oh my God. Who-who beat a black woman's clothes off.

TO: Right. I mean, he knew that he was doing this--.

ML: I don't think it should be on campus like that.

TO: For the long haul.

ML: Right.

TO: And in the same way, like getting rid of those statues i-it's for the long haul, like, yeah sure, the next ten, twenty, thirty years of the Confederate flag on every whatever. But over time--.

ML: No, I'm sorry.

TO: Over time.

ML: Not over time, I don't believe that.

TO: No?

ML: I do not believe that. I believe that these folks are passing down--.

TO: They are, it's true.

ML: And they are doing it very well, they're very good--. Have you ever met a United dau-Daughter of the Confederacy member? I swear--.

[Crosstalk]

DW: I'm- I qualify. My dad's a- my dad's a member of the Sons of Confederacy.

ML: Oh, yeah. And I-and I do too if all of my ancestors claimed me.

LS: [Laughs] And my wife's family would qualify.

DW: Yeah.

[Crosstalk ends]

ML: If all of my ancestors claimed their illegitimate Black children, I do too on my daddy's side through a bond.

DW: We never had any money for slaves so I'm-I'm free on that one. [Laughs]

ML: Well. Well, no, but everyone benefited from the work of slaves. So none of us are free. None of us are free. Everyone benefited: one third of the population in 1860 was enslaved, one third owned slaves and some- some of them rented slaves. Rented like cars. We all be- we still benefit from slavery today. So, United Daughters of the Confederacy are good at what they do. If they could preserve their brains to pass it down a hundred twenty, you know, a hundred generations, they would. They're really good.

TO: Maybe I'm-I'm just misunderstanding your thoughts about keeping it and contextualizing it and it's function as an educational tool.

ML: I just--. No. I believe put it in a museum. It's a part of the story of this land--.

DW: And then talk about the who--.

ML: And talk about it--.

DW: Who did it and what a racist he was.

ML: We have to talk about it. There's so much that a lot of people don't know about those statues. And what I'm, uh, what I'm afraid is if you just totally destroy them, the people who do value them as it have built a legacy of saying 'this is a part of who I am,' will take it as, like, you have- you have murdered--. And they will rise in a way that--. So there's a fear I have about how you turn (inaudible - 01:13:02). And at some point we have to make space for the whole story. So my thing is, put it in a place where it can be interpreted. I do think they need to be moved but I think- I don't believe they should be destroyed.

DW: I'm with you on that.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

TO: There was an article a-along this whole conversation about this about, um, there was a museum in North Carolina of the Civil War, I think, and there were- it was a set of-of rifles from the Civil War. And--. You hear that story?

ML: No, I don't know that story.

TO: They-they had 'em on display and the museum just decided that they were gonna stop glorifying these Confederate rifles. And they were gonna move them to storage. They weren't gonna destroy them. They're gonna move them to storage. And then the gentleman said, 'Well, how are you going to--? People can't see these guns anymore.' So well, you can do it by appointment. Which, you know, is basically disappearing the guns.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ML: No, it is. It's where you go--. But that's how most artifacts in museums. And, af you know museums, that's most artifacts. You make an appointment to go study something and you do new scholarship. That's the most app--. That's the most museums. The Smithsonian doesn't put nearly, hardly any of that stuff--.

LS: Yeah (inaudible - 01:14:04)

[Announcements from 01:14:03 to 01:15:07]

ML: Okay, are y'all ready?

LS: Yeah [Laughs]

DW: We don't have an audience.

[Laughter]

[Crosstalk]

ML: No, but we can still hug we don't need- we don't need an audience.

LS: We-we--[Laughs]

SC: They say you live longer--.

DW: Ah.

SC: This is so true.

LS: Yeah. [Laughs]

SC: I love it. (inaudible - 01:14:24-29) This is wonderful.

LS: What's your last--? Ca--?

SC: Carrier. Thank you for--.

DW: (inaudible - 01:14:37)

TO: (inaudible - 01:14:41) everywhere.

DW: Well, it's one way to [Pause] ensure equality.

TO: Yeah, in a really practical way.

DW: In a practical way. And it is impossible to have a more just society if we can't participate and you can't participate if you're not connected to each other.

TO: Right, exactly.

DW: It's what drives us, but--.

[Announcements End]

DW: Anyway, that's--.

TO: Nice to meet you.

DW: Thank you.

SC: We're hugging [Laughs]

[Speakers inaudible - 01:15:18-23]

SC: Oh, that would be great. That would be great.

ML: I have not been to Wilson lately. But you know--.

DW: Wilson's a happenin' place.

ML: It is a happenin' place (inaudible - 01:15:37)

SC: So I've just been recorded--. Is that still on?

ML: Yeah. Oh, hit "stop," Deborah.

SC: I've just been recorded on tape saying that I- Silent Sam will not be in Wilson library.

ML: [Laughs]

DW: I know your email.

ML: I think that's hilarious. I'm sorry, I just--.

SC: It can be moved, but I don't want it to be in Wilson Library.

ML: There's-There's a level--. At some point I need to write about my experience
(inaudible - 01:16:00) I would love to talk to you about that--.

SC: You can imagine I get a lot of questions from (inaudible - 01:16:08). You
know how they are.

ML: You're my friend.

[Laughter]

ML: I-I've been a guest speaker at many similar roundtables (inaudible -
01:16:16)

SC: Yeah, I would love to talk to you more--.

ML: With F.C.B. and the--. Yeah, I have some really interesting- I've had some
really interesting--. I've-I've been in the (inaudible - 01:16:27) headquarters here- I
mean in Raleigh. I've had lunch there and some of them (inaudible - 01:16:32) and
some of them were like, 'Oh, I'm so glad you're here,' like, it make them happy and
some of them were like, 'I'm gonna smash that crystal cup that she was drinking her
punch out of.'

DW: Where were you?

ML: In Raleigh, the u- the ni- the state headquarters.

DW: Of what?

ML: United Daughters of the Confederacy.

DW: Oh.

ML: Yeah.

SC: Well, the Sons are--.

ML: Some of them- yeah, some of them were like (inaudible - 01:16:53) and some of them were like, [Claps] 'Yay.'

SC: The Sons have definitely taken on the-the heritage, uh, preservation, uh, (inaudible - 01:17:00)

ML: Oh, and they will. I bet they're probably meeting right now.

SC: Yeah.

ML: At this very second.

DW: My dad is (inaudible - 01:17:10)

ML: Yeah.

DW: (inaudible - 01:17:11-39)

ML: I love to meet a moderate (inaudible - 01:17:39). It's actually one of the most interesting conversations you could really ever have.

(inaudible - 01:17:49)

ML: The head of the Civil Rights Museum (inaudible - 01:17:53-01:18:12)

SC: And we do a lot (inaudible - 01:18:17)

ML: So, you have some people who are like your buddies?

(inaudible - 01:18:24-34)

[Laughter]

ML: You know, I ain't got time. I'll ask around--.

END OF RECORDING

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