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LAVINIA JACKSON
BOB POWELL
DERRICK MCMILLAN
COKA COLEMAN
CEDRIC BLUE
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Preface

The following conversation was hosted at the Elsewhere Museum, 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: Say your name again one more time. I'm sorry.

COKA COLEMAN: Coka Coleman.

JV: Coka Coleman, thank you.

LAVINIA JACKSON: Okay. Um, my name is Lavinia Jackson. I am a native of Virginia but I've been in Greensboro for seven years now. I am a poet. Um, I just published --well, not me-- but I just had my first collection of poetry published in March and I was published again in another book about two weeks ago. Um, I do dabble in-in oils and acrylics and things like that, but my medium of choice is words, so.

BOB POWELL: Hi, I'm Bob Powell. Uh, I'm an architect. I teach at A&T, uh, in architec- it’s called architectural engineering. Uh, originally from Boston, but I've been here longer than anywhere.

[Laughter]

DERRICK MCMILLAN: Uh, my name is Derrick McMillan. I produce art shows and represent my grandfather who is an artist, James McMillan. Uh, I went to A&T also. My major was aerospace engineering though, not architectural engineering.

BP: Gotcha, gotcha.

DM: Uh, that’s about it.

BP: Okay, so we're ready to--. Curious.

[Cards Shuffling]

BP: So, (inaudible - 00:01:41) Deal ‘em out.

LJ: Okay.

BP: Everybody gets a card. [Pause] [Laughs]

LJ: Huh, wow.

[Pause]

BP: It's like spades, right?

LJ: Not quite.

[Laughter]

[Pause]

LJ: Wow.

[Pause]

LJ: Wow.

[Pause]

BP: Everybody had a chance to read them all out?

CC: Um, yeah, sure, um--.

BP: So, why don't we go around--.

CC: Okay

BP: In a circle, just read one--.

LJ: 'Kay.

BP: And just keep going around till we got them all read.

CC: Okay.

BP: Okay?

CC: Um, it says: *What is the role of community based, ethic based, or gender based survey shows in the 21st century?*

LJ: Um, *Discuss the relevance of the term post-Black as an art historical phenomenon.*

BP: This could-could be a lot of those.

LJ: Right.

CC: [Laughs]

BP: Um, *How do you connect with the larger art world? Is that important?*

DM: *How do we encourage development and maintenance of our community without segregating ourselves from the larger art world?*

LJ: Hm.

BP: Yeah.

CC: *What is your perception of the ethnic makeup of art gallery rosters? Can even distribution be considered a goal?*

LJ: [Whispers] Wow. *Ken Johnson, go with it.*

[Laughter]

LJ: Yeah, okay.

BP: Okay.

LJ: Right. Okay.

BP: *How has the collectorship of contemporary art by people of color changed in the past few decades? How is this change reflected in gallery rosters, museum shows, acquisitions, and the writing of art history?*

DM: *Discuss your experience with* targeting hiring- *with targeted hiring initiatives in university systems and or the issue of affirmative action more generally.*

CC: Um, *Discuss ways to encourage the growth of minorities post-doctorate and MFA populations.*

LJ: *Discuss the authorship of Black art history as it is relevant to the work of curating writing art- art history.*

BP: *Discuss your experience with STEAM fields as it relates to the realm of contemporary art by people of color.*

DM: *What, if any, responsibilities do we as Black creative workers of color have to the larger community of color and the world? How does this affect decisions made in the studio?*

CC: *How do we continue to have conversations- this conversation year round? Brainstorm.*

BP: You have one more?

DM: Oh, *What is the climate of the realm of Black owned nonprofits or alternative institutions? Alternatively, discuss artists* who practices- *whose practices rely on non commercial avenues*.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Okay.

[Pause]

JV: You have a new person.

BP: Cool.

[Pause]

CC: Hello.

BP: Hi, Mr. Cedric. So we've all kind of ourselves.

CEDRIC BLUE: Yeah, um, I am Cedric. I'm the operations curator, um, in Elsewhere.

LJ: Oh, okay.

CB: I'm a little tardy. I apologize for that.

LJ: That's all right.

BP: So we've-we've--. Cedric, we've just read through all-all these questions. I'm not sure how to pick one or two.

CC: Um, I guess everybody pick one out of their pile that they wanna talk about first.

BP: That they really want to talk about. That sounds good.

CB: I'll-I'll follow your cues.

CC: Okay.

CB: Um, since I'm late to the table.

BP: And just--. Ea-each of you--.

CC: Okay, I'll pick this one.

BP: And give him- give him one. Okay, yeah, good.

CC: Out of these three, which one would you like to talk about?

BP: There you go.

[Pause]

BP: There's mine.

[Pause]

CC: Okay. Wanna start with mine?

LJ: Sure.

BP: Well, l-let's-let's--.

CC: Oh, do you wanna pick which one--?

BP: Read-read them all and then--. 'Cause there may be some of these that connect.

CC: Oh, okay. Sure.

BP: And then we'll start with yours. [Laughs]

CC: Ah, well, mine says, um, *What is the role of the community based, ethic based, gender based survey shows in the 21st century?*

BP: Gotcha.

LJ: *Discuss the relevance of the term post-Black as an art*, um, *historical phenomenon.*

BP: *How do you connect to the larger art world? Is that important?*

DM: *How do we encourage the development and maintenance of our community without segregating ourselves from the larger art world?*

CB: *What is your perception of the ethnic makeup of art gallery rosters? Can even distribution be considered a goal?*

LJ: Wow.

[Pause]

BP: What are your thoughts?

[Laughter]

LJ: I mean, there's some--.

DM: These two are connected.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

DM: Directly.

BP: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

LJ: Yeah, there’s some- there’s some--.

DM: ‘Cause I see both of these--.

BP: And then these--. This whole--.

DM: On an everyday basis.

BP: The-the-the larger art world, our art world… Read yours again.

CC: Um, *What is the role of community based, ethnic based, or gender based survey shows in the 21st century?*

LJ: Right. Yeah, they're all kind of doing this concentric circle.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yes.

LJ: Thing.

BP: Yes.

LJ: Like, yeah.

BP: Yeah, that's the deal.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DM: And yours is connecting directly to these two about the--. Well, from my experiences. 'Cause I see this when I'm producing shows for my grandfather, 'cause some galleries want specifically his civil rights timepieces. And then, some galleries want just landscape pieces that have nothing to do with civil rights. And usually the, um, the galleries that want civil rights pieces are usually more white galleries, 'cause that's what he's branded as: a Black artist. And I'm trying to get out of that by trying to display the landscape so he's known as an artist, not a Black artist.

LJ: So--.

BP: [Sighs]

LJ: What's the perception, since you do shows, um, of, you know, the dif- I mean, the differences in perception as far as Black artists versus if I had no clue that this person was of- you know, a person of color.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DM: Well, when it's a Black artist, the perception is that their art is gonna be civil rights based or oppression based work, when it's a Black artist. That’s the majority of the works that sell for Black artist.

LJ: Wow. So--.

DM: Things that have- that’s--. Not saying that they have to be, uh--. I mean, but they're mostly things that come out of those type of environments where somebody was opressed, civil rights, slavery; those type of things are what- are hot commodities for Black artists.

BP: So that even raises the issue of stuff that probably is Black art related to the Black experience, but not related to the Black experience that these particular institutions are looking for.

DM: No, not at all.

BP: Right?

DM: ‘Cause they- it's-it’s basically being stereotyped, ‘We want this type of artwork.’

DM: Yeah.

CB: Like that's all we're good for.

DM: Yes. That's- and it--. That’s exactly it. That's how they look at it and they're not--. ‘Cause a lot of places are not even- they don't even want to see the other work that my grandfather has that was post Civil Rights Era. It’s- they're not concerned with it, it doesn't have the same value to them.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

BP: But see, then it fi--. It hits to this point, all your grandfather's work is related to the larger art world. Black and otherwise, right? In different ways. And so- but that's lost.

DM: Yes.

BP: Yeah.

DM: A lot of it is lost. A lot of it never even gets the light of day or even mentioned because that's not what they’re interested in.

[LJ intermittently agrees]

CB: Yeah, I, um, I grew up here and I used to live across the street from, um, a Black artist. And he was, like, kind of environmental art and he did these, like, huge, beautiful, like, canvasses. But I mean, he struggled for a long time, he had, like, a great studio behind his house and my dad was a bit of his broker. But, um, his comment made sense, because it wasn't that traditional, like, struggle, or it wasn't all about, um, you know, Civil Rights specifically, or something like that. So, you know, it probably was difficult for a lot of traction.

LJ: But that makes- it makes it hard, as- you know, as an artist. And my mother was, her medium was sculpture. She taught art for seventeen and a half years. And it makes it difficult for you to want to pursue different media and do something different if

that's all that's going to sell and, you know, sort of make money. Does that makes sense? So how do you- how can you, as an artist, like, reconcile?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CB: Well, I--. It's--. I'm so glad that you mentioned that, because, um, I kind of didn't want, um, make any assumptions, like, on a larger scale, but, um, something that I'd noticed since kind of joining this field of work is, um --just since working in the arts in general for the last three years-- is, um, that question of money. Can I make money off of this? I think that is a major, major barrier that prevents a lot of African Americans from moving into art, period, um, just because the financial feasibility kind of isn't there as it is with, you know, a real- "real job," um, in engineering or law or something. And so, you know, not having- having that mindset thinking that my work isn't speaking to one of these specific things and therefore it isn't gonna sell? Probably is, you know, really a big barrier, um, in exploring different media-mediums and, um, different topics.

LJ: Wow.

BP: Coka, what does this mean for you? 'Cause you're an emerging--?

CC: Yes--.

BP: Artist?

CC: I am an emerging artist. Um, um, I do have different body of works. Um, right now my- I have a body of work that is political and social based- justice based, um, that's hanging up a-at the artist block right now. Um, that body of work, I decided to showcase first because I got more reception out of that work. Um, people ask more questions, um, about my, um, social pieces. Um, I do have other pieces that is not related to social injustice issues that I don't--. It-it-it resonates to what you said, I don't

really get questioned about it or people don't ask me, ‘Oh, you know, what was your vision behind it?’ as much as my social pieces. Um, and one pi-piece in particular that I did, it was kinda similar to BK the Artist, if you guys are familiar with him, he does a lot of Black love pieces. And, um, I kind of got compared to him. And at the time, I was a little offended, u-um, just because as a Black artist, I don't like to be compared to other artists. Especially because, you know, BK the Artist is not Black hisself, he’s a white artist. And to be--.

BP: But he does Black love?

CC: He does Black love pieces.

BP: Okay. Okay.

CC: And to be kinda like compared to someone… Um, not saying, like, because he's white, he can't do Black pieces, but it's like, you're--. He makes a lot money off his pieces. And [Laughs] just to, like, be a Black person to be compared to someone who's not in the community is interesting. Um, and also, it's like it--. You know, I still am a fan of his, but i-it just goes to show, like, you know, even as a Black artist you struggle with even showcasing Black- the Black experience. ‘Cause you have- not only are you competing with other Blacks that they say like, ‘All Black pieces look the same,’ or we have the same message, you also have to be compared to those who are outside of the community making the same pieces.

BP: And making the same message.

CC: And making the same message and actually doing a little bit better than the piece- people who are in the community making these same pieces. So, it's-it's, um, it’s like a supply and demand thing, but everybody's supplying the same thing and it's not

enough demand for Black artists doing Black pieces, because you don't even have to be Black to con-consider being a Black artist. I mean, BK the Artist, when you google “Black artists,” he- his pieces- piece-pieces-his- his pieces pop up. And not saying that--. He-hi-his art is considered Black art because it showcases the Black experience. But it- he's--. It's kinda like--. It's a touchy subject, you know. Um. It's also Sarah Golish. I love her pieces also, but she also showcases the Black experience. But, um, most people- most people wouldn't even know that they’re a white artists. If you follow them, they never post what they look like.

[Laughter]

CC: They never post what they look like. You have to be a true fan to know that these people behind the pieces aren't actually in the community. So, um, it's a struggle, being a Black artist. Um--.

CB: It feels like a double edged sword.

CC: It’s ve- it is a double edged sword.

[CC intermittently agrees]

CB: It’s, you know, it's almost good that you’re getting, kind of, comparisons to this, kind of, developed, nice artist and it's kind of nice that, like, no one really knows that they're not, you know, from the community, but at the same time, what does, you know, that say to you personally?

CC: Right, yeah.

BP: But-but here you are trying not to be stereotyped.

CC: Yeah.

BP: And you got a white artist who's willing to be stereotyped

CB: Yeah.

LJ: And profit from it.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: And profit from it.

LJ: Right, right. And I think that's the-the biggest thing. I have a friend of mine, she's an artist, we went to high school together, and she's done a lot of pieces. She's a white girl. And I complimented her on her coloring ‘cause I was really impressed with what she did with an acrylic painting of — it was a request for a portrait. And normally I don't see white artists that do it well, but she did hers like it--. Her shading and all of that was wonderful. And had- if you did not know, just like with BK, and if she had just posted that, you would’ve thought, honestly, that it was painted by a Vlack person. And I was like, eh, I don't know if I feel comfortable. And I just had this eerie feeling about her painting one of us. I don't care that she's good. It just gave me that feeling like, ‘You- you still don't know what it's like,’ like…

[Laughter]

BP: Yeah, yeah.

CC: Yeah.

CB: The intentions may be there but--.

LJ: Right.

CC: Yeah, but--. Yeah. And there’s, um, an, uh, Instagram page that I follow who- um, it’s designed to showcase Black artists. And they had a few posts where the- they thought that the artist was Black, but the artist wasn't Black. And it-it started this

conversation that, you know… It's- that page was meant to showcase us, but because there's a lot of outside kind of people of different races doing Black art that it kind of- it took away from the opportunity for an actual Black artist to be showcased. Um, it- uh, ano- a, uh, emerging artists like me could've been showcased, but it was that opportunity was --I don't want to say- use the word "robbed"-- but it was kind of tooken away from be-because they showcased someone who wasn't Black, who they thought was Black. Um--.

[CC intermittently agrees]

CB: I imagine you would probably get that same kind of affirmative action reaction, like, if you took that kind of argument to someone. And it's one of those things where it's like, 'I'm sorry, it's the world that we live in. These opportunities are fewer and far between for people of color, for Black people, and therefore, you know, kind of, those outlets like that devoted Instagram are accessible, you know, ways for you to get your pieces (inaudible - 00:19:52) for lack of a better word, sucks when [Laughs] um--.

LJ: See that--.

CB: It starts getting crowded (inaudible - 00:19:59).

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LJ: But that makes me think of the whole Martin Luther King monument thing. And I don't know whether it was that-that-that was the best choice because the person was a person of color but was not an African American who did the sculpture, or whether they didn't just- they didn't do the research because he was a popular, you know, and world renowned artist in the small--. Because, realistically speaking, Africa is

a continent. You mean to me there's not an African sculptor that could have done justice?

BP: No question.

LJ: Right. Right. To-to the, you know, to the same effect? So, I don't know whether it's, you know, chosen ignorance, you know, you know, when it comes to that, or whether it's, you know, or whether it's our lack of accessibility. It's-it's, you know…

BP: Huh.

CC: Yeah. I guess that brings-. Like, in the last few years, I have noticed that there has been a, um, great, um, increase of Black awareness. There's a lot--. Especially people of my age. Um, I have a lot of classmates and a lot of friends who are starting to do more research into Black heritage and Black traditions, we wanted- a lot of--. I wanna call it The New Great Awakening period, where a lot of, um, people of our community are trying to get back to traditional roles that was not taught to us, um, that, uh, heritage that was lost, basically. And I'm not sure whether this increase, uh--. And it- because of this period of time where people are trying to become more pro Black, there's more- its more of a demand for Black art. So more people want Black art and want to see Black art. So I'm not sure if it's, um, these, um, non Blacks are creating art because the demand is starting to increase, or they actually have an appreciation for the Black community. Um--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DM: I can tell you firsthand it's a business, because the people who run the major Black auction- I mean, Black art auctions are Jewish people; they're not Black at all. The major Black auction is the Swan Gallery in New York and the people--. My grandfather

had a painting that sold in April for $35,000, the person who sold it bought it from him for I believe about $12,000. They didn't let us know that it had sold for that much. They tried to immediately come back after it sold and buy more for cheaper prices. They didn't want--. I mean, I found out on my own that it sold for that much. And the majority of the people selling those works at those auctions aren't the artists themselves. They're collectors who've housed a mass quantity of work that they bought for a very low price and now they're releasing it in their time to create a value for it.

CB: Controlling the market.

DM: And that's exactly right. That's exactly what they're doing. They go buy up collections for dirt cheap and they release the art when they want to to control the market like he's saying.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

BP: So I-I want to talk about segregation and post segregation, I see this post Black thing, but- and-and maybe even connect with what you're saying, 'cause- 'cause this- but this thing you're saying about this new interest in Black art. So, there has been interest in Black art forever, right? When I grew up, the Black art that was on my walls, my- that my parents bought, was-was important to my up-upbringing, right. But- and-and so, you know, I grew up just on the cusp of segregation, you know, so, 'cause and- probably art was still segregated back then. Everything else was not segregated, but art was still segregated. Um, but I would wonder what the economics were even back then, people kind of getting ripped off 'cause it was segregated then, you know, oh, well, you know, nobody's gonna want to buy- nobody's gonna want to buy it. You

can tell an artist, you know, your stuff isn't of any value because rich folks don't have access to it.

DM: Well, they didn't have a market to display it on to begin with.

BP: Exactly. Yeah.

DM: To get a fair market value. They didn't have anywhere to display it.

BP: But-but- so- but we're in- we're in a different world now. You know, the more things change, the more they stay the same, right? And so it-it's a- thi-this whole issue of, you know, Black art being important, um, it's a different flavor. And so, you- I sus- I suspect it's a different version of this you're gonna face than-than other- in earli- than your grandfather.

DM: Yeah.

BP: Right? I keep- I keep flipping between-between, kinda, your grandfather's generation and this generation.

DM: Well, it's- I don't know this that much-- .It's-it's kinda the same parallels they were talking about in the beginning about having to decide whether you want to be a commercial artist to make money or you want to follow your passion, which is whatever you want to paint or whatever medium you choose to work in.

BP: A-and see, I think that's universal. I mean, that's-that's not just even Black.

DM: Yeah.

BP: That's-that's whatever you do, following your passion versus being-being--.

DM: Well--.

BP: Versus being commercial.

DM: Well, sometime--.

BP: Somebody’s gonna put you in a box.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DM: Well, sometimes, like, if you- if you've studied in Paris, or France, or somewhere like that, then you have a greater likelihood of being looked at as a noncommercial artist and it’s — a classical artist, as they would put it. And it's hard--. I mean, I don't know why it's like that, but that’s a place that they consider that you've been trained- you've been highly trained, or you've been trained superior to everybody else. And that elimi--. If he hadn't been to school in Paris, I don't think he would be considered the artist that he is or have afforded the opportunity he was afforded as an artist, ‘cause a lot of stuff he didn't have to deal with or go through that I see a lot of artists going through because of his history as school- I mean, schooling and the way he was trained by the artists he was trained by. They consider him more of a classical artist, even though he is a Black artist, they consider him a classical artist, as well, because he went to school in Paris.

BP: [Laughs] (inaudible - 00:26:35)

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LJ: But I mean, that-that's-that's true throughout any, um, any of the arts genres. Like you--. Or any educational genre, it's like, you could go to, you know, a “state school” or you could go to Cornell, um, you know. Or, like, in my field, you'd have to go out to Wisconsin, or go up to Vermont, in order to get the stamp to say that you are highly trained--.

BP: High art.

LJ: Broadway. You know, like, and it's not off-off, you have to actually be there and be trained and, you know, you have these contacts, and then you consider classical, and it does take you out of the commercial realm.

CB: Yeah. And you have to have access to all that which takes me back to those institutional issues.

LJ: Right.

CB: Black people not being able to have access to cer… (inaudible - 00:27:32)

CC: Yeah.

LJ: Wow.

DM: Is that because of the, um, the way that the schools are set up now?

CC: That's my question.

DM: 'Cause my grandfather got those opportunities from Howard, he went to Howard and they--.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

DM: His, um, his- I think Lois Jones was his teacher at Howard, his mentor, she sent him directly to Paris.

BP: Mm-hmm.

CC: Yeah, I think it's--.

CB: I think it's a mixture of not as much access, um--. Well, part access, and then, part, kind of, encouragement. Um, like, just art isn't--. I know, personally working in the arts the last three years, it's totally been, like, my decision and something I spent a long time thinking about before I moved to, because I was never ever, ever, ever

encouraged my entire life to pursue the arts. I grew up doing theater like all my life. Um, my parents liked it, they thought it was cool, but as far as ever contemplating that or film as an actual, like, course of study, it just didn't happen. And I kind of ended wasting a lot of time in college doing a lot of stuff that would never yield anything useful, um, for me, when fifteen years later, I'm an arts administrator, which is what I feel I could have [Laughs] probably moved towards a lot longer ago, um, had I taken the stance. So yeah, I-I do think, you know, there aren't probably as many schools or as many like HBCUs, or specific African American universities, with, you know, these big art programs that the larger schools have, but then I also think that, um, a lot of kids just aren't pursuing, um, those tracks in the schools where they are offered just because it's not seen as something viable, something--.

DM: That's gonna make--. Something lucrative.

CC: Right.

CB: Lucrative. Yeah, it's not, you know, what I'm gonna send you off to make me proud and come back home in-in that traditional sense.

CC: Yeah, I do think it-it's- depending on the actual institution. Like he said, I don't want to blame it on HBCUs 'cause your father went to Howard and he had op- more opportunities than I do at A&T, and I don't think it's a location thing either because I think UNCG has more opportunities for the arts than A&T. I think it's just the individual programs and does the school really take pride in those individual programs to fund it. Um, I don't- I just think A&T's issue is that we don't have- most--. If you walk around campus, we did a chalk mural, most people on campus didn't even know we had a visual arts program.

CB: You're at a technical school.

CC: Yeah.

CB: I remember when I was, um, when I first graduated, I went to NC State, which is pretty much, you know, the same thing except bigger and I was in a theater program there. I didn't know they had a theater — they had this tiny little theater, um, called Thompson theater in the back of the campus. And, um--.

LJ: I didn't even know they had a theater there.

CB: Yeah.

[Laughter]

CB: They had a theater, they had a theater program. I took like two classes in it. Um, I was in, I think, about three different plays. But it was really tiny and you never heard about it, it was never advertised. Like, you know, it only had, like, kind of, a handful of people that knew- that came. And so I think that issue is kind of, you know--.

CC: Yeah, it's from institution--.

CB: Especially being a big tech school, right? It's just- it's not on the radar.

CC: Yeah. And--.

BP: So I-I don't know--. I have a--. I don't know enough to be--. I know enough to be dangerous about this.

[Laughter]

BP: But, you know, to me, A&T has a lot more than I would have expected it to have, you know? And I don't, frankly, I don't even think of A&T as strictly a tech school because of the, you know, the business school and the art- and the art is part of arts

and sciences and so forth. And the thea- I mean, it has the theater, you know, it had- it-it has a- an art program. Whereas I would have thought, you know, back when your grandfather was at Howard, there probably would've been just only, maybe, two or three schools around the country that would have opp--. Probably back then, A&T --and I'm guessing I'm probably wrong-- had nothing.

DM: Well, when he went to school, it was only, I think, two colleges, two full universities, that Blacks could attend. I mean, Howard was one of the only full- they had a full business school, a full law school, a full medical school--.

BP: The liberal arts kind of stuff?

DM: Well, the-the major university for Blacks--.

BP: 'Cause it- 'cause it--. Well, now, Fisk--. You know Fisk--?

DM: Yeah.

BP: Had Aaron Douglas, and-and-and--.

DM: Well, it was only a few of 'em.

BP: But there were- but see, the--. There were probably just the few private schools as-as I'm guessing that, you know, that back then, there --in terms of Black folks-- you know, this whole thing of improving the race was very much kind of technical and, you know, farming and business and, kind of, Booker T. Washington kind of stuff. And-and so to me, ther-there's just--. Again, there's more opportunities for Black artists now just to be able to consider it that back then --and again, this may be a stereotype-- that it- that it was not as much (inaudible - 00:33:00) consider it.

DM: But it's kind of- isn’t a double edged sword? Because the reason that I- the reason I feel that the Black artists were so successful at that time was because they were so concentrated in one area and they fed off of each other--.

CB: So you have the Harlem Renaissance.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Right.

CB: Yeah, yeah.

DM: But, at the same time, to be considered an artist, you have to separate from that just Black genre and move on to other things which spread artists out to go to the white schools or the other schools that weren't HBCUs and had art programs that could offer them what they wanted or whatever they were looking for. It's- it’s kind of hard to have it both ways because the reason it was- I--. The reason I feel that it was so powerful and had such an impact back then is because it was concentrated. It was more in- more talent in the talent pool in that area and it wasn't but a few areas they could go to, so--.

BP: The pool was smaller.

DM: Yes.

BP: Talent was- talent--. Talent was there, talent’s here- here now.

DM: It's just more spread out now.

BP: Yeah.

CC: Do- so, do you think, like--?

DM: Or more opportunities for ‘em where they don't have to necessarily focus on Black art to begin with.

BP: And-and that's not to disagree with what you're saying, with whatever the talent pool is now, you look across the street to G and there's even more opportunities, I mean, there's still this kinda, ‘Is the- is the glass half full or half empty?’ kinda deal.

CC: Yeah, that’s true. And-and, honestly, taking consortium classes at UNCG even though the program is much, much bigger, as far as the visual arts program, I s- feel more, uh, I feel more close to my professors A&T. Like, um, McClinton, she really took me under her wing and made sure on one on one personal basis, was I okay as a, uh, a student, and a artist and a friend. And at UNCG it was just a strict student, professional relationship.

BP: Professional relationship.

CC: Even when I went to them and asked them for advice, it was a very, ‘Well, this is what you got to do,’ in a very cold environment. And I don't know if that was just- that's just the institution or I don't know if it was a racial barrier. I really don't know what that-that issue, you know, I never pinpointed what that really that issue was. And it wasn't just me, I had friends who took consortium classes also and got the same experience. So, I'm- not even the program size matter. It's just- and you know--.

DM: Was it like that for all races, too?

CC: Oh--.

DM: Did you ask white students if they--?

CC: I didn’t- I- I don’t- we don't have any- I don't--. We don't have but one white student in the- in--.

DM: Okay.

[Laughter]

CC: In the art department and I don't think she took consortium at U--. But, um--.

BP: So there's a white student in the department at- over at A&T?

CC: Yeah, it's like one.

BP: Okay.

CC: [Laughs]

BP: That's good.

LJ: And-and to- and to speak to that, my oldest started off as an art major, and then she switched art history at UNCG, and she said it was very similar. She said that her experience with her professors was, 'Okay, well, you got to do this, this, this, this and this.' And UNCG was her school of choice, don't…

BP: Mm-hmm.

[Laughter]

BP: I gotcha.

CB: Yeah.

LJ: Yeah, that was- I said, 'Okay, if that's what you wanna do.' But--.

BP: By the way, it's now a majority Black school.

LJ: Right.

[Laughter]

LJ: It is- it really is. And so, I was like, 'Okay,' but she didn't have that relationship. It took much- it was so much more for her to get in to talk to her professors to follow up. Like, she didn't feel like she was valued as a student, let alone as an artist.

CC: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CB: I will share — I went to several different schools. [Laughs] Um, I spent some time at both A&T and UNCG. Um, and when I had gone to UNCG, I was there for their, um, film and television program. It was like one of the worst year and a half- year and a half of, like, my academic life. Like, everything was by the bo- by the book and attendance, and this or that, and you have--. And I had transferred into there, like I wasn't a freshmen; I had credits under my belt. Like, I was basically, like, treated, like, a number thrown in a corner. And I move on to kind of the same program at A&T and I'm getting that experience where my advisor's, like, kinda, like, you know, talking stuff to me that my mom like, 'You need to do this, this, this,' and like, 'Get it on track and, like, you know, make it happen.' And, you know, I feel specifically when pursuing the arts, like, we need that. Like, we and, you know, a school like A&T, even though the program isn't big, like, they at least recognize that, like, you need that extra kind of encouragement, you might not be getting it from home, you might not be getting it from, like, your personal community, for the most part. Um, but, yeah, I-I definitely think that's just a thing and I don't even know if it's racial. I think it's just kind of an institutional…

DM: Could it be program size? Because I went to A&T and I was an engineering major and my teachers didn't have time to talk to me at all like that. I had to schedule an appointment to talk to him, too.

CB: [Laughs]

BP: So, which teacher though?

DM: Um, my--.

BP: Were they white or Black?

DM: Black.

BP: Really?

DM: Yeah.

BP: Okay.

DM: Yeah.

BP: ‘Cause in my department, there's a split between the white professor --well, not even white professors anymore-- but the non-Black professors and the Black professors. ‘Cause with the Black professors, I mean, I know we try to- we're--. And, you know, we're the parents away from home.

DM: Well, I’m not--. They were--.

BP: And put the- and but--.

DM: They were that way, but we just had so many that they couldn't- it couldn't go like it. That's what I'm saying. It’s not--. They were still nurturing and stayed on you like your parents did, but in the engineering department, it was so many more students versus the arts department that--.

BP: Well, I'm in the engineering department now and-and-and we- and we are facing that problem with having more students than the faculty can deal with.

DM: Yeah.

BP: But I-I ha- I have always felt at A&T there's a difference between the-the Black professors and the non-Black professors.

CC: Yeah. Yes, we have--. [Laughs]

BP: This whole professionalism that-that you talk about, um--. On the other hand, I would say — so I went to Stanford and MIT in-in my schools, and I-I was given personal attention at those schools, white and Black. And so, you know, and-and the- ‘cause the deal is those schools are, um, not factories, you know. By-but if you get to one of those places, then the professors are gonna, you know, take special interest in you and--. I-I mea- I went to Stanford, and the first semester, uh, I was trying to register something and the- and the woman said, ‘Oh, no, you will never hear “no” at this school.’

[Laughter]

LJ: Wow.

BP: ‘Okay.’

[Laughter]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

BP: And-and when I applied at MIT, the guy said, ‘Yeah, you come here, you're gonna have freedom.’ All right? So, at some- these--. I mean, that's the advantage of-of the elite schools. You know, the--. And-and that these other schools probably are more factories and-and just have this whole factory mentality to them. But that was the difference between the Black schools, that-that, you know, this was our legacy.

CB: Yeah.

DM: They have invested interest in you.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah, yeah.

CC: And-and we do have two new teachers in the art department who are both white, and--. I-I haven't had the, um, the opportunity to take them ‘cause, uh, right now, I'm not taking any art classes; I'm trying to focus on my sociology part of my degree. But just from the feedback of my peers, they're not as close to those two teachers as the previous teachers that they replaced. And when I asked questions, it’s becau--. It’s-it’s more like because they want to--. I guess they feel obligated to talk about Black issues in class. And they're getting away from studio work. I guess- and I guess, the- my peers feel like, ‘Okay, we understand that you would wanna talk about it to us, but we also do want to focus on art too.’ And in studio classes, they want to get really down deep and paint and start working, and they're taking these opportunities to talk about the same thing in two different classes. So, they say, like, in two different classes, they teach two different things, but they're talking about the same thing, and they haven't even been producing any work. So, and the- then the teacher- when you offer advice to the teachers and, like, pull them to the sidelines like, ‘Look, you know, we're not used to just talking in a studio class for three hours,’ they kinda get like, ‘These kids don’t know what they’re talking about,’ you know, ‘I’m-I’m hired--.’

CB: What they’re really trying to say is, ‘It’s not quite about your therapy--.’

CC: Yeah, like we’re not--.

CB: ‘We’re trying to--.’ [Laughs]

BP: Ah, ah, okay.

[Laughter]

CC: It’s almost like they’re-they’re here trying to, like--.

LJ: White guilt.

CC: You know, one of my--.

BP: Woah.

CC: Yeah, like one of my--.

[Laughter]

CC: One of my peers described it as a, he feel- he feels like he's doing missionary work or something.

CB: [Laughs]

LJ: Right.

CC: He's coming to a Black--.

DM: Like, come feel accepted.

CC: Yeah.

LJ: Right, right.

CC: He's trying to come to a Black school and trying to feel like, 'Well, I'm trying to help you guys.' And then, when he does talk about art, it's more contemporary based. You know, it's--.

BP: It splits. It just--.

CC: Yeah, it's just- it's a disconnect from the students.

BP: Wow.

CC: And we have--. And, honestly, the-the last, I think, my- director of the art department has been there for about six, seven years now. But he- the last- the only people he has been hiring since he's been there has been white professors. So we're not sure if--. And his-his wife is a director at UNCG. So we not sure if his- if he's trying to

make our department like UNCG, but it's starting to have a wedge between administration and students ‘cause we're not liking the direction where the department is going. We liked that closeness that the other two- the pre- the previous professors gave us that these new professors are just not- not, I guess, not incorporating into their practices. And then, um--.

LJ: And see that- that begs to question the…

CC: Divers--. Like, I don't like the-the whole diversity of--.

DM: [Laughs]

LJ: Right.

CC: The-the goal of making A&T diverse--.

DM: If you went to a Black school--.

LJ: Right.

CC: Yes, I--.

DM: You want it to be Black. [Laughs]

LJ: That-that begs to question--.

CC: Exactly. Espec--.

DM: That’s the reason I went to a Black school.

CC: Exactly.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LJ: Yeah, so that begs the question what's going on in the city as far as, you know, A--. You know, UNCG coming this way, ‘cau--. You know, and-and-and the fact that you can dial, from what I've heard, you have to make sure you dial the right

numbers or else you will get- you thought you were calling A&T but you'll get UNCG. Like, the- so there's- like, what is that?

CC: Is there something wrong with Black exclusivity?

CB: Well, as a local, there's been like decades, like, just rumor like when, um, UNCG changed their colors to blue and yellow or blue and gold, like, everyone was like, ‘Oh, yeah. It’s about to happen.’ Or--. [Laughs]

BP: That’s right.

CB: Like, and then when they--.

CC: Well, this new building right there, that's supposed to be a merger of the houses--.

[Crosstalk]

DM: Of both.

CB: Yeah, well, and that’s the second--.

BP: It- which is a merger.

[Crosstalk ends]

CB: Because they built- they built out over at A&T’s farm that’s, um--.

BP: That’s a gateway campus.

CB: Another, um, joint. And it's something, like, I don't know, I've always kind of had mixed feelings about it — at first I was kind of more for it because UNCG was kind of having their renaissance at the time and A&T was still, you know, pretty underdeveloped by comparison. But, you know, now, A&T is, like, kind of, you know, overhauled and done, like, a lot of work in, like, upgrading.

DM: A lot of work.

CB: And at first, I just kind of thought that there was a need to be attached to UNCG--.

DM: From twenty years ago to now.

CB: To get, you know, additional funding or attention. But, um, you know, now, A&T is, like, thriving on its own. Like, does it need to be like a mega, one entity university? Is that gonna, like, dilute the experience, um, of, you know, the students who are going to A&T (inaudible - 00:45:00)

BP: And how does all relate particularly to the art world? I mean, we-we've got a Black institution, white institution, kind of, two art institutions in the city, and this question we're asking about the art world as a whole versus the, kind of, the Black art world--.

LJ: I mean--.

BP: What's gonna come out on it?

LJ: I think it speaks a lot to the word “dilute,” um, because I know that, technically, UNCG is-is more of a classic-classically traini-training type of campus, especially when it comes to--.

BP: For the arts?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LJ: For the arts. Yes, it's very, very cold and classic and things like that. And A&T may not be as classical in its delivery, um, but that's what you're looking for, you're looking for a space to express that. So if we don't have that sacred space to express ourselves, and if we only can deliver via these technical routes, and via these classical

routes to be accepted, then that eliminates three quarters of who we are as a people, because we don't necessarily stay in the lines. You know, we'd beat to our own drums. You know, we-we create our own paints, and the magic of who we are will be lost in trying to fit into this little box of the Weatherspoon and whatever to be accepted. Like, it-it doesn't work for me.

[LJ intermittently agrees]

DM: But on the other hand, you already in a box, though. ‘Cause you already classi- I mean, you already in the “Black artists” box to begin with and that's what I think the goal should be to get out of to be considered an artist, not a labeled artist, not a Black artist, not a white artist, not a modern artist, or classical artists, but an artist.

CC: Do you think it’s-it's harder for Black person to become- have a title of classical or fine arts than our white counterparts. Like if a- if a white person created a portrait of- a-a regular just of-of herself, she's considered just an artist. But if I create a self portrait, then my self portrait is gonna be labeled as a Black por- self portrait.

DM: Well, it’s the style that the portrait is done in that makes it classical or Black art to me or to the consumer, ‘cause Black art tends to be a style. Or--.

BP: But when-when will Black art be considered to be high art, classical art, you hear what I’m saying?

DM: It is now.

BP: I mean--.

DM: It is now to cer--.

BP: In the market? No, no, I'm-I’m saying--.

DM: Yeah, in the market it is, as far as dollar value is concerned.

BP: No, no, not in the market. In-in terms of the critics.

DM: Oh.

BP: You know, that-that- to--. You know, that a Raphael or a Michelangelo or whatever, right? But a Black art- that is Black, right, and to recognize the spirit, the-the genius, the whatever, as a human [Laughs] value, you-you know, contributions to--.

DM: I get what you're saying.

BP: And it's Black. [Laughs]

LJ: Yeah, right.

BP: You know, it-it-it--. 'Cause, to me, when people say "Black art," it's a denigration. They say, 'Oh, well, it's good for Black--.'

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

CC: Mm-hmm.

BP: It-it's not--.

DM: It's like saying--.

CB: Yeah, why can't it--.

DM: 'You're pretty for a fat girl.'

CB: [Laughs]

MULTIPLE SPEAKER: Yeah.

LJ: Right.

BP: And Black. I want both.

CB: Yeah, yeah.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Right.

CC: Like, you have to--. It's a difference between saying, like, ‘the greats’ and then ‘the Black greats.’

BP: Yeah.

CC: You know, like, Pablo Picasso got his inspiration off Black African art--.

BP: See--. Yeah.

CC: But you wouldn't know that, it-it’s just Pablo Picasso.

CB: Yeah.

BP: Right.

CC: Um--. Yeah, like, I--. And--.

DM: Beethoven’s mother was a Moor.

LJ: Right.

CB: [Laughs]

DM: I mean--.

CC: But they-they-they refuse to accept that fact. [Laughs] Um, i-it’s kinda like, do I want to change my art to be considered, uh, fine arts or, you know--. I-I feel like I shouldn't have to change--. If my style is truly an expression of me, but I don't want to always have to put a #BlackArt to it to get out there, and it's like, it--. They put you in a box. You can't even get outside the box yourself without changing your own artwork, you know.

CB: I kind of like what you had mentioned earlier about your current piece that you, um, were saying that it is, um, you know, social and it-it is kind of, you know, that s-

what's expected and what's on trend now and I like the idea of you being able to maybe use that side of your work as like a bit of a Trojan horse. Like, you know, if that's what's selling, if that's what's starting- drawing interest, getting the conversation started, you know, hit ‘em with that, and, like, you know, once everyone, like--.

CC: Oh, yeah.

CB: You know, say what you do, you know?

CC: Oh, yeah, here I am.

CB: You know, gain, you know, some--.

CC: It’s like a musical artist--.

CB: Fame.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CC: You have to be very mainstream in your sound, and then after everybody knows your name, then you can start making the music that you want to.

CB: And then, it-it's unattractive and--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DM: Well, art is harder than that because even- they don't want the other stuff. They don't want the other works. They don't wanna that’s not what the- what--. ‘Cause, you know, when you doing a show, unless you have the whole exhibition, you only have a few pieces in there, and they want the pieces that are going to be of what you're known for. They don't- they don’t wanna take a chance, if you're known for sculpture, they don't wanna take a chance on one of your oil paintings; they're not going to do that,

that's just not how it is. You s--. In a- in a certain sense, you're going to group yourself into that- back yourself into that corner of only being labeled as that.

LJ: It’s a question of--. For me, it's a question of-of being authentic. Um, because I have a poem that around town people know me for. And I told folks, I said I didn't want to go here because that, for me, it's not my absolute authentic voice and it doesn't, for me as an artist, it's not my most technical piece. So you know, I'm-I’m looking for certain elements like any other artists to say, ‘Oh, this was great. And this is, like, the best thing I've done.’ And that's not the piece that people want. They want the lesser technical, they want the one that I didn't spend as much time on, and I'm going, ‘But I went to college for four years and this is not the one that you wanna read.’

CB: [Laughs]

LJ: They want- they want, you know, just like--. And it's a very typical, it's a very, you know, it has that particular cadence, it's socio-political. You know, it's one of those things that people like, ‘[Claps] Yeah, we--.’ I'm like, ‘No, I have other work that--.’

DM: ‘I moved past that.’

LJ: Right, that exemplify everything I've studied, everything that I've read, everyone that's influenced me as an artist, and you're not interested. So you wanna label me as a Black poet, I don't want to be labeled as a Black poet. I don't want to be labeled, I just want to be labeled as a poet. But that doesn't work; that doesn't get your name out there, it doesn't help you circulate, so you end up falling back into the Trojan horse type thing going, ‘Okay, I'll put this out here. And let's hope that you get to see the rest of- and appreciate the true body of my work with crossed fingers.’

CC: Right.

BP: Yeah.

CC: So that asks the question is, do you want to make art to make money? Or do you want to make the art that you truly want to make?

BP: Yes. Authentic is the work you used. Yeah.

[BP intermittently agrees]

CB: Or, I mean, is it ‘I gotta do this to pay the bills’? And, you know, work on the real stuff in that crowd, but then you risk, you know, being stuck with that.

DW: Well, that's what my grandfather did. He had a dual profession; he taught art and at the same time he did his artwork. So, he got to get- he got to make--. He was fortunate because he got to make money doing what he loved and still do the artwork that he loved at the same time. He wasn't forced to do what made money and not be able to do what he- his passion was. He didn't have to pick between the two.

LJ: So how can--?

DM: (inaudible - 00:53:23)

LJ: Piggybacking off of your grandfather, how can we encourage that in the community? Because that's kind of what we need is- are ways that artists can, you know--.

DM: You have to have a duality, because, it's like he said, you have to pick between, what, do you want to make money or do you want to do what you love? ‘Cause art is not a career that’s guaranteed to make money, unless you're a commercial artist.

CB: Yeah.

DM: It's not one of those things where you graduate with a degree and then you go to work and get a paycheck in two weeks. [Laughs] It's not one of those jobs. It's not a field of that. You have to make that choice.

CC: Unless you gon' be about making your body at work and then doing commissions when you get it.

DM: Yeah, that's--. I mean, if you're a commercial artist, say, you work for Exxon and you draw logos for them, you're making 'em a check every week, but at the same time, you're not doing what you love unless it's on the side.

CC: Right.

CB: Yeah.

DM: I don't think it's--. Well, I don't know of any artists that have done what they wanted to do full time from the start.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

DM: You have to make some kind of sacrifice--.

CB: I know--.

BP: Mm-hmm.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CB: It's funny because I know, um, two, um, in Brooklyn. Um, and I met, um, it's a girl and her husband (inaudible - 00:54:39) SCAD and I met her down at Guilford here in Greensboro. But, um, they're two fully full time, like, working with artists and it's almost an anomaly, like, because I knew other --and they're white-- and, um, when I first moved to New York, I met a lot of kids from the Pratt art program. All them are, like, waiting

tables, like, struggling, like, doing all that, but then I'm like, 'Alex and Michael. Oh, look. They're in Italy for, like, a residency for three months.' And like, 'Oh, look. They have another show.' Like, 'Oh, they're (inaudible - 00:55:18) And like, i-it's for the art world, like--. And I just- it's like, I kind of have known them so long that I knew that, like, they kind of, you know, went to school, went to grad school, and then came ou--. And I- it wasn't easy, I'm sure. But, you know, they're around my age and they're to this level where they're their full time artists and I'm just--.

BP: Hmm.

CB: Kind of amazed--.

DM: It's rare.

CB: That, um, you know, that-that it kind of showed me that it's possible, but at the same time, it's really difficult. And, like, due to the subjective nature and due to like kind of the segretory, you know, issues, it's just something I don't think that, you know, is ever on a Black kid's radar.

CC: Yeah.

CB: Um--.

DM: A lot of it comes from the collectors for the commercial --not commercial-- but for private art and things like that. It's the collector that- uh, uh, the collector can make or break an artist. If you find one--. 'Cause my grandfather found one collector i-called Heritage Gallery in California, and they bought a-a tractor trailer load full of work from him. And ever since then, he has had sales that have almost tripled. But until they bought his work, it was like the most he had done was commissioned work around the city and things like that. Like, the city would commission him to do a painting for the

courthouse or the Natural Science Center would commission him to go out there and do something, but that was it until the collector bought it and showed his work to other people and they said the collector has influence ‘cause they said they liked it. And people looked at him, as far as his collection and what he had already collected, and he held the value from my grandfather. It wasn't my grandfather's work that held the value, it was his word on my grandfather's work to his circle of friends who bought the work.

LJ: Wow.

BP: Interesting. Interesting. I- and it--. So here's the question, ho-*How has the* colle-*collectorship of contemporary art by people of color changed in the past few decades?* A-and was this guy even…?

DM: He was not Black--. He was--.

BP: So he was not? Okay, so--.

DM: No.

BP: But X that, but you know--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DM: It’s getting harder for Bla- it’s getting harder for people of color to collect works because the-the people with the money are not Black and they're seeing that these products are being sold. Like at this point, I can honestly say I don't know too many African Americans that can afford to purchase my grandfather's work because of what the market value is set- that was set by the guy that bought his work at the Heritage Gallery.

BP: ‘Kay let me read this again, ‘cause this is- this is- this is actually- it’s-it’s on point. It says, “the collectorship of contemporary art by people of color--.”

DM: Yes. It's-it's harder to get it. You can't--.

LJ: Right.

BP: In the past few decades?

DM: 'Cause you can't afford it.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

DM: It's gone up so much in value--. Before, the only people that my grandfather would sell works to were people of color and they could come and af-afford to buy one of his paintings for $1,500, $2,500.

LJ: Right.

DM: Now, since that guy has bought his stuff and it's been sold on the open market for over $35,000, $40,000, everything-

LJ: We can't--.

DM: No, nobody can--. It's--.

CB: [Laughs]

[Crosstalk]

DM: You can't afford it.

CB: It's almost like your grandfather's work has been

CC: Even on- even on a small scale, I get people--.

DM: Yeah, I mean--.

CB: Like, gentrified.

[Crosstalk ends]

DM: I can sell pri--. I sell prints now for $2,500, where he was selling original works hisself for $2,500. Now, I sell prints for $2,500 all day long. And they fly.

CC: Wow. I gotta- I have trouble--.

DM: It's hard to--. The more and more- the more value that gets put on it, the more the collectors want to buy it because they think that the Black community doesn't have an awareness of how much it's worth. So they come in and buy your whole collection. Like, say--. And most of the Black artists that have valued works are getting older. So, like my grandfather, if I didn't know the value of his work, when he passes, a collector would come in and offer me $75,000, $100,000 for his whole collection, and he'll take it and hold it for ten years and turn around and release a piece at a time for $40,000 or $50,000 at a piece. And that's what's been happening. I mean, a lot of Black artists are losing their works like that. [Pause] It was some guy that went down and bought quilts, the, um, the quilts from Alabama. He bought every one of 'em for maybe $300 or $400 and released 'em years later for thousands of dollars apiece. The slave--. You know what I'm talking about?

BP: Yeah.

LJ: Yeah, I know what you talkin' bout.

DM: He went down there and bought every single of 'em.

BP: 'Cause those quilts- but I think those quits where from Greensboro, Alabama.

LJ: Yeah, Greensboro, Alabama.

DM: Yeah.

[Laughter]

LJ: Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DM: Yeah, but bought every one of them that he could find in the ba- he went in the backwoods and bought all of ‘em, and then turned around and released them. So he held on to ‘em for I don't know how long before he sold them, but then sold them for so much that no Black person could afford to buy ‘em. I mean, realistically. [Pause] It's hard to find Black people that are in a position to spend that type of money on artwork--.

LJ: Or--.

CC: And if they are, they’re not appreciating Black art--.

DM: No. No.

CC: They’re appreciating the--.

DM: The material things and not artwork.

CC: Mm-hmm.

DM: They would rather spend that money on a car or house or something like that than invest it in a piece of art.

LJ: But I heard, was it the other day, Lil Wayne owed some- some back taxes--.

CC: Oh, he got his 20- uh, like, 12 something--.

LJ: But he had been investing in art.

CC: Yeah, and then he had his art repossessed.

LJ: So they came in and took part of his collection. Now, that's not a conversation that we as a community have about where to invest your money and how this is going to only appreciate, um, over time--.

CB: Yeah.

CC: They don't see art as an asset.

LJ: Right.

CC: They don't- they don’t- they see art as decoration, but not an asset.

LJ: (inaudible - 01:01:08) no.

DM: Well, it's not talked about that much in the Black community that art is an asset or art does appreciate with value over time. It's not- it's more so stocks and bonds and things of that traditional investments.

CB: And I never really thought about that. But, like, honestly, yeah, like if you buy a piece, nine times out of ten, then that- it- it's-it’s not gonna do anything but appreciate with age, like--.

LJ: Right.

DM: It's like real estate, it goes up in value.

LJ: Right. Like when I first bought my house a few months ago, there was a piece I saw last year by a local artist and I told him, I said, um, ‘When I buy my house, I want that--.’

BP: ‘In my house.’

LJ: ‘In my house.’ And he was like, ‘Huh?’ And people were like, ‘What?’ I said, ‘Don't worry about how much I paid for it.’

CB: [Laughs]

LJ: This is a one of a kind original --that I know-- like I looked at it, and I was like, This is what I want. And then there were, you know, as I move along and figure out what

I want on my walls, I want in o--. And am I willing to pay for it? Yeah, I'm willing to pay for it because of the appreciation. It doesn't exist, there's only that one. Thank you, 'preciate it. You know, but we don't, again, we don't have that conversation. We don't have conversations with young people, you know, in schools, where they're doing away with arts programs and things like that, about things like residencies. They don't talk about Elsewhere.

CB: Yeah, you don't know.

LJ: Right, you don't know. So you're- if your art teacher is begging you for art supplies, she's not gonna have a conversation even with the brightest of their- of their kids with, 'Well, maybe you should go down to Elsewhere and-and see what's going on,' or 'Maybe you should go over to A&T to see- just to talk to the art department.' That conversation is not going on.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm-hmm.

CB: And I think--. We, um, just went to a conference in Minnesota for- it's kind of a gathering of alternative art organizations from around the country. And, um, I asked kinda the same question about, um, you know, getting to youth or exposing, um, children of color to art, kind of at a younger age in a larger — and I know, it's definitely easier said than done, especially with all the cuts in education. But, like, as artists, maybe trying to find new and, like, radical ways to kind of, like, go into these, like, communities that, like, don't have access and just, not even in a really formal setting, just some kind of exposure. Like you said, knowing, like, what a residency is, you know, when you're in high school or middle school. Like, knowing that there are these different kind of opportunities that you can pursue. Knowing the game behind applying for

residency, applying for grants, um, you know, getting support for your program, like, having more of that information available at a young age, then that's at least gonna give you know, more kids an idea of what they can do, and it's gonna be an option for more than I think it's classically been--. That's just happens to be, I think, due to my kind of personal experience, that's like one thing that I would like effect, like, in the art world is being able to, like, kind of bring in more, um, youth, especially, um, Black kids, kids of color, that just aren't getting the exposure, um, from home, so.

CC: And if we- and the kids are smart enough to get it if we just expose it to them. I'm- during the summer, me and a friend of mine did a-a mural project, a summer camp with kids, and we was talking- we was highlighting, um, Kehinde Wiley. I love him, completely love him. So he was highlighting them and showing the kids samples of his work and stuff. And I had one kid email me and tell me that he was watching *Empire* and he'd seen Kehinde Wiley right there on *Empire*. And that made me so, like, happy. And like see--.

LJ: Good.

CB: Yeah.

CC: As long as you expose it to them, they're- they have at least to know how to identify it when they see it. You know, if they would have never took the art camp with me they wouldn't even know who Kehinde Wiley was. And I guess they-they limit arts to say that arts is not as important as STEM programs or technology programs, but it is- it's important for--.

DM: No, it depends on what community it's in, because in the white community, art is incorporating everything.

CC: True. And--.

BP: So, this question about STEAM. So STEM is now STEAM.

CC: STEM. STEAM. That's STEAM, I called it STEM, but--. [Laughs]

DM: But that's--.

BP: No, no. STEM with arts.

CC: Oh, STEM with art.

BP: Is now called STEAM.

CC: STEAM, oh, okay.

BP: That's the new thing.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Oh, okay.

BP: STEM is- STEM without arts is-is incomplete.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Okay.

CC: Yeah. Uh, going back to my high school, my high school did nothing when it came arts at all. I didn't even--. I went to Dudley. We had--.

DM: I went to Page and we had an extensive arts program.

CB: (inaudible - 01:06:25)

DM: Yeah, we did.

CC: But when I--.

BP: At Page, but not Dudley.

DM: No.

CC: No. When I started at Dudley we had two art teachers. And now, when I went back to talk to my old art teacher, they were like, ‘No, we only have one art teacher now.’ And we used to have an art, um, after school program. Like a art- like a art club or whatever that I was in, they don’t have that anymore.

CB: That’s crazy because Dudley is like Black (inaudible - 01:06:48) like--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CC: Like, right there. And just, like, why are we limi--? It's like, I-I-I used art growing up as, um, basically like a self reflection. When I seen Black artists and how much they appreciated the Black experience and made me appreciate my own Black experience. So it's like they’re- when they limit programs such as this, they almost limit the self identity of these children. Like, um, I guess it gave the-the child so much, um, pride to know an artist and know and recognize it on TV. Like, that-that was a kind of self appreciation that they can identify with. Like, ‘I wanna be an artist and I know artists that’s on TV, on a national program. I can do what they can do.’ Um. Like, I-I’d- honestly, when I started at A&T, I started as a biology major, because I have a-a father who went to, uh, engineering school to air- you know, to fix airplanes. So, and so--.

DM: That was my major, aerospace engineering.

CC: Yeah, aerospace engineering.

[Laughter]

DM: That was my major.

[Laughter]

BP: STEAM. STEAM. [Laughs]

CC: And you know, and back in my--. Like, growing up, I was told by him like, ‘You have to go into these programs. You have to--.’ You know, I-I went as pre-med, so my father tellin’ me, ‘That’s good. You gon’ make money.’ And as soon as I switched out, it was like, ‘I love you, but you gon’ be broke your whole life.’And it was like a, ‘Well, you know what, Dad, I'ma do what I love.’

CB: Yeah--.

BP: That’s right, that’s right.

CB: It’s like, you need to be--.

BP: That's right.

CB: Open. And especially, that's when you're, you know, approaching your adulthood and, like, discovering who you are, you need to--. ‘Well, that might be, you know, my path,’ but…

CC: Mm-hmm.

CB: [Laughs]

CC: And even, like, uh, relating back to, um, like, my boyfriend's a videographer, and he wants to go into film and make his own movies and does his own scripts. But you kind of--. And, you know, he made like two big projects and he’s entering into these film festivals and stuff and wasn't getting accepted. So now he's- he ha- is forced to go into these like rap mu--.

DM: Editing jobs.

CC: Yeah, editing rap music videos that he dreads, you know. But that's the only thing that's making him money.

DM: While he tryna do live his vision.

CC: While he's trying to do what he's--.

DM: Yeah.

CC: You know, so, it's like he's almost like, 'Well, the-the critics and the feedback I'm getting off my pictures, I might have to change it to make it more accepting of not just Blacks but whites too,' just to get into these films, you know, film, you know, um, film festivals and stuff. And it's almost disheartening, you have to change who you are just for them to know who your name is--.

DM: Or create your own market, one of the two.

CC: True.

DM: If you can't fit in, then create your own market. Create your own festival where it only highlights the Black artists that are doing the things that are you doing- along the lines that you're doing.

CC: Mm-hmm. And-and I think his, um, issue with Black film festivals is that they were looking for a specific message in the m- in the movies, they want to highlight something in the Black experiences whether it's a dysfunction in Black love or social justice or if like--.

DM: Something stereotypical.

CC: Yeah, something stereotypical that he--.

BP: Blac-blaxploitation.

CC: Yeah.

LJ: Right.

BP: Yeah.

CC: So, there's even a barrier within our own community that we have to break out of. Like, just because you're Black, you don't have to always relate to some stereotypic role that they want- that Blacks a lot of time wants to see.

BP: Mm-hmm.

CC: A lot of times, we want to see stuff that we limit ourselves with.

CB: Yeah.

LJ: And see, that was my mother's struggle as-as an artist be--. And that's why she bounced--. She didn't want to go to an HBCU specifically because she didn't want to be boxed in. And she knew that because she was choosing sculpture, and it was, um--. I forgot the word for it, but it's-it's, you know, it just- does--. It's not of people, it's just kind of-of shapes and forms.

DM: Abstract?

BP: Abstract.

LJ: Abstract. Yeah, it was abstract. So, really? Really? She's like, 'Uh-uh, they're not gon' get it.' And she kn- she knew that. She understood that. So, she was like, 'I'm in a very small--.' So, she had to go a different route. Which is unfortunate that you have to choose as --especially as an African American artist-- to be outside of your own community just to be appreciated, without compromising who you are as a Black person. Like, who wants to live like that? Like, who wants to struggle with consciousness and self awareness and expression, like that-that shouldn't be a part of--. It really shouldn't be a part of the-the whole entire conversation. You just want to be an artist.

BP: Mm-hmm.

CC: Yeah, it's like I love being Black, but let me stop being Black for a minute so I can make some money.

CB: Well, I have like a weird--. I went to Southeast, so I was like back in the country.

[Laughter]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CB: Um, and so, you know, I grew up in this like, majority, like, white environment from elementary school to the day I graduated high school. Um, but I kind of had a situation where it's like, I lived in, like, the Black suburbs, but I drove into the country to go to school, um, in this, like, majority white school. But then I would, um, in high school, I came to like--. We were sort of- basically I was like, kind of in and out of a bunch of different populations and I volunteered with, like, different youth councils and stuff, so I was kind of exposed to a lot of different areas coming up. And so, it's- I mean, it's been a blessing and a curse. But, um, I kind of had that moving from group to group, clique to clique, if you will. And I have, like, an expectation, if you- maybe, of, like, I wanna see Black people at plays when I was working at (inaudible - 01:12:34). I wanna see Black people doing residencies at Elsewhere because I know they exist and I know that it's possible. And so, it's not, kind of, it's- rather than like a victory, that we have more Black people or we're more diverse, it's like a fulfilled expectation, um, for me, and I've chosen to keep that point of view, like until it becomes so. [Laughs]

CC: Right, right.

LJ: Wow. Love that. I totally love that.

CC: Yeah.

LJ: Totally.

CC: Whew.

CB: Well, I loved this conversation.

CC: Yeah, it was a nice conversation. [Laughs]

LJ: Right.

BP: Me too. Me too. Very nice.

CC: Yeah.

LJ: Right.

CC: Look at some more of these cards.

[Laughter]

BP: So we covered-covered all mine.

[Pause]

CC: Mm.

LJ: I think we covered most everything. In, you know, in some sort of general…

CC: Yeah.

BP: We touched on it.

LJ: Yeah, we touched on- we touched on it.

BP: These are some nice--.

CB: I kept this one because--.

CC: Oh, yeah.

BP: Which one was that?

CB: Yeah, it was a little too close to home, um--. [Laughs]

CC: (inaudible - 01:13:41)

BP: [Laughs]

CB: Got my job, um, in the coming months, so. [Laughs]

BP: No, that--. So the next time we get together… [Taps]

CB: [Laughs] Yes.

BP: [Laughs]

CC: Mm-hmm.

LJ: Hope-hopefully, they'll be in--.

BP: That-that one starts us off.

CB: Yeah.

CC: Right.

LJ: I like these--. I-I think all over the city, they're doing these sort of roundtable--.

CC: Discussions.

LJ: Conversations. And what I've found in my experience is that depending on whom is leading the conversation, we don't go anywhere with it. Like, there is no vision for where this conversation can go.

CB: What's next?

LJ: Yeah, what's next? So, I've gone to like two or three and I just kinda go, 'Okay, and?' We all came here together, so what's the next step? I don't want to meet to meet to meet.

CC: (inaudible - 01:14:31)

LJ: Right, right. I don't- I don't want that. We-we've come up with some great, sort of, strategies, you know, underneath. So, yay, let's meet and let's go.

BP: So be- so before we finish, let's-let's just take a moment on-on this question: *How do we continue to have this conversation year round?* And, *Brainstorm.* What-what- what are some next steps?

LJ: Um, well, she's led an art camp.

CC: Mm-hmm.

LJ: I've done summer camps. You have Elsewhere. Um, you have access to talking about the experience of being- of what it takes to really get your work going--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DM: Well, the shows I produce, we actually--. Like, the next show I have is January 15 at Hayti Museum in Durham and we're gonna have students come in --the exhi-exhibition lasts three months-- during those three months, students will come in periodically, and they will actually get a chance to talk to my grandfather. High school students, college students, elementary school students, to talk to him to find out what he went through or ask him questions about how do you get started being an artist and what was some of the struggles that he went through. I mean, just to sit down and be able to talk to somebody who's actually been through it and get his opinion or his view, or just--.

BP: And you know what, I'd-I'd like to have some discussions between him and folks like Coka who are having those problems right now.

LJ: Right.

BP: Right. So the-the kids in-in elementary school for them, that's still kind of a pipe dream ahead of ‘em, and they-they might be imagined stuff, but you're going through this shit right now, right?

CC: Mm-hmm.

LJ: Right.

BP: So how can your grandfather share his wisdom, you know, with them?

LJ: Right.

DM: He was and administrator, so he has an- a outlook on that, too. He started the art department in Bennett and Guilford college.

CB: Oh, wow.

CC: Okay, that’s great.

BP: Yeah, yeah. And-and so he's had some experience with young folks [Laughs] tryna- tryna make that first step.

DM: He started an art department at both schools. He’s still tenured- he's Professor Emeritus at Guilford College still.

CC: Okay.

BP: Yeah.

CC: Yeah, I would--.

LJ: So, see that--.

CC: Love to come- I’ve gotta get that-that--. January 15th you said?

DM: Mm-hmm.

CC: I gotta get that information so I can make sure--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DM: I think is just exposure, though. The earlier you start, the more they see of it, the more it becomes a part of their world, ‘cause that's how it started with me. I used to go to art galleries when I was four or five, he would drag me along with him. That's how I learned about art. That's where I studied art --I mean, not studied-- but that's where I got exposed to it.

CC: Right.

BP: Gi-give us two minutes.

Unknown: Oh.

[Laughter]

CC: Yeah.

BP: Got one more question we tryna deal with.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DM: I mean, I know I wasn't an average case because he wasn an artist, but that's where it came from. Every summer, we would- I went to the Smithsonian in D.C. or I would go to the galleries in New York where he was doing exhibitions, but I would see it every summer, every year. I will go to class with him when I didn't have school. I would sit out at Guilford college in his class. I would go to the firing room in the kiln with him. I mean, I was exposed to it from a young age.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CB: And a lot of that stuff you mentioned is open. Like, it’s open. There aren't even, like, barriers of cost to, like, a lot of that. And so…

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Right.

BP: But you know, we've-we've talked about authenticity. We've talked about this whole business of, kind of, the-the-the-the in-in- circles, the inner circle of Black art versus the outer circle of the greater world and stuff. What-what do we- what do we do about any of that? What-what's an action that we can take in response to some of the discussions that we've had today?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DM: Some kind of programs where- in the mainly minority schools or schools that the children aren't going to be exposed to the arts as much as other schools. Like he said, I went to Page we had an excellent arts program. And she said she went to Dudley and they didn't hardly have one at all. In the schools that it's not there or areas where it's not available, those programs need to be made readily available just like we have sports. Just like they can go play basketball and football and baseball, they need to be able to go get in a liberal arts program or fine- I mean, a visual arts program. It needs to be there.

CB: and it does need to come from--. Like, it needs to be, kind of, on site, because, I mean, I was in the country in Southeast and I had to go to (inaudible - 01:18:57) to take advanced theater, and I could do that 'cause I had a in a car. Um, and that was, like, accessible to me. Now, I don't know, I'm sure if they had like a more convenient busing system worked out now. But, you know, it's one of those things, it would have been a whole lot easier to have that and those kinds of resources--.

LJ: On site.

CB: On campus and not have to drive twenty minutes into the city.

CC: And just the art programs itself, when you teach art history and art appreciation, just don't teach about the white great artists, you need to teach about Black artists — and don't call them Black artists and call them artists, and they're just as appreciated as the white counterparts.

END OF RECORDING

Transcribed by Miwa Lee 4/29/22

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