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Participants:
ANTOINE WILLIAMS
MARCIA JONES
JASIATIC ANDERSON
RYAN WILLIAMS
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Preface

The following conversation was hosted at the McColl Center, facilitated by Heather Hart. Consent was given by the participants to have their conversation recorded and transcribed.

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START OF RECORDING

RW: We--. Well, we just, like--. So, for instance, um, it's just a question and w-right, and we just talk about it.

MJ: Okay.

AW: Yeah.

MJ: And then we move on to the next question?

AW: Yeah, we could talk about it for the hour, or, if you want, we could just go through however--. I mean--.

MJ: Okay.

AW: It's pretty informal.

MJ: Okay.

AW: But, um-- [Mic movement] And just, I guess, before we get started, just for prosp--. Just so they'll know, like, who's- who you- kinda say your name.

MARCIA JONES: Woah. Oh, Marcia Jones.

[Banging noise]

JASIATIC ANDERSON: Jasiatic Anderson.

RYAN WILLIAMS: Ryan Williams - put some respek on it.

[Laughter]

AW: With a 'k'.

RW: (inaudible - 00:00:35) With a 'k'.

AW: Um--. [Laughs]

[Chuckles]

ANTOINE WILLIAMS: Antoine Williams. A'ight, y'all see anything that's- you wanna talk about or something?

JA: Oh, I definitely see something. [Shifting of cards]

AW: Alright.

MJ: Oh, go ahead.

AW: Solid--.

JA: Yeah. Um, so, *What kinds of public art do you find valuable in Charlotte?* This is very--. [Taps table three times]

[Chuckling]

JA: Interesting important one, especially as it pertains to the conversation.

Unknown: (inaudible - 00:00:59)

JA: Well, um, I guess public art is something that I think about a lot because I travel a lot. And so, um, it's interestin' when I may listen to NPR or read different things and they talk about the public art, which, in so many ways, um, specifically speaks to one of the reasons I think we're here, which is to talk about Black artists in Charlotte and how that shows up. And so there's an interesting divide when it comes to [Chuckles] to public art in particular. Right? Um--.

RW: Yeah.

JA: And so- and so that's-that's- you know, that's-that's why that question is, like, blaring.

AW: Yeah, it's-it's weird to me when it's a neighborhood that's been gentrified, right? It used to have, like, for Brown people living there. Now, it's, like, upper middle class white people. And then they, I don't know, try to make it help by bringing in, like, graffiti type (inaudible - 00:02:01)--.

JA: Token artists.

AW: Yeah. Yeah, it's like--.

JA: They bring in token art so they can, you know, cut off the fat of their guilt.

AW: Yeah.

JA: Like, 'Oh, but we have this lovely Mexican do this mural.'

AW: Exactly.

MJ: Right.

JA: 'We're okay, we're exonerated.'

AW: Yeah.

JA: And often times I feel like Charlotte is not even- they don't even go that far.

MJ: They're not even that own (inaudible - 00:02:20).

JA: They're not even going that deep. They're bringing in white artists that are usually in the forefront of the city, usually the ones getting the grants, and they're having them tell a story.

MJ: Mm.

JA: Or tell a story about history.

MJ: White washing them (inaudible - 00:02:37)

JA: Which is always an interesting dynamic in Charlotte because Charlotte destroys so much of its history and legacy.

MJ: Mm-hmm. They're embarrassed.

RW: Yup.

MJ: Sorry.

RW: No, absolutely. I agree.

MJ: I'm from the outside on the- coming in, so.

AW: Where you coming from?

MJ: I came from Atlanta, but from Atlanta I came from LA; LA I went to-- you know--. I'm-I'm, every city, I'm-I'm pretty much.

RW: (inaudible - 00:2:59).

MJ: So--.

RW: Yeah.

MJ: But somehow I ended up here.

RW: I don't know [Clears throat] I think that, um--. Yeah, I-I agree with you, J. Um, a lot of the art is, you know, kinda in response to, I guess the, uh, the-the destruction of the actual history. It is kinda- almost has a- like a artistic appeal to it in the sense that it evokes like a conversation, you know? Like, a lot of the architecture and whatnot, but, um--. Yeah, they throw all these murals up and stuff and try to make the city look pretty for these new people to come in. No offense to, like, anybody that's new to the city.

MJ: Yeah. No-no, no-no, I'm-I'm not fooled.

RW: Mm-hmm. [Laughs] But, uh, it's just like I--. That-that-that gets to me, like- the fact that they'll be alright with, like, putin' all these new pieces up and stuff and, like, having this image of what the city is now while, you know, destroying what-what really made the city itself. But--.

MJ: What made the city though? That's what I'm tryna understand.

JA: [Laughs]

RW: Many people have.

AW: Yeah.

MJ: (inaudible - 00:03:59)

AW: And these are the people that ask. And they're both born and raised.

MJ: Yeah, cause I'm, like, 'That's what I'm tryna figure out.' It seems as though, from the outside looking in, and I've been here for quite a long time now.

JA: Sure.

MJ: I mean, I'm going on three, four years and I still can't wrap my head around it. Like, I'm having a hard time understanding where I belong as an artist--.

RW: Mm-hmm.

MJ Here in the city.

JA: Sure.

MJ: Um, I think, um--. [Pause]

RW: In--.

MJ: It's just a serious divide. There's a serious separation between, like, Black art, white art, good art, bad art - acceptable where all the money is going.

JA: And-and I think--.

RW: Mm.

MJ: At the top of that is corporate art. And so--.

MJ: Right.

JA: A lot of these--.

AW: Yeah

JA: Pieces that you see in the city are very well thought out, functional, touchy-feely--.

MJ: They're corny as fuck.

JA: Corny pieces. And so one of the things that I think--.

MJ: Jeff Koons, like forever--.

RW: Mm-hmm.

MJ: Made a mark, and, like, people were like, 'Let's go with that forever'.

JA: Oh, yeah. There's lots of things--.

MJ: It's kitschy.

JA: That they're like--. Yeah, absolutely. And, um, one of the things--.

MJ: Didn't mean to cut you--.

JA: No, u-um, one of the things that strikes me is how non-Black the murals are in Charlotte. They're disgustingly non-Black and non-Brown compared to other cities.

[Crosstalk]

MJ: But, this whole city is, though. Out--. But not, like--.

JA: Yeah.

MJ: As far as the--.

JA: Ish.

MJ: Crevices. Ish, right? It's--.

JA: Ish.

[Crosstalk ends]

MJ: Underground-underground. Like, all the color is underground.

AW: You-you mean like where it's presenting itself.

MJ: Right.

RW: Are you talking about that?

MJ: Right, right.

JA: Well, it presents itself because, like, you know, the people that i- er, uh, seeing--. You know, the people who-who are positioned in a top tier--.

MJ: Mm-hmm.

JA: Even-even within--.

MJ: With access.

JA: Within the art community--.

MJ: Yeah [Speaker intermittently agrees]

JA: With access, are white. But that doesn't mean that y- you know, that people of color are not here and are not thriving and they're not doing, it's just that it hasn't, you know, it hasn't qualified. It hasn't--. You know. The mobility in Charlotte for Brown and Black people is a very interesting subject, and the numbers speak to it.

RW: You right. What you--. 'Cause there are people who, like- that live on, like, the West Side and don't even know anything about what's happenin' on the South Side--.

JA: Oh, absolutely.

RW: That's a- that's a crazy thing to think about, you know, and leap--. Even like my family- like, they pretty much stay on the certain side of the city--.

JA: Right.

RW: So, they're not exposed of, like, all the opportunities that are happenin' in the other places in the city.

JA: Sure.

RW: And that's just a- it's a crazy thing to think about. Yeah, mobility.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JA: And-and so one of the things that I always talk about when I'm speaking about Charlotte and access and mobility and exposure, is we have a very failed and flawed transportation system. And that's, you know, that's-that's at the root of-of a--.

MJ: Is that with all the--?

JA: Lot.

MJ: Is that with all the- is that what all this construction is?

JA: That is what the construction is--.

MJ: And so we're gonna see it, like--.

JA: So they're trying. And-and you can- you can feel the things that are changing and shifting, I don't know if they're changing and shifting necessarily for us, but-but you can feel a change and a shift; and transportation is at the core of that.

MJ: (inaudible - 00:06:48)

JA: Like, that's a big piece because most of the Brown and Black people you know will say that they live in University. Well, from Univers--.

MJ: Yeah, [Laughs] everybody who's there apparently.

JA: Yeah. So from university to the center of the city--. You know what I mean? Like, if there's no easy access and no easy way to get there, especially if you have public transportation, ch.

MJ: How do you feel- how do you guys feel about this city becoming international before it becomes black and white? Before the Black people were really accepted and gained the fair access? 'Cause wh--. From the outside looking in, it seems as though it's gonna just check or skip over and just go international.

JA: [Chuckles].

RW: I don't know. You think so? I mean, well, I know there's, like--.

MJ: Abs--. Like, I--. Like, a- like, again, just- I've seen, like, every community making marks. Like, the-the, um, South American community--.

JA: Mm-hmm.

MJ: You know, Panamanian, like African, like f-for real, for real. Like, Asian, Filipino, like, they're-they're- they all got their own little pockets. And it's like--.

[MJ intermittently agrees]

JA: Right, but there's no Black community because that was all destroyed. Like, there wasn't many cities, but--. I mean, so then if you talk about the history and you talk about Brooklyn and that area, right? Being completely demolished--. And I mean, that's the story all over the country, right? Whether it from Black Wall Street to Brooklyn to wherever. But, um, I think, like, when you talk about upward mobility and that happening among Black and Brown people, yeah, Charlotte is like- it's [Chuckles] again, the numbers say it's not the- it's not the place.

MJ: It's money.

JA: Right?

MJ: It's the money city.

AW: Mm.

JA: Yes--.

RW: Yup.

JA: It's not really the place.

MJ: It's a money city. Wow.

RW: Mm-mm.

[Tapping]

MJ: Interesting.

AW: Y'all got another one?

MJ: Um [Pause] This one might be interesting, but I don't know what we're supposed to discuss about it: *Being the only Black person in the room*.

RW: Oh.

MJ: That's just one of the cards.

AW: Uh, yeah, no. I--.

MJ: Is that a conversation you wanna have?

[Crosstalk]

JA: I can have it.

RW: What, like in terms of art, or just like--?

MJ: I don't know, I guess it's all. It doesn't say in terms of what.

AW: I guess it doesn't--.

RW: I like--.

JA: Doesn't matter.

RW: I like this one right here, though.

[Crosstalk ends]

MJ: Yeah.

RW: That's a good question. You think so?

JA: Here, read it.

RW: *Describe the exhibition scene, local vs. International. Discuss support systems for your work: commercial, community, institutional--.*

MJ: That's a smart ass question.

RW: *Governmental.*

AW: [Laughs]

JA: Oh, yeah. It's a very layered question.

MJ: It is. Can we do it in a digestible?

JA: [Chuckles]

AW: Well, I- eh, yeah, I just remember, like--. It's so weird. So, years ago when we was doing the God City thing, like, we were just, like--. Me and J were just talking about like-like how hard it is to make it as an artist in Charlotte. Like, in the city, it's just so hard. It's just really a weird thing, like when we was doing God City, we would get love from, like, other people in the community. But, like, institutions, all these other places--. I don't know, they just- it's-it's a way of look--. They just look at you as if, like, you don't belong here, because for whatever reason--.

MJ: Wait. Charlotte?

AW: Yes.

MJ: Okay.

AW: Yes. I mean--.

MJ: Yeah.

AW: And--. I don't know, like it- like back then it was just such a struggle, right?

MJ: Are you fr--. Where you from originally?

AW: I'm from, like, Red Springs. It's a really small town; it's in North Carolina.

MJ: Okay.

AW: But I went to school at USC Ch- uh, Charlotte.

MJ: You went--? Okay.

AW: I was here for, like, seven, eight years. And it was just so hard; it's like, damn, like, I had to--. The shit that we used to have to do, like-like do our own shows, curate while all this stuff, you know--.

RW: Get interest in people coming to the shows and everything, and, you know, figuring out how to--.

JA: Sure. And then the people that are interested in your shows are not necessarily the people that are buying artwork.

MJ: Right.

AW: Exactly.

JA: Right. And so--.

MJ: And just, like, 'I'm gonna go to--.'

JA: (inaudible - 00:10:32) uh--. Yeah.

MJ: 'Something interesting tonight.'

JA: Charlotte--.

AW: Yeah.

JA: Charlotte for me, um, in terms of that has been a very, like--. I mean, you was- you were saying earlier like h- like how do you survive in the city? I survive in the city, like--.

MJ: Y-you do. You're a--.

JA: I do.

MJ: Hustling mother fucker, you're like--.

JA: I do. I--.

MJ: Hardest working woman I know--.

JA: [Laughs]

MJ: In the city. And I don't even hang out with you like that.

JA: Yeah, right. It's--. Well, it's--.

MJ: (inaudible - 00:10:51)

JA: It's a plan. It's-it's-it's a very strategic, like--. But- but I will- I will say, like, in terms of, like, the art space of things and feeling inspired. Like, I--. You know--.

MJ: You're so sufficient.

JA: Charlotte doesn't do it for me. (inaudible - 00:11:06) I do it.

MJ: You travel like a beast.

JA: Yeah. Well, I have to.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: To breath--.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: In this motherfucker.

MJ: Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JA: I have to be able to travel.

AW: But I'll get someone like you, Jasiatic. And say it--. Like, they should be--. Institutions should be lining up to give you money, right? Because--. And this is something I realized, like--.

MJ: You paid your dues here.

AW: When we was doing God City and like what you're doing now, we had access to people that, like, they had no clue how to interact with--.

JA: Oh, absolutely, and I had this conversation, you know, like-like face on with the Gantt because [Chuckles] I don't know if we're supposed to name names, but I mean--.

MJ: Let's go for it.

JA: I don't have shit to lose, so--.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: You know, but- but the one time I brought Su CASA there, that was the conversation. You know, like--.

MJ: They just wanted to keep the money.

JA: It--. Well, yeah, [Laughs] you know? But, like--. But you're exactly right in terms of, like, bringing this co-cross cultural cross, you know, like, age--. You know, like just--.

MJ: Demographics.

JA: All of these demographics just kinda coming together and exploding that otherwise would never ever have access or interest to your institution. But I think doing solo shows here, and like really putting your heart and soul into it- and I don't care what it is. Like, whether it's that or then- you know, like I moved on to do also just like curation of like, you know, dinner parties and Charlotte is a hard city to find support.

AW: Mm-hmm.

JA: You know? It really is.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AW: They- They seem to always be looking outward. And they blare their--. They seem to be interested in people looking like, 'Oh, no. We're-we're a major city,' it's--. They have this inferiority complex.

MJ: [Laughs]

AW: They're not- they're not small like let's say a-a (inaudible - 00:12:49). But they're not Atlanta, they're not New York, and they- they wanna--.

JA: It's the white Jesus concert. Or someone- or someone call- told me once the, um, the iceman concept, where, like, you know, the white man's ice is colder than--. Like, you know, 'You don't qualify for because you're from here.' You know? And you're in Charlotte. And it goes back to the identity thing that you were talking about: like, what's the identity? If there's no identity?

[Crosstalk]

MJ: They don't know how to reference it--.

JA: Then people don't know get behind you

[Crosstalk ends]

MJ: Like, it's being an alternative artist at a record label. Like--.

JA: Right.

MJ: People don't know where to put you.

AW: Right, right, right.

MJ: Like, I mean, I think for me, again, it's--. I had the disadvantage of --or maybe the advantage, I don't know-- of capping; I capped out. Like, I, eh--. The McColl and the Gantt, that was my entry.

JA: You came in here, yes.

MJ: I came capped.

JA: Sure.

[Laughter]

JA: Yeah, yeah.

MJ: It was sort of like that 'cause it doesn't feel like that.

JA: You did though. Yeah, you did.

MJ: But so, and I'm like, I didn't realize that that's what I did. I had no idea what the arts in Charlotte was.

JA: [Laughs] Yeah.

[JA intermittently agrees]

MJ: I was completely seduced and was like, 'Oh my god. This city is poppin'. Like this is it.' And that's--. Well, there's other reasons, but it landed me here, and I was like,

‘Oh.’ So now the way I look at it is like, ‘Okay. Make my art here and take it somewhere else.’ Like, this is perfect- the perfect place for me to create.

JA: It is that. It’s a good space to-to--.

MJ: To make.

JA: To be quiet and-and to go within.

MJ: Just create--. Yeah.

JA: Absolutely.

MJ: I did. This is my-my--.

JA: But again--.

MJ: My season in hell and my deep meditation space.

JA: Mm-hmm.

MJ: That’s what this is for me.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AW: That’s what- that’s what’s frustrating. It’s that- the-there’s people here who are making, who are doing interesting stuff, it’s just, I think, people who are running things don’t have that foresight. I mean, you look like in, uh, is it Austin? Like, Texas, like, they--.

[Crosstalk]

MJ: They love their artists.

AW: Turn around and invest--.

[Crosstalk ends]

AW: In, like, those people, and, like, they don't--. But that-that's how you create a community. That's how you cr- that's how you standout. But with--. But with Charlotte, for some reason, they're just, 'No, let's just go here and get all those other people and--. I mean--.

[Crosstalk]

[MULTIPLE SPEAKERS]

MJ: But I--.

JA: So the biggest--.

MJ: But I'm here, but I don't feel welcomed here.

JA: But-but here's the biggest riddle--.

MJ: Just to be honest with you. It's, like, 'Fuck that bitch. Who she thinks she is?'
Wow.

AW: Right.

JA: Here's--.

MJ: Nah.

JA: Here's the-the biggest riddle of [Laughs] Charlotte, though, that I find very interesting which is why I do this, the things that I do: it's that you have this ens-tire city of people saying there's nothing to do. You know, there's no momentum, there's, you know, no culture, nothing happening. And all of those people are from somewhere else.

AW: Hm.

MJ: Oh.

JA: Seriously.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: I mean, they're all from somewhere else, so you have all these transplants coming together and saying it's wack and it's like--.

JA: Then why do people come here?

MJ: Wait, wait. Y'all were (inaudible - 00:15:24).

AW: [Laughs]

JA: But not only why you're here, but you take up a majority of the space in the city. So, if you came from something great, then bring that greatness here in every way that you can. I'm just sayin', it's--.

[Crosstalk]

MJ: Yeah, yeah. No--.

JA: A riddle. I'm not--. I'm, you know--.

MJ: It is a riddle because--.

JA: I get it.

MJ: When you do it--.

JA: I get it, but--.

MJ: But it has to, like, you gotta want it. Like, 'cause I feel like I've had good ideas, but people are like, 'Pfft.'

JA: Yeah.

MJ: 'But you've been here like five seconds, bitch.' You know what I sayin'?

JA: I g- I mean, I get it.

[Multiple Speakers]

MJ: That's why I call it a riddle.

AW: But also, could it--. Could it be this, though?

JA: Yeah, it is a riddle.

[Crosstalk ends]

AW: But could it be this--? Right? Like, so--. Like, you're-you're a transplant, right?

MJ: Yeah.

AW: Like, so you're coming from somewhere else. Like, born and raised here. I think--.

MJ: And I respect--.

AW: Do you think we you, like--. Well, I'm--.

MJ: Her.

AW: Do you think you probably have access to certain communities that you might not have. So, maybe the venues you're going through--. you-you ran into those--.

MJ: I-I just stopped.

AW: Brick walls.

MJ: I just stopped.

AW: Where as, like--.

MJ: I completely stopped.

AW: Jay-Jay does all this amazing stuff, but--.

MJ: She's the queen on top.

AW: Like-like you know that stuff.

MJ: That's not (inaudible - 00:16:13).

AW: But this is what I'm saying: Why is--. There should be institutions here that bring that together. They don't--.

MJ: Right.

AW: See, like, that's worth their while 'cause I--. They seem to look very short term.

[MJ intermittently agrees]

JA: And it's-it's clique-ish. It's clique-ish, but I'll tell you what. Like, I mean, seriously, when it comes to, like, you know, like, art as a photographer, um--. Like, that stuff, it lives in my heart. And it's--. I work functionally as a photographer, but when it comes to, like, really finding the space to create and do the things that I want to do, it has taken a back seat. I'm not gonna lie. And then that way, I'm in no way on top, but when it comes to Su CASA, I've created Su CASA purely out of my own home, out of my own space, out of my own desire to see and hear what I wanted to see and hear.

JA: And it was a struggle--.

MJ: And it works.

JA: Initially. It was a struggle initially to be able to find- or to be even able to, again, you know, to get it out there so that there are — because there might be three people inside Charlotte that are like, you know, 'Ah, they never put--.' I mean, I'll meet people and be like, 'Oh, they never play this in Charlotte', and I'm like, 'Oh, s- yes they do--.'

RW: [Laughs]

MJ: They do.

JA: You know, because, again, I do have the access to knowing what they do, but--. But yeah, but it's--. [Laughs]

AW: And I- I just get frustrated because I've seen both sides of it and--.

JA: Yeah.

AW: I-I've been with, like, mus-museum people, people in-in academia, and it's just--.

JA: Right.

AW: It sucks that you're so cut off from, like the lifeblood of the city.

JA: It's--. Absolutely.

AW: And I'm like--. And they're like, 'Well how do you get--.' One, it's just they assume for some reason, Black and Brown people under forty five just don't care about art for some reason.

MJ: [Laughs]

AW: And-and-and-and-and they for s- is like, 'How do we interact with them?' It's like, go to the neighborhood.

JA: And then- so you have--.

AW: Build there.

JA: Like, Brooklyn, right?

AW: Yeah.

JA: And then you have Brooklyn. And then--. You know, you have these cities where you see these amazing parties. When we initially took Su CASA to the Gantt

Center, we were like, 'Yo, this is a great marriage.' You know? Like, 'This shit could work right?'

AW: But they were very--.

JA: And it was a wonderful party.

MJ: The bougie Black folks.

JA: Well, I'll tell you what they were.

MJ: Sorry.

AW: No.

JA: They w--. One piece of it was, you know, it was a big money piece so they wanted me to pay them initially to have--.

MJ: 'Cause they--.

JA: Like, I'm not running your venue.

MJ: (inaudible - 00:18:23)

JA: I'm not--. You- if you pay someone to put an exhibition up --I know this because I'm coming from a space of being an artist-- then you're gonna pay me, or at least allow me to make the money that I need to make to bring this particular population into your space and use that for the growth, and for the communion of the two.

AW: You know what sucks about that is, right? They'll-th-they'll take what one did there, and they'll package that and say, 'Oh, give us grants. Look, we're doing stuff for the community--.'

JA: Sure.

AW: 'And you're being a part of that.'

JW: You can after dark.

JA: Right.

AW: Like that kills me.

JA: Yeah, it's a--. Yeah. I got some (inaudible - 00:18:58), yeah.

MJ: Daddy need new shoes.

AW: [Laughs] Yeah.

MJ: I'm sorry--.

AW: No.

MJ: I'm just gonna go completely--.

AW: Oh, that's--.

MJ: Negro route on it.

JA: Yeah. I mean, it is what it is, so, right?

RW: Mm-mm.

AW: I don't know--.

MJ: (inaudible - 00:19:05).

AW: I-it just bugs me 'cause I like-like- I just know so many talented people.

JA: And people will say that thing. You're right, because people will say the thing of like, 'Oh, well, you know, you gotta- you gotta have your this-th--. You gotta, you know, you gotta be able to come to these people with this or this or this.' I have no problems speaking, talking, connecting, being in conversation with, shaking hands doing whatever. But, you know, it had this genuine interest has to be there to blend those things together.

MJ: And then you have to--.

AW: Yeah.

MJ: Be willing to have a conversation that is open to new experiences. Like, I feel like--. not to just--. Because the Gantt is the only big Black institution --.

JA: Sure.

MJ: In the city. They just have to be open to the conversation. It's like it's-it's very much, 'Keep us comfortable and keep that slave narrative and that--.'

AW: Yes. (inaudible - 00:19:55)

MJ: You know, that freedom fight narrative--.

JA: Which is so different from the Afro-American Cultural Center.

MJ: Right. Like--.

JA: Like, there's such a difference, right?

AW: Yeah.

JA: I mean do you remember?

MJ: Yeah, like--.

JA: That there was a difference?

MJ: I mean, it's like if you try to engage in new conversation it's soon like, 'Oof, oof'. You know?

RW: Mm.

AW: Yeah.

MJ: And it just seems like very much--. It--.

AW: But.

MJ: It's not allowed.

AW: I think that goes into, maybe, who's funding it, right? Like--.

MJ: It kind--. It--. You said it, it's a riddle. It's a fucking riddle.

JA: It's a riddle, it's a riddle. Well, we were just talking about a particular, um, group of artists and a friend that I really love his work, and he just did a major, you know, like, a s-gallery. And did you go--.

RW: Mm?

JA: To the thing yet? Er--.

RW: What?

JA: The (inaudible - 00:20:36) I don't wanna name names 'cause it's not--.

AW: Mm-hmm.

JA: Me, right. So, but-but anyway, w--. There was a group of, um, non Black artists, um, white artists--.

MJ: Uh-huh.

JA: That were just kinda, like, tearing it down. Basically, because--.

[Crosstalk]

RW: Oh, yeah. I know what you're talking about.

JA: They weren't involved, right

RW: Yeah. Mm-hmm. Nah, that's (inaudible - 00:20:52).

JA: Basically because they weren't involved, but a--.

RW: Mm-hmm.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JA: A-apparently, this particular person that hit someone up from one of them-- the studios and said --or the galleries-- and said to them, 'Hey, can we show whatever film here?' And they said no. Now, I don't know why they said no. I don't know if the date was booked, I don't know what the deal is. I know that that particular gallery is usually so white for me that I can't even go in.

[Crosstalk]

MJ: Wow.

JA: Yeah, I-I don't even go there 'cause it's--.

MJ: Can you tell me which one it is, or?.

AW: Mediocre white

JA: Y--. Oh. Well, it's all mediocre.

AW: You know what I mean? Like, the work is not, like, amazing. It's just--.

[Crosstalk ends]

MJ: Just- does-does the local gallery roster and museum record reflect this city's demographic?

AW: Nope.

JA: No.

AW: Nope.

JA: Absolutely not.

AW: Nope.

MJ: It seems like just to tie into what you're saying.

JA: Yeah, sure. No, not--.

AW: It doesn't.

JA: Not at all.

AW: I mean, unless things have--.

MJ: No.

AW: Changed in the-the way your--.

JA: And it's their family kind of, you know, again, like, segregated lunch table. You know, like, we--. Unless you're in my pocket and my friend, if you're there and you happen to be Black, then sure, you can show your work, but there's definitely not a genuine interest of 'Hey, let's tell the story. Let's tell everybody's story--.'

MJ: As a collective.

JA: 'Let's give an option of telling this story or that story,' unless it works for them.

MJ: It's just not on their radar--.

JA: Right.

MJ: Until it becomes a hot topic.

JA: Right.

RW: Yeah. And then their beating down the door to get to it, you know?

MJ: Yeah, and then you don't really want to do it after that. And, like--.

JA: It's real token.

MJ: Right, it's very- it's a token mentality.

JA: It's a real token, it is.

MJ: (inaudible - 00:22:16)

JA: [Shifting of cards] Alright, *A moment of silence for Prince.*

MJ: Oh my god. Jesus, I haven't even--. Tch, I haven't done it yet. Like, I can't, I'm not ready.

AW: [Chuckles] You don't wanna--?

JA: So many--.

MJ: I can't attempt it.

JA: People aren't ready.

MJ: He's supposed to resurrect tomorrow and (inaudible - 00:22:27)

AW: Right. Let's make sure it is--.

RW: [Chuckles]

AW: Like that.

MJ: It's been three days [Laughs]

[Chuckling]

MJ: Right, exactly.

AW: Waiting for that.

JA: Well, you know (inaudible - 00:22:33) she had that status up that said, um, 'People like Michael Jackson and Prince don't die, they just sit around and watch how you honor them.' [Laughs]

[Laughter]

MJ: Exactly.

JA: [Laughs] I was just like, 'That shit is so accurate,' you know?

MJ: That is so true. I'm just not ready. I'm just not ready 'cause--.

JA: Yeah.

MJ: I still don't believe it. I think he's just--. You know, it's a joke.

JA: Yeah, but not believing it is like- that's--.

MJ: Denial? [Laughs]

JA: But it's also half the battle. I mean, 'cause that's how people have been able to live. I mean, Tupac--.

MJ: I'm coping.

JA: Tupac did that. Like, people could not--.

MJ: I'm coping. It's gonna be a minute--.

JA: You know?

MJ: I'm on that train with. Elvis, Tupac, and Prince. They're--.

AW: They're still here?

MJ: Yes.

AW: [Laughs]

JA: [Laughs] Like, for real?

MJ: For real.

JA: Like, yeah.

MJ: I don't know what you talking about.

JA: Right.

MJ: I ain't see nobody.

RW: Mm.

AW: Nah, it--.

JA: Well, it's gonna be a moment of music tonight--.

[Laughter]

JA: Not silence.

AW: Yeah, it--.

MJ: I think he was just tired and needed a way out.

RW: Mm.

AW: Now, that's--.

MJ: And so he faked his death.

AW: But that's how he--.

JA:[Laughs]

AW: He's at a point he's- is--.

MJ: Collapsed in a elevator from the floor.

AW: Yeah, like it can't happen to Prince.

MJ: It's Prince.

AW: [Chuckles] Prince.

MJ: That doesn't happen.

JA: Right.

MJ: He transcends.

AW: Well, that's what I'm saying, he's at a point where he's, like, he's more of an ideal [Chuckles]. Like, not even like a per--. Like, it's like, 'He died?'

MJ: Woo.

RW: [Chuckles]

AW: 'He can die?', like--.

JA: Right.

MJ: No, he can't.

AW: Exactly.

MJ: That's what I'm saying.

AW: (inaudible - 00:23:41)

MJ: Like, 'What are you saying?'

JA: Yeah.

MJ: 'Those were just blasphemous words.' He's like Jesus Christ.

AW: [Chuckles] Yeah, he's just--.

MJ: Okay, we can though if we need to. I haven't broke down yet, I haven't had that moment.

JA: Well, you can come to Su CASA tonight and you can break down on the floor.

Unknown: [Laughs]

JA: 'Cause it's like--. You know?

RW: It's gonna be crazy.

MJ: You guys are gonna play Prince music tonight?

JA: Yeah. C'mon.

MJ: Like, a tribute type--?

JA: It'll be a tribute.

MJ: I'm not ready.

[Chuckling]

JA: Why do people keep saying that?

MJ: [Laughs] It's--. I- you don't understand, this man was my everything.

JA: No, no, no.

AW: Bigger than Michael for you?

MJ: Oh, god--.

JA: I get it.

MJ: Michael was gross.

[Laughter]

MJ: I liked him.

JA: It-it was bigger than--.

MJ: I liked Michael Jackson open to--.

JA: Michael for me. Yeah.

MJ: Yeah. I liked Michael Jackson up until I discovered Prince.

AW: Ah.

JA: [Chuckling]

MJ: Then after that, I was like, 'I don't know who Micheal is.'

AW: Alright, alright.

MJ: Like, and I really let go of Micheal when he started just messin' with everything.

AW: Yup.

[Speaker intermittently agrees]

MJ: I was like, 'Oof. Not sexy.'

RW: Well, I think that for me, um, I--. You know, I was talking to some people earlier about Prince and, you know, I-I hate to say this, but Prince wasn't really on my radar. I ain't really care too much about him, whatever, whatever. He's just somebody--.

JA: Don't hate to say it--.

RW: But-but--.

JA: It is what it is.

[Crosstalk]

MJ: No, I judged you.

RW: Yeah, but-but- but this--.

MJ: I get it completely.

RW: Th-but this--.

[Laughter]

MJ: I totally judged you.

RW: But here's the thing though, like, post passing, when I got to see, like the things that he was doing outside of music--.

MJ: Mm-hmm.

RW: Not see, like, the person he is, like, the-the-the interviews--.

MJ: Charity work.

RW: Because he was, like, really quiet about his, you know, his- all his other stuff. I can certainly have an appreciation for him as a human being--.

MJ: And shows the part.

JA: So did you miss the music, though? That's what I wonder--.

RW: No, music--.

JA: For some people.

RW: Music--.

JA: Like, but-but do you know how much Prince music there is?

RW: I know he did stuff with--.

JA: Do you know how much he produced and wrote?

MJ: Genius.

Like, do you know where his hands--. I mean, do you know there are songs that you love that he wrote?

RW: Yeah.

MJ: Genius.

JA: Like, do you-you get that? Okay. Alright.

RW: I-I looked a little bit, you know- you know, it's everywhere on the internet, so I'm seeing some of the, like, he's wor- wrote for a lot of different people. You know?

JA: I love that I'm hearing songs, right now, that I've never heard. That's when--.

MJ: Wow.

JA: I mean, like, there's so much music.

MJ: I need to open up the door 'cause I haven't thought of going there.

JA: Yeah. I been doing it.

MJ: I been--.

JA: I been I--.

MJ: I'm scared.

JA: 'Cause this is a celebration.

MJ: For a minute, because I-I-I clicked on something and-and almost just--. I haven't broke down. Like, you don't understand; when I say I'm in denial, like, my whole bedroom wall was, like, wallpaper. It was my first alter, was to Prince. Like, it had candles, the whole wall was wallpaper, I had a airbrush cutout--.

RW: Right.

MJ: Of Purple Rain and him on a motorcycle. Like, you don't understand. I worshipped him.

RW: [Chuckles]

MJ: He was my first god. I'm serious. You think I'm playing. I'm not. That was my first god as a teenager and I worshipped that man, and now I don't even know what to say. Like, I mourn his passing like I mourned my father's passing.

JA: Mm-hmm.

MJ: Like, I could get- I could get emotional right now. He was the first man, or person, artist, being, to let me know it was okay to be a little different or a little strange.

JA: Right, right, right.

[Speaker intermittently agrees]

MJ: Or a little queer. You know what I'm saying? I was like- when I was like fifteen, so — or thirteen really. Actually, I heard 'Dirty Mind' when I was nine and I wasn't supposed to. I was just like--.

JA: [Laughs]

MJ: 'Woop, woop, woop.'

RW: 'What, what.' Mm-hmm.

MJ: I hung the poster behind my door so my mom would open the door, yell at me and then close it, and I was like, 'Oh.'

RW: [Chuckles]

JA: You know we took the children to see Purple Rain last night. They have seen it, but we went--. They were showing it in the movie theatres, so we took them last night. You know what I mean--.

MJ: Did they love it?

JA: Yeah, but they-they already had seen it already.

MJ: Okay, okay.

JA: You know, we just wanted to have that theatre experience. I saw it in the theatre as a child, so.

AW: I had a (inaudible - 00:27:08)

MJ: Dude, the cover eyes and everything. No, you said they already saw it.

AW: Yeah.

JA: Oh, no. We don't do that in my house [Laughs].

AW: I had a student who was like, 'Who's Prince? What's the big deal?'

MJ: Oh, Jesus.

AW: I had to, like, not scream at him.

MJ: [Laughs]

JA: Yeah, yeah, right. I know, I know, I know.

MJ: (inaudible - 00:27:26) never know who Prince is.

RW: First time anything I've been compared to- like, an eighteen year old white girl for any reason.

JA: Ah.

[Laughter]

AW: Oh, but you know who Prince is.

JA: But you know who he is.

AW: Sh was just, like, completely oblivious, like, 'Well he's a (inaudible - 00:27:38)' I, uh, like she was just-didn't--.

RW: She was like Pr--.

JA: Listen--.

RW: Prince of what?

JA: And lemme tell you this. Oh my.

[Laughter]

JA: On the day that he died, we were at the, um, we were at the gas station getting gas and--. Well, no, no, no. The way we found out, I--. We had just come in from Montreal, so I was knocked out and my sixteen year old called me and, like, eh- you know, I kept hearing a phone ring and I answered and then he was like, 'Mom, you

know Prince died?' And so I'm, like, in dream world, so it was like a shock to the system, but then we got up, we got out, and we went to the gas station, and this man came over that was very, like, neutrally nondescript. Like, in some world, if we were in New Orleans, he would be Black, but--.

MJ: Right, right, right.

[Speaker intermittently agrees]

JA: In another world here in Charlotte--.

MJ: He's creole.

JA: He's white.

MJ: We just gon' call him creole.

JA: Right.

MJ: [Laughs]

JA: Um, but he came over and was like, 'You know, man, did you--,' I mean, he walked over to the tank and was like, 'Did y'all hear what happened?'

MJ: The world was--.

JA: And he was crying.

MJ: Devastated. The world--.

RW: Wow.

MJ: Was fucking devastated.

JA: He was crying.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: He was like, 'Man, he died. You know, like, can you believe this?' And then he just walked away. He was like, 'This is what it sounds like.'

AW: Yeah.

JA: But that shit was so, like--. You know what I mean?

MJ: Yeah.

AW: We got Stevie.

MJ: Huh?

AW: Stevie's left.

MJ: That's all we got left.

RW: In, like--. I--.

MJ: Stevie Wonder.

[Crosstalk]

RW: Forget, like, how much of an impact he made on people. Like, it's-it's--.

MJ: Who, Stevie Wonder?

RW: Hard, y--. No.

MJ: Prince.

RW: Prince. Yeah.

[Crosstalk ends]

MJ: Oh, yeah.

RW: It's cra--. Eh, not crazy, but, you know, it's in- it's interesting. I think I thought I saw somebody put something on Facebook to the effect of, like, 'You mourn people, not because of what they did--.'

AW: You mourn an artist not because of what they, uh, did to you. Made you think about them, but what they made you think about yourself.

MJ: Yourself.

RW: Yeah.

AW: Well, like you've been saying, like--.

RW: Absolutely.

AW: It made you--.

MJ: I used to, every night, pin like a hundred and twenty five Prince buttons to my outfit for the next day. It was my ritual--.

JA: Right.

MJ: Like I said, that was my first person I worshipped.

JA: Because let's be clear, too. I mean, a-and especially when you speak about, like, the element of queer and just the element of, like--.

MJ: Other.

JA: Comfortability and just, like- you know, like, this neutral space of-of identification, like--.

MJ: He owned it.

JA: Yo, that motherfucker did that shit with ease.

MJ: --Ease. Like, from the jump.

JA: Like, complete ease and-and--.

MJ: (inaudible - 00:29:56)

JA: Like, complete ease in the sense of, like, 'Don't ask me no questions. Don't worry about it. I will take whatever from you,' you know what I mean? Like, 'Fuck around and question my masculinity and I'll take your woman right now on the spot.'

MJ: [Laughs]

JA: Like--. You know, like--.

MJ: And take you on the court.

JA: Yeah.

MJ: While I'm wearing some heels.

RW: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

JA: Like, all of it. So, he-he really, like, symbolized that and no one else did.

AW: And that's-that's interesting that you say that. So that's-that's--. In my opinion, that's like real manhood.

MJ: Yeah.

AW: Like, that lack of insecurity.

MJ: Yeah.

[Speaker intermittently agrees]

JA: Absolutely.

AW: Like, you don't have to constantly like--.

MJ: It was still gangster though.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

AW: Like, 'Oh, this is who I am.' I-I don't--.

MJ: 'Deal with it, (inaudible - 00:30:34)'

JA: I'm just gonna be exactly who I am. You know?--.

MJ: Yeah.

AW: Yeah, exactly.

MJ: Yeah.

AW: No, I-I've been thinking about that-that question of manhood a lot lately, what that means.

JA: Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AW: Yeah, I-I just see a lot of insecurity with a lot of guys. They have to--.

JA: It does not have to be confused with testosterone, right? Yeah.

AW: Right, exactly. Yeah, and I--.

RW: (inaudible - 00:30:51).

AW: I'm thinking about it now, like- yeah, like, he's very much comfortable and confident in who he is.

MJ: And pulled the baddest bitches.

AW: [Laughs]

MJ: [Laughs] You know what I'm sayin'?

AW: Like--. Yeah, okay. Yeah.

MJ: Wow, wow.

AW: What we gonna talk about next now?

RW: Got a little bit more of an appreciation for Prince because like--.

MJ: Oh, yeah.

RW: I guess, you know, in popular culture, you know, a lot of times, he--. From what I would be, you know, aware of is he would get, like- people would, like, kinda make a mockery of him because of what he'd wear, and, you know, the-the his little- his nuances and the way he would do stuff that I had no clue.

MJ: It made him sexy as hell, now.

RW: No clue.

MJ: Like, he was amazing. He was a gorgeous man to begin with.

RW: Well, like--.

AW: Yeah.

RW: It like- all, like, not all the time, but often times enough, I would see, like, most, like, comedians and stuff making a mockery of--.

MJ: Mm.

RW: You know, Prince and whatever. I guess that had to do with my perception of him too, but...

MJ: Yeah.

RW: What's the next--?

MJ: Yeah. What's next — we got? Um, we did the local galley--.

AW: Maybe this'll help: Uh, *'How's cultural memory passed down to younger generations? Discuss lega-legacy, uh, intergenerational advocacy, and men-mentortship.* But--.

JA: Oh, that's another layered question, break that one down. What's the first--.

AW: Well--.

MJ: [Laughs] (inaudible - 00:32:03).

AW: Like--.

JA: Er--.

AW: Well, *How's cultural memory passed down to younger generations?* So it's interesting-. We talk about, like, trying to figure out, you know, what's the culture of this place and, you know, it's changed, so--.

JA: Yeah.

AW: I mean, you know, you have kids. It's like, what is- what is Charlotte to- to your kids?

JA: Oh.

AW: There's a different--.

RW: Cultural memory.

JA: Well, we better not say that that has anything to do with Charlotte.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: 'Cause you're gonna be in trouble. I mean, again, like, growing up here and-and I'm a generation older than you are.

RW: Not really.

JA: Absolutely I am. How old are you?

RW: Thirty.

JA: That's silly. Yeah, I'm more than a generation older than you.

RW: Oh.

MJ: How old are you, if you don't mind me asking?

JA: So--. I'm, um, forty.

MJ: Okay.

JA: Yeah.

MJ: Yeah, I'm in my forties also.

AW: Thirty-six.

JA: So--.

MJ: Okay.

JA: But because of that, like, my experience of what--. Alright, so uptown, there's a little slither of the Ivey's building. But, like, I have very distinct memory of my grandmother taking me downtown to go to Bakers to go to Ivey's, to go to Montaldo's, like, you know? Like, I do remember when there was a downter shop- downtown shopping area. I'm not quite sure that you would. You know, because by then, it was starting to dissipate.

RW: Mm-hmm.

JA: You know what I mean? So, this--.

MJ: You're from here.

RW: Yeah.

JA: So, I'm from here.

MJ: So this is your hometown, okay. Awesome, okay.

JA: Absolutely. So, when we moved to Hidden Valley, my grandmother would find, like, arrowheads from where Native Americans had inhabited the area.

MJ: Wow.

JA: So, I-I do have some of that space, but at this point? None of that is relevant to my children--.

MJ: Wow.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JA: In the sense of really being able to make that tangible. Like, they can't see any of that because Charlotte is such a knockdown-buildup city. You know? It's a knockdown-buildup city, so you know.

AW: Well, lemme ask you this question 'cause--. So, you did Su CASA and I think, culturally, I think that's really important. But, um, do you think about posterity?

RW: Absolutely. Yeah.

AW: Yeah. But--. Okay, twenty years from now, maybe you're somewhere else, or maybe you're just not doing--. Like, how do we talk about, like, you know- like, you know, cultural-cultural legacy--? How do we keep that as something that was--.

JA: Yeah.

AW: Here and it mattered? You know, when it's hard to--.

JA: Yeah. I mean, I just think you-you create it as a- in a- in a space of normalcy. So, you know--. I mean, my children now know Stevie Wonder songs because I make them sit and listen to it.

MJ: [Chuckles]

JA: They know it 'cause of--.

MJ: Cause they feel it.

JA: They don't have no fuckin' option not to hear it.

RW: [Laughs]

JA: It's in their hea--.

AW: Right.

JA: You know--.

MJ: Right.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JA: What I mean- like, I mean, uh, don't-don't get me wrong, they know the next whatever; I mean, like Lil Yachty, you know? (inaudible - 00:34:43) sound like they know that shit like the back of their head, too. I mean they know all that's--.

MJ: But that's-that's diversity though.

JA: Yeah, they know all of that. Like, all of that, you know, mainstream whatever, but they also--.

MJ: But they also--.

JA: Know those things just 'cause it's a part of your everyday--.

MJ: That's your culture.

JA: You know? It's just--. Yeah, it's your culture so your--. You know, it's-it's really important.

MJ: And I don't mean just like African or Black culture, I mean as far as you as a mom and who you are and you're entire--.

JA: Yeah.

MJ: Identity and--.

JA: Yeah.

MJ: Who you are. That's-that's culture.

JA: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah.

[Speaker intermittently agrees]

MJ: So you know what I'm saying? That's the culture. At least, that's how I see it. I have a twenty year old and, like, trying to explain her Charlotte. It's like I let her come and she wants to come, which is very rare.

[Chuckling]

MJ: And it's like [Laughs] you know, it's like--.

AW: Wh-where is she coming from?

MJ: She's coming from--. Oh wow, she goes to school in Massachusetts right now, but before that she was in New York, and before that she was Paris, before that she was in Chicago and L.A. Like, my daughter is all over the place, but--.

RW: Yeah.

MJ: But in a good way.

AW: Right, right (inaudible - 00:35:39)

JA: Not because she's displaced, but just international. Um, but yeah, no. Like, we--.

AW: I-I'm just thinking of--.

MJ: She--. Yeah.

AW: Not fair, I'm sorry.

MJ: No, no, no, no, no. I'm just sayin' she's confused. She doesn't even understand while I'm- why I'm here.

AW: Right. (inaudible - 00:35:55) like, I don't--. And I'm just like, 'I need this to reprieve. I'm-I'm healing and I need this to be my-my--.

AW: Yeah.

[Speaker intermittently agree]

MJ: My--. It's like, I'm--. It's an extended residency so to speak.

JA: Yeah. And then they (inaudible - 00:36:05). That's the piece to-to like give gratitude for what it is--.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: Exactly what it is. Um--.

MJ: It's a quiet space--.

JA: I always tell people--.

MJ: To heal.

JA: It's a easy place for me.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: It's a easy space to live so--. I mean, I get- I give gratitude, but in terms of cultural memory, hopefully we don't--.

MJ: Right.

[Speaker intermittently agree]

JA: Have to stick to Charlotte with that, 'cause that's a difficult one.

AW: Yeah. Well, I mean we can go out further. I'm just- I just think of, like-- So, we go to museums, right? There's a certain culture there that's preserved. Right? Um, and I just think of — not even just Charlotte, but there's so much culture in different cities, different regions.

JA: Sure.

AW: And it seems like it just gets wiped away constantly. And I--.

JA: Some of them.

MJ: That's just here.

AW: Yeah, well I'm on to us--.

MJ: 'Cause we could go right now into Atlanta--.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Right.

MJ: And see Basquiat. We can go to New York and see, you know-- who's--.

JA: Yeah.

MJ: Who's- there's somebody--. I don't know, but somebody's doing a show at the Book-Brooklyn Museum right now, and it's--.

JA: Right.

AW: (inaudible - 00:36:59)?

MJ: They give--. Yeah, exac--. So, it's like they don't want that in Charlotte.

AW: Yeah.

MJ: That's not for Charlotte.

JA: We find it--. You know, here's the thing, too, about, like, in this particular space is that, like--. Like I took the children to see Nikki Giovanni a couple weeks ago.

MJ: Right, she was at the, um--.

JA: She was at Queens--.

MJ: Oh.

JA: And, um, you know, like, it's hard to know about things that happened here.

[Crosstalk]

MJ: Yeah. You gotta be in the pocket.

JA: So when they happen--.

MJ: It happened in the (inaudible - 00:37:27)

JA: You gotta be like, 'Oh, okay.' You gotta, like, really jump on it.

[Crosstalk ends]

AW: Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JA: But, um- but-but we-we just went to, um, y--. The babies are homeschooled and so we went to Charleston and did a tour there. And so I was learning things. Like, I never knew that Harvey Gantt was like the first person to segregate the schools in Charleston. So he's giving me all this Char- this Charlotte history from this person that, like--. I mean, I went to school with his son, you know, I grew up during a time when he was mayor. So I knew all these, you know--. But I never knew that, like, he was the first Black person to segregate the schools there, and that his wife was actually the second, and they went to highschool together. And then--. So he was telling me all of this stuff, but it was, like, you know, this was a very proud piece of Charlestonian history. And it was so dope to--. I mean, I'd done tours there before, but the biggest, like, when we

finished, we talked about what was the most impactful thing. And for me, the most impactful things- thing was going to com-communities in the sea islands, and that's one of my fascinations with literature. But going to communities and looking at communities that could trace their legacy of--.

MJ: Back to something.

JA: Slavery within the community. So looking at houses that had a house here, a house here, a house there, a house there, that have been with their families since reconstruction. You know? So something like that. He's like, 'This-these people with this last name, and these people with this last name, 'cause here's the street name right here with their name, they lived here and they got a property from mister such-and-such when--.' You know, and-and that shit is deep.

MJ: That is.

JA: You know?

MJ: The Black churches here are so valuable, too. That's been something that I been attracted to--.

[Crosstalk]

JA: In the South you mean.

MJ: Right, in the South--.

JA: In general. Sure.

MJ: In the Carolinas--.

JA: Absolutely.

[Crosstalk ends]

[JA intermittently agrees]

MJ: Like, between South Carolina and North Carolina, just taking road trips or whatever. I know, aesthetically, I'm always drawn to that; energistically, like, I'm always like, 'There's an energy over there. There's something over there.' There's something there. You know, and there's G.P.S who's trying to kill me: 'Make a left turn', I'm like, 'Fuck no--.'

RW: [Chuckles]

MJ: 'Not right now,' but you can just feel it. You can feel it. There's a lot of energy here that I have no reference to or to understand, but--.

[Crosstalk]

JA: Yeah, that church piece is, again, with Charleston, it was, I mean--.

MJ: It's serious. That energy--.

JA: Oh it's so--.

MJ: From the churches down--.

JA: Serious.

MJ: Down there is so serious.

[Crosstalk ends]

JA: It was so serious--.

AW: Right.

JA: And, like, going to the direct spot where Denmark Vesey was-was murdered and r--. You know, like--.

MJ: Yeah, it's rich.

JA: This is just like--.

MJ: It's so rich.

JA: Wow, it is. It is. What's the other parts of our question?

AW: Oh, right. *Discuss legacy, intergenerational advocacy and mentorship...* Do you guys have mentors?

MJ: No.

AW: You don't?

JA: Mentees?

AW: Yeah, mentees.

JA: No.

MJ: I have mentees.

AW: You got mentees?

MJ: 'Cause I teach.

AW: Right.

MJ: So I--. They come and--.

JA: Yeah.

MJ: Gravitare and we kinda go from there. But as far as people that I can look up to that are older than me--.

AW: I don't know, I don't think I do.

JA: Oh, mentors. I have- I have a mentor.

AW: Really?

JA: Um, I have some mentors. So one of them, um, moved far away and the other one, um, I actually was, um, the creator of a program that I was in, and she actually is a minister and she was so influential and, um--. She was so dope. She-she's a virgo also. And so she has these really interesting dynamics that just make her so tangible. You know, but at the same time, she's a seer and so she's such a psychic. You know--.

MJ: [Laughs] Right.

[Speaker intermittently agrees]

JA: So she's so amazing. But, um, she really i--. Like, you know, it-it is because of her that I learned so much about African religion and meditation, as a child. You know, so, um, I would definitely consider her a mentor. And I have another person that was a strong mentor to me, but she lives in, um, in Richmond. So, I could say that I have.

AW: And it has a positive effect.

JA: Oh, absolutely.

MJ: What about you?

JA: Absolutely.

MJ: Who's your mentor?

AW: Outside family?

JA: Yeah, outside of family I would say.

MJ: I don't know.

AW: Outside of family in--. The closest thing would probably be Juan Logan, the artist.

MJ: Yeah--.

AW: But, like, it's--.

MJ: I love him.

AW: Not- it's nothing official, it's just that, like, when I was in grad school--.

MJ: You look at his stuff and you're inspired.

AW: Well, not even his stuff, it's just him. Like, just--.

MJ: Yeah. He was kinda my mentor, too--.

AW: I mean--.

MJ: Him and Susan Paige.

AW: Yeah.

MJ: When they were married then.

AW: I mean, when I was in grad school and I'm up here, I'm coming from Charlotte, and I- everyone, and I go into this place where it's nothing but white people who can't--. Who knows.

MJ: Yeah.

AW: They no jack shit about--.

JA: Mm-hmm.

MJ: What you're doing.

AW: Stuff that we knew — yeah.

RW: Mm.

AW: And they're looking at it, like--.

MJ: Juan is, like, right on it.

AW: Yeah--.

MJ: (inaudible - 00:42:10)

AW: Juan is like, 'Why--.'

MJ: I felt good about him, too.

AW: 'Why-why--.' But he was just like, 'Why-why-why you letting him get you down? Why you care about what they think?' He's like--.

MJ: (inaudible - 00:42:17)

AW: 'You don't worry, you're white. Why are you acting like a minority?'

MJ: [Laughs and claps]

AW: He's like, 'We're the majority. We're alive, but you're up here--,' he's like, 'Stop. You--.'

MJ: Stop being scared.

AW: 'Don't- stop looking at them for approval. Stop--. No, you already know enough.' Right?

MJ: Don't be a happy slave [Laughs]

AW: Exactly. Y--. 'Cause I was like--. I mean, I-I-I go into critique and they're like, 'I don't understand.' You know, it was just the--.

MJ: Of course you don't understand.

AW: The feedback, but, like--. Yeah, talking to Juan, he's just like, 'Nah, nah, y--. No--.'

MJ: He teaches you how to--?

AW: I (inaudible - 00:42:44) Like, when I--.

MJ: Fight the good fight.

AW: Yeah. When I got to- when I first got to grad school, I was like, 'Damn. I don't- I don't belong here, this isn't for me.' I'm talking about, like, uh, fuckin', like--. You know?

MJ: You right. You wouldn't see--.

AW: Chapel Hill.

MJ: Chapel Hill, okay.

AW: Yeah, and, like, some of the professors were real cool, but just overall it was just like--.

MJ: (inaudible - 00:43:01)

AW: When I was there, but, like, Juan was like, 'Nah. You belong here. Nah, they-they need this.' You know, and--. So I mean, like, people like him--. Jina. Jina was one of my professors. Like, yeah, like, it was like, 'Nah, Nah.' So--.

MJ: Be here.

AW: Yeah, and I--. Like, I teach now, right? I teach at Guilford College, predominantly white. The last two weeks, I've had at least four Black students in my office talking about like, 'I don't know if I belong. I don't know if I can do this.' You know, like, no way you're--.

[Crosstalk]

MJ: Prepared for--.

AW: Talks like me--.

MJ: To have that (inaudible - 00:43:31)

AW: No one here understands where I'm coming from. You know--.

[Crosstalk ends]

MJ: It's hard.

AW: It's hard. It's like, you know, what other path do we choose? Are they--. We shouldn't all choose the same path, but it's nice to have people along the way, 'Hey.' You know, so. It's weird now li-like I'm seeing, like, for some people, I'm becoming that.

JA: Sure, and I-I was gonna say--. I mean, one of the-the advantages you have when you are teaching — and when I'm teaching, I feel the exact same way, but I haven't taught probably in the last year and I half. And, so for me, it's very easy for me to get isolated in a city and just be in my own space--.

MJ: [Laughs]

[MJ intermittently agrees]

JA: Doing my own thing. But I'm such a better person when I am mentoring, but [Chuckles]--. It's alright. Like, the part of me that doesn't really like the formal aspects--. You know what I'm saying? Of going a route to have a mentor. The person to m- the person in me that's just very hands on, and so when I do it, I do it. You know, just, very, very just in the community, touch, hands on, um--.

AW: Yeah, I mean th-th-the (inaudible - 00:44:39).

JA: And Charlotte makes it tough. Um, I am f--. My dynamic in my-my neighborhood is that it's extremely gentrified. Um, you have, um, lots of- lots of Black teenagers that are in the seventeen to eighteen year old--.

MJ: Mm. That's tough.

JA: Area, right? And then the kids are mostly, like, young white children. So then from my children, they don't have any playmates in our neighborhood.

MJ: Wow.

JA: You know? It's an interesting dynamic.

AW: Yeah. Nah, I mean I'm talking about, like mentorship in a- like a official capacity, but do you ever think--. I mean, I don't know if--. So, like, with my daughter, my-my thing is, like, I want her to see, like, people of color, you know, not doing, you know, what when you turn on the T.V., what do you see?

JA: Sure.

AW: Do you ever look at yourselves as just not being you?

MJ: Mm-hmm.

AW: Like, freely being you? Like you were saying, like, Prince--.

MJ: Yeah.

AW: Was the first person--.

MJ: Oh, yeah.

[Speaker intermittently agrees]

AW: Right? Like, do you ever see, like, people who respond to, like, 'Oh, Jay's dope as hell. Like, she's doing her,' right? Like, the same with you, do you ever see that response?

MJ: Um--.

AW: From younger people?

MJ: Yeah.

AW: 'Cause I think that's important. I think just you being you, and you being you confidently, does a lot. Even if it never said you--. I--.

MJ: I just wanna--.

AW: Walking--.

MJ: I teach--.

AW: That confidence as if- as if being--.

MJ: I mean--. I cut you off, I'm sorry.

AW: No, I--.

MJ: I teach at A.I. Like, it's- that's the most, like, craziest place. You know what I'm saying? I gotta be conscious of what I [Laughs] say.

[Chuckling]

MJ: But it's the craziest place to teach, and I'm, like, 'I-I-I like it.' It's like to me, I call it 'The Historical Black College of Charlotte.'

JA: Mm.

AW: [Chuckles]

RW: Interesting. I like that.

MJ: Yeah, it's the--.

RW: (inaudible - 00:46:09)

MJ: Only H.B.C.U. in my eyes in Charlotte. I know you guys have, um--.

RW: John C. Smith?

MJ: John C. Smith.

RW: Mm.

JA: Mm.

RW: It's a--.

JA: Mm.

MJ: There's still--. It's a privilege. That's a privileged institution.

JA: It is a privileged institution.

AW: It is.

MJ: It is a privileged institution.

RW: On Saturday night it don't seem like it.

[Chuckling]

MJ: Well, that's not--. I'm thinking of--.

JA: Might not seem like it, but it is, okay?

MJ: Right.

JA: The number--.

AW: (inaudible - 00:46:26), boy.

JA: Woah, what?

MJ: Exactly.

RW: [Chuckling]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MJ: But I'm saying, if you're- you're paid the same thing. Like, in a--. But you--. Like, it seems like the- the others. You know, ended up (inaudible - 00:46:37). Like, you don't have to do anything really to get in there, right? You know what I'm saying? So, it's really- like, I don't know why I'm attracted to those--. I know it is, we gravitate towards each other because I wasn't an artist, I was a fashion major. You know what I'm saying? I'm a- I was a commercial artist before I became a fine artist, and I think that's what I'm attracted to. But these kids are like, 'I got a skill, I don't know what to do with it, but I'm gonna go to this school, I'm gonna learn some skills, and I'm gonna work my way out of this hole.' You know what I'm saying it's--. From, like, having that conversation like-like acquire, and I tell them this, I'm like: 'Don't do anything in this class for me. Do it for you.' 'Well, I just wanna know what you want.' I was like, 'I don't want shit for you'.

[Laughter]

MJ: 'I don't need nothing from you.'

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Right.

RW: [Chuckles]

MJ: 'What do you need from yourself?' You know, so, that's my kinda methodology and that's when they kinda come and gravitate like, 'Okay. You brought that out of me. Thank you.' Because other people are looking for me to seek their approval. You know what I'm saying--.

JA: But, see--.

MJ: Like, 'Oh, that fine woman taught me so good.'

JA: It's such a- it's such a benefit though to be in that space, to be able to offer that up, 'cause what you're saying, like --just by being an example-- but I'm not an example to anyone around me that's--.

MJ: Your children?

JA: Well, my children, but that's a very selfish familial, personal--.

AW: Right, right, right.

JA: You know what I'm saying? That the-the--. Especially because my children- they-they kinda, I don't want to say suffer, but they have kinda the same situation as me where they're cool with everybody, but in terms of, like, friends--.

MJ: Mm.

JA: You know what I mean, like--.

MJ: Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JA: I don't have, like, friends in Charlotte.

MJ: Really? We could be friends.

JA: No, absolutely not. We could, I told you that when we first came though.

MJ: I know--.

JA: [Laughter]

MJ: We could've said that.

JA: Which is all good. But, you know, my-my friends live in other cities, they do. You know, the people that are dear to me that I'm close to, they-they live in other cities,

every single one of them. When it comes to women that I'm close to and that I, you know, value, they—they don't live here. And so for my children, they have the same kind of situation, so it's not even like I'm a, you know, a person of influence to my children's friends, but when I'm teaching and when I'm in a space to offer that up to a multitude of children, it is dope just to be--. And particularly, I think, as --I mean, I won't say particularly-- but I know, you know, as-as — I mean, I would say Black people in general, right? Just to be different and to be able to kinda defy the odds and not think like every single person around them. You know what I'm saying? It-it gives them, I think, even just--. [Sighs]

AW: It does.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: So I can be (inaudible - 00:49:15) and be myself--.

MJ: A place to exhale.

JA: You know? So.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: Yeah.

AW: There's a lot of folks that same age still struggling with, like, how to be Black and how to deal with that.

JA: Or even how to, like, not make six figures and you're thirty five, you know? One thing I have to tell thirty year olds is like, [Chuckles] 'You-you're gonna be okay.'

AW: Yeah, exactly.

MJ: [Laughs]

JA: 'You know, cap it all together. Motherfucker, me neither.'

MJ: Right [Laughs]

JA: 'What are you talking about?'

MJ: (inaudible - 00:49:39) It's--.

[Crosstalk]

JA: 'How am I supposed to--.'

MJ: A spiritual--.

JA: Have it all together?

AW: Yeah.

JA: You know?

MJ: It's a spiritual understanding--

JA: Yeah.

[Crosstalk ends]

MJ: And a surrender, like, just no. Just no and just let it go. Like, I panic sometimes; I'm like, 'Woof.'

JA: Right.

[Speaker intermittently agrees]

MJ: You know what I'm saying? But you just have to let it go and just trust. Like in this-this place--. I was telling- I was talking to somebody the other day — I don't know if I'm off topic or whatever but--.

AW: It doesn't matter.

MJ: Okay.

JA: [Laughs]

MJ: They were like, 'Well, explain how you f--.' We were- I can't remember what it was. I was like, 'Really, I think Charlotte is--.' Oh, my friend [Snaps fingers] Dino, he just moved here from Atlanta, and he was like, 'What is this city about?' I was like, 'Charlotte is a place for me, when I'm learning, to hone your skill; to understand your potential, and understand your powers and to hone them in and use your magic.' That's it, like, for me, it's what it means. Like, 'Okay. Just understand what it is,' 'cause they--. When that whole name, 'Queen City', I'm all about demographics and what people say and what the energy is about what you call it. So, it's like, I gotta learn how to use my powers here. That's it.

JA: Yeah, yeah. That 'Queen City' is real.

MJ: That's real. Like, and so just and understand how it- how it works. You know, and so I don't even think about, creatively, what the city--.

JA: You get real clear- you get real clear here. Like for me--. You know, and it's--. I remember, like, my partner asking me, he said, 'So when you go places and you see, like, white women in your neighborhood where you lived for however long, right?'

MJ: Mm-hmm.

JA: 'With lots of tattoos and jewelry--.'

MJ: MM-hmm.

JA: 'And whatever. Is there a camaraderie?' Absolutely not.

AW: [Chuckles]

JA: You know, and so I don't- I don't need to be visible to white people any longer. You know this-this space of like filling in this--. Charlotte will make you feel motherfucking invisible, because it's such--.

MJ: It don't matter to me.

JA: A white city. Right? And so, it's funny, right? Because like- it-it's funny, because you can be a person of like--. I mean, I shot for a-a major arts paper here forever. Right? And there were people that I would shoot all the time. I'm talking about cover after cover with my name on it. And these motherfuckers would still look at me when I walk into their establishment and say, 'Hey, have you been here before?'

[Laughter]

JA: Like they did not see me two fucking days ago.

MJ: Ago shooting.

JA: I was in your motherfucking house shooting all of this, we were talking about it--.

MJ: It's their disability.

JA: You were asking me for this.

MJ: It's their disability.

JA: I don't know.

MJ: They can't register through anything.

[Laughter]

JA: I don't know what it is, I-I decided not to diagnose it. But here's the thing: you see me, you see my children, you see my name everywhere, you see- you see all of it.

And-and if I- if I was talking about one or two people, then we wouldn't have this conversation, but I'm talking about an entire community of people. You come to my door, Su CASA, and you beg to get in 'cause you brought ten people, you rich white people that have so much say so, and you still walk past me and act like you've never seen me.

MJ: That's the South, though.

JA: So--. I don't know that that's the South.

MJ: I feel like what's nestled into this--.

JA: I-I--. Maybe it's the South, maybe it's the South, but it's particularly- I can--.

MJ: This place.

JA: Particularly speak to Charlotte.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: And so- whatever.

MJ: (inaudible - 00:52:55)

JA: Like, you know, so what-what I've said is like not that- like I know what feels good to me and what doesn't feel good to me, and so I know what I like. I like a certain amount of, like, you know, I need--. You know, the South in me needs some [Clanging sound] color, I need some gumbo, I need for things to be--.

RW: Soul.

JA: Bright--.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: And brilliant. And-and soulful for me. And so, when I can walk in a place and say like, 'Meh. A little sterile in here tonight, let's go.'

MJ: Go.. Right.

[MJ intermittently agrees]

JA: You know? Right?

MJ: This is not working for me.

JA: So I--. You fight, you get really really clear on what works for you and what doesn't and what feels good and what doesn't. You know?

AW: That's liberating. That-that feels good.

MJ: I went to, um, I went to get something to eat at homemade places, but the girl with, like--.

AW: Y'all are, like, good.

MJ: This little (inaudible - 00:53:40)

AW: I-I'm horrible. I will say shit.

RW: Y'all are nice in here.

JA: I-I say certain things, but certain things I'm not--.

MJ: But this little girl--.

AW: (inaudible - 00:53:46)

MJ: This little girl was just like, 'Oh my god, I just love you. Oh my god, you're amazing, you look so cool.' I was like, 'Look, mall rat, I don't need--.'

[Chuckling]

MJ: Your validation.' I said it straight to her face and she looked shocked, and I was like--.

JA: You called them 'mall rat'?

AW: [Chuckles]

MJ: I called her a 'mall rat'.

RW: Nice.

MJ: I was like, 'Look, mall rat, I don't need your validation, calm down,' is what I told her. She was a (inaudible - 00:54:05).

RW: Hmm.

MJ: I was, like, 'I appreciate it, but I'm good.' And, um, I was like, 'I'm forty years old, I don't need your validation for shit.' She's like, 'Oh my god. I would've never known you were forty,' I was like, 'I know.'

RW: [Chuckles]

JA: [Laughs]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MJ: They don't know what to do with that. They don't--. And I'm fine with that, I'm like, 'Go figure it out. Like, it's not for me to teach you what to do with all that, but just go figure you out and understand why this is so astonishing and amazing to you. Go deal with that. That's not my job.'

JA: Yeah, but it's like it's astonishing and amazing, but then it's not really--.

MJ: But it's really not.

JA: 'Cause if it was then we would have, like--. Right? The communists need it
[Laughs].

AW: It's like (inaudible - 00:54:38) Why you--. Like--.

[Crosstalk]

JA: It's token.

AW: They're not being real with it and they're not seeing you, right?

MJ: Right. And I'm not--.

JA: It's token. And-and certain people do have access to that and I don't envy those people. You know, like, whatever you have that-that-that makes that cohesive, then that's cool. I don't always have it, but I don't always need it, you know? I've been ab--. N-my-my whole thing is like, again, just getting really clear and then moving about. You know? And so, like, in terms of the cultural memory, from my babies, a lot of it is about just being extremely international and just, you know, learning how to speak different--.

MJ: Base and then move out.

JA: Areas, right?

MJ: Base and move out.

JA: Yeah, the base.

MJ: Yeah.

AW: Definitely.

MJ: Yeah. Um... [Mic movement] Mm. I don't like that question.

[Chuckling]

MJ: They talk about, *What's your experience with affirmative action? Empowering and e- in exhibiting?* Mm. I'm like, 'Fuck it.,

JA: Affirmative Action. Is that still a thing?

MJ: That's what I said [Mic movement] Like--.

RW: When--.

MJ: I'm clear that--.

AW: How is it affirmative act--. I'm sorry. Yeah.

[Laughter]

AW: I'm just like, what, do we not (inaudible - 00:55:51) the--. What--.

MJ: No, I know I'm a token. I know I'm a lot of--.

AW: Yeah, but like--.

MJ: Checks, like, on the box.

AW: That's-that's crazy though.

MJ: I'm Black--.

RW: [Chuckles]

MJ: I'm disabled, I'm a woman, you know what I'm saying? Like, I get, but I'm fine with that; I just wanna teach. So, I don't give a shit.

AW: How much fucking white, cis, male, mediocre art fuckin' do you see? Like, that's, like, people- I- --not you-- but like people asked what affirmative action and stuff like this, like, 'Oh, you're getting a pass.' White cis male- men have been getting passes--.

MJ: Passes forever.

AW: For years, yeah. Like, and that's never--.

JA: Yeah.

AW: Looked at--. So when they're in the gallery, when they're 85 percent of the gallery, that's-that's okay? That's not okay, they're not 85 percent of the world.

JA: Hey, hey, hey, you have a Black president, okay?

[Laughter]

AW: I can't even complain.

MJ: Alright. Oh my god.

JA: What you got?

RW: Oh, I- I was gonna, you know- you know, think--.

JA: Mm.

RW: About that one. *Discuss an artist's role of colonization of historically Black neighborhoods*, you know. And that one, I think that, um, card is pretty close to my heart because I, too, live in like a area that's being gentrified on both sides and--.

JA: Yeah, yeah, you do.

AW: They're coming.

JA: Oh, yeah.

RW: Yeah. You know I st--.

JA: They coming for it. And you know that area, though.

RW: Mm-hmm.

JA: They weren't- they weren't- they was- they slow with that area because of the homelessness.

RW: Mm-hmm.

JA: 'Cause of the shelters.

RW: And plus, like-- Well, not really. The shelters is it's own up here--.

JA: Well, okay, on one side.

RW: We got the project, we got Dillehay Courts on the other side. And they don't really want to deal with Dillehay Courts, but--.

JA: I don't know why. They have torn every single other--.

RW: And I--. We could--. That whole area is owned by somebody. So if they wanted to, they could just tear the whole thing down.

JA: They will.

RW: But it's-it's--. Yeah, it's owned by the Charlotte Housing Authority (inaudible - 00:57:31). It's under, you know, like it's lock and key or something by the Charlotte Housing Authority, but you know, um, but we try to keep our neighborhood community pretty strong and pretty, um, you know, um, aware of what's going on so we can, like, at least take advantage of when it happens. I mean, I don't know if it will happen or not, but, you know. If it does happen--.

JA: It will happen.

RW: Man, like, whenever--.

[Crosstalk]

JA: It will happen--.

RW: We talk about it--.

JA: Where you are.

[Crosstalk ends]

RW: Scared me so much because that neighborhood, I've been living in that neighborhood for almost thirty years, you know what I mean? That's my home, you know what I mean?

MJ: Right.

RW: So th-the thing that all these people are encroaching on my home is such a- such a hard thing.

JA: It scares you. There's a bulldozer on my street everyday.

RW: Yeah.

MJ: It's just the American way at this point.

RW: And that's--.

JA: There's a bulldozer on my street everyday.

MJ: It's the American way.

JA: It is the American way.

AW: And that's, eh, it- that shit kills me, right?

MJ: It's what we're founded on. That's how, literally--.

JA: Absolutely.

MJ: This nation was founded.

AW: Around, right?

MJ: The natives were the first.

AW: Yeah.

JA: (inaudible - 00:58:25) Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MJ: It is native land. Like it's been happening (inaudible - 00:58:28) over and over.

JA: Shift.

MJ: What I'm- what I'm curious about is--. And that's what I meant about identifying the land, and where we live, and what is the- is the--.

JA: The energy.

MJ: Yeah, the energy of the land and what is the cycle that it's on and what repeated cycle does it exist in, manifest and grow and why--.

JA: So I always say, too, uh-uh--. And just so you know that I'm speaking about Charlotte in general and say, 'Charlotte is a very, um, cross-rodeo sabiki kind of, you know, riddle [Laughs].

MJ: Yeah, it is. This-this-this city--.

JA: Um--.

MJ: For me is circular.

JA: Neutral, passive, you know. Uh, it's a- it's a real interesting energy, and I think if you look back at the history of it, it speaks to that.

MJ: Do you watch a show, *Underground*?

JA: I--. So, I've only watched one episode.

MJ: Yeah, no (inaudible - 00:59:16)

JA: Well--. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. I mean, I don't watch T.V, so--.

MJ: Right.

JA: The only reason--. I started to see people posting about it, and I watched the first episode, and actually one of my friends was starring in the- one of the stars of the first episode.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: And I was like--.

MJ: You gotta keep going.

JA: Is that such and such?

MJ: You gotta keep going.

JA: Nah, I am.

MJ: She said 'Nah.'

[Laughter]

JA: I am, I am.

MJ: It's-it's--.

JA: No. I mean, it's like time, it's a time piece--.

MJ: Yeah.

[Speaker intermittently agrees]

JA: Like actually having time to sit and watch--.

MJ: And I think it's well balanced--.

JA: But no. I--. Yeah.

MJ: Out. It's well balanced out that it shows--.

RW: W-what's--.

MJ: A bunch. It, for me, it's a reference. Like, a reference tool, like a--. Like I said, I'm not really familiar about how the South really works from the root. You know, so I'm learning it, I'm observing it, and I'm like, 'Wow.'

JA: Nah, it's dope. I mean, I-I definitely want to have more time to, like, sit and just, like, plow through it.

MJ: It's like watching a Kara Walker painting.

JA: In defense, I don't watch any series.

MJ: Yeah. Right, right, right. That's fair.

JA: You know, like-like when I sit and watch it, I sit and watch it. So it's really just--.

MJ: You gotta binge it out, like--.

JA: Finding the time. Yeah, I can't--.

AW: We don't have that much longer, right?

JA: We got ten minutes, yeah.

MJ: Oh. I--.

AW: (inaudible - 01:00:19)

JA: Maybe five.

MJ: Loving how it goes.

AW: Uh, question- just the second half: *Where do you see yourself in ten years? Where are we going collectively?* 'Cause, and I ask this because--.

JA: [Chuckles]

AW: Like--.

JA: Yo, those questions stress me out so much.

AW: Yeah. Yeah and that's the thing, like-like as artists, I don't think er--.

JA: They're so--..

AW: Ask those k questions enough.

JA: I--. Yeah, I mean--.

MJ: Ten years?

AW: And I don't even- and I don't even mean like, 'As an artist where are you gonna be' I mean, I don't know. Like, that's something I--.

MJ: I just- I want my own school.

AW: Really?

JA: Nice.

MJ: Mm-hmm. I want a school.

JA: Yeah.

MJ: I don't know how it's gonna happen.

JA: I'm envious of people who can answer those questions.

AW: [Chuckles]

JA: I mean, and-and-and--.

AW: But is that always a bad thing?

JA: In defense of not, um, what? To be able to answer it?

AW: Yeah, just that-that--.

JA: Y'all who be able to answer it is dope. I mean--.

AW: No, no, no--.

JA: Like--.

AW: I know. What I'm asking is: is it okay that you don't have like that--?

MJ: Yeah.

AW: Goal?

JA: Uh, I don't know. Well, maybe it is.

MJ: You live in the moment.

AW: Yeah.

JA: Well, the thing that I- the one thing that I know about myself, and at the risk of not sounding cliché and-and making an excuse, is that I'm-I'm a very- I'm in a- I'm in an amazing manifestor.

MJ: Mm.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JA: So the moment I say I want something--.

MJ: It comes. It's on, right?

JA: It's on. It's- it's there, it's in my pocket. So-so, I'm very careful and-and a bit apprehensive about being like, [Pounds table rhythmically] 'I want this in five years.' You know what I mean? So, like- so I- so I'm one of those people who be like, 'Where do you see yourself in five years?' 'Happy,' you know?

[Laughter]

AW: But honestly, J. I think that's bold.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: YEAH.

JA: No, it is.

AW: And I--.

JA: I'm happy now though--.

[Crosstalk]

AW: Yeah.

JA: Like, but you know [Laughs]--.

[Crosstalk ends]

AW: The thing I feel like--. But can continue to be that 'cause I think sometimes--.

JA: Sure.

AW: When you do say, 'I'm gonna do this,' it could limit your scope of where you would go.

JA: Yeah.

RW: I feel you man.

AW: I think, like, you just live in the moment, enjoy the journey--.

JA: Yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AW: And the goal is: in ten years I want to continue to be happy, whatever that entails.

JA: But, like-like for example, so many things — I say to people like, 'Yo, I'm a professional hobbyist,' like for real. People are like, 'Oh, when you gonna have a restaurant?', I'm like, 'Yo, I don't want a restaurant.' Like, I don't- I like to move around

too much, that's too stable for me, you know? But no, but I think- I think- I think it's very valuable to know where you're gonna be. And then you said *In ten years collectively*.

AW: Well, where are we going for like the (inaudible - 01:02:28)

JA: Yeah, where are we going collectively.

MJ: Oh, we have no idea. I want us to get off of repeat.

AW: Yes.

MJ: If we can get off of repeat, I can answer the question.

[Crosstalk]

JA: Yo [Pounds table] it's an interesting thing--.

MJ: We're gonna be right back where we were ten years ago, in ten years.

[Crosstalk ends]

JA: It's an interesting thing, uh about what's happening right now, like, in a, um, in, like, the Black community. Um, and-and--.

MJ: Mm, let's all start together.

JA: In the sense of, uh, [Sighs] I don't know. Okay, so, like, there's a Catch-22. There's all these, like, Black think pieces and Black Twitter and, like, you know, like, Black magic and all--. You know, all of this great shit, right? And a lot of that stuff you'll like, 'Yeah,' but some of the stuff, it just gets to the point where I'm like--. Y-you know, like how--.

AW: You can't do it to that.

JA: I can't do it to that.

AW: Yeah.

JA: Like, I can always do Black girl magic, but, like, I can't do the need to have to announce and to--. What I cannot do is continuously fight white people. Like, I have no interest and have no energy — 'I don't give a fuck what y'all do.' You know what I'm saying--.

AW: No--.

JA: Like, at the sake of, like, y-you know, you're-you're gonna be who you're gonna be, right?

MJ: Right.

JA: You're gonna do what you're gonna do.

MJ: And so--.

JA: So all I have time to focus on is my own, like, you know, beauty and greatness. And, like, I don't care; I don't care if you come, I don't care if you buy my art, I don't care- like, people be like, 'I'm trying to get the white dollar to--.' I don't care.

AW: No.

JA: I don't care--.

MJ: Money's green.

JA: Yeah. I just want--. You know? And-and, like, I have no energy to think about whether or not you are looking at my hair a certain kind of way or what--. Like, and some of that stuff is like I just don't call certain experiences into myself, so like white girls don't come and touch my hair all the time.

MJ: Mm-mm.

RW: [Chuckles]

AW: Right.

JA: [Chuckles]

MJ: Right.

AW: But, here's the thing. I-I think I-I agree with you a hundred percent, 'cause you know what? White people aren't sitting around concerned what--.

MJ: About our--.

AW: The fuck we think--.

JA: Absolutely.

AW: Like, you know why? 'Cause there's like--.

JA: Yeah.

AW: Wh-why-why should I care what the fuck they think? Now, I agree with you; we shouldn't like — 'Alright. You don't like my shit? O-okay, I wasn't really talking to you.'

MJ: Waiting for you, too.

JA: So it's like--.

AW: Yeah.

JA: Yeah, like Black Lives Matter. Like [Pounds table] of course. Like, all they, one hundred percent, they always have, they always will. But where are we going collectively? Yo, I don't know.

MJ: I'm--.

JA: It goes back to that circle you were talking about.

MJ: I'm totally like--. I speak to my daughter on a regular basis, and I'm really in love with her fervor and her passion--.

JA: Yeah.

MJ: About the no fuckery.

JA: Sure, sure.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MJ: Right now. She's like 'I can fuss', and she's calling people out, and she's, like, really on it and they're very [Snaps fingers] aware about their advocacy and what they really affiliate with, and what they ally with. So, I think for those movements, and to power up collectively, it's working for them, you know? And I'm like, 'Oh, wow. That's cute.' You know, not cute, but--.

AW: Yeah, I feel you.

MJ: To just--. Not to, you know, diminish it in any way. But it's making them strong collectively, but they're not--. I-I -I track back and I'm like, 'Wait, my mom went through this in the 70s. I went through this in the 90s,' you know what I'm saying? So then that's when I say kinda step over heat--.

JA: It's a circle, yeah.

MJ: It's a twenty year cycle. But let's see where they go with it — maybe it propels it up, spirals it up. And she's also playing with the new theory of that the ozone layer is deteriorating; so, is our connectivity to the cosmos like open. Like, is there a hole for us to transmit better.

JA: I like it. When I-When I went--.

MJ: Right.

JA: To see Nikki Giovanni, she talked so much about space, yo. It was so dope. So, like, noticing that, like, there's so much conversation right now about--.

MJ: Space.

JA: Like, the next planet. Like, there's really a lot of, like, regular conversation.

AW: It's good.

MJ: About?

JA: About the next planet and, like, how to, inhabit. But everywhere you go, there you are. So, motherfucker, you better get your habits in order.

[Laughter]

JA: [Laughs] Before you leave here--.

MJ: Yeah.

JA: Before you go somewhere else and fuck that up--.

AW: Fuck it up, too, right?

MJ: I'm going to see Prince.

JA: Too, you know?

MJ: I don't know about y'all, but I'm going to my Prince concert in the sky.

[Chuckling]

JA: [Chuckles] Yeah.

RW: I think I saw somebody, uh, selling real estate on Mars now. I'm like straight up, it was like buy an acre of land on Mars for like--.

MJ: Wow.

JA: From who? Who we buying it from?

RW: That's not (inaudible - 01:06:29)

JA: Get outta here.

AW: I was about to say that.

JA: Get outta here.

AW: You buy it, then like two months later--.

MJ: (inaudible - 01:06:32)

AW: It's gonna be gentrified.

RW: [Laughs]

AW: It's like, 'Oh (inaudible - 01:06:35) is new.

RW: Yo, we--.

MJ: Wow.

AW: Maybe (inaudible - 01:06:36)

RW: This is right beside the glacier, so it's the value is a little bit higher.

AW: Yeah.

RW: You'll have to take that, you know?

JA: Whew, I gotta get movin'.

MJ: Where you going? Oh, you got--.

JA: Well, I have Su CASA. [Laughs] Yeah.

RW: Absolutely.

JA: Yeah. Got some errands to run in the meantime.

MJ: Can I have this pen? I like pens.

AW: Have at it.

MJ: Is this anyone's pen?

RW: No.

JA: No.

MJ: (inaudible - 01:06:57)

JA: Have it.

RW: You gotta ask, um, Heather about that one.

JA: Do you collect pens?

MJ: I do.

JA: Oh, you're such a Cancer. I forgot.

MJ: [Laughs]

JA: People in my-my-my house, like, you know, my daughter is a Cancer, I know--.

MJ: --I know. She collects shit.

JA: They're like- they give it to her. They're like, 'You're a hoarder', she's like 'Not a hoarder.'

MJ: 'Not a hoarder. They all have significant meaning.'

AW: Yeah.

MJ: Like, it don't mean nothing.

RW: Mm.

AW: Well you had all those--?

MJ: But this one, I just like the tip. And that's what she said.

[Laughter]

JA: Right. That is- that is definitely what she said.

MJ: [Laughs]

RW: I like that. I like where you went with that.

MJ: [Laughs] Thank you, thank you.

RW: Um--.

MJ: Yeah. It- Oh, it's a nice--. Um, I just- I catch myself (inaudible - 01:07:33)
stupid little things like that.

RW: Yeah.

MJ: But yeah, I like how it writes. It wrote very nicely.

RW: Mm.

[Speaker intermittently agrees]

MJ: This was awesome.

RW: Absolutely, yeah.

AW: Yeah.

RW: Y-yeah, this- I would like to do this, like, all the time. There's like a--.

MJ: We need to.

RW: Like a revolving, you know, Black Lunch Table.

JA: It was good, but I think it's an interesting dynamic that we all knew each other. I don't think the other tables all knew each other.

MJ: Oh.

AW: Yeah.

JA: Right?

MJ: That's kinda cool.

JA: W-We're may be the only table--.

AW: Yeah, we are.

RW: I mean, well, um--.

AW: Yeah.

RW: I- this is only my second time meeting you.

MJ: Right

RW: I've known you--.

MJ: We've been (inaudible - 01:08:06)

[Crosstalk]

RW: Plenty of times, but I don't think I've ever sat and, like, listened to you talk like that.

[RW and JA's separate conversation - 01:08:11 to 01:09:33]

JA: Who me?

RW: Yeah, straight up.

JA: C'mon, Ryan, but I've known you for ten years.

RW: [Laughs] I know right?

JA: Get out of here.

RW: I feel like I gotten, like, so much knowledge from you, though. On some real stuff, like--.

JA: Like, what do you mean? What were we doing in the past?

RW: Like, obviously I've known like, Jasiatic. 'Oh, that's Jasiatic walking by.' Like, I've known like--.

JA: But we've sat on the phone and talked. What are you talking about?

RW: This is true, but I feel like--. This, like (inaudible - 01:08:35) And then like, I love it though. It's like, 'Wow. Like, J, that's where I feel--. You know, I mean--. But--.

JA: Yeah, it's different.

RW: Also and like, I love listening to people who have, like, an insight. We were talking about mentors and stuff like that? Like--.

JA: Mm-hmm.

RW: I don't feel like I have a certain mentor mentor, but--.

JA: Yeah.

RW: Like, y'all. Like, this-this collective of, like people that are like, 'Okay, that's something that on right now.' So--.

JA: Right.

RW: I'm gonna listen to you, and maybe--.

JA: Sure.

[Speaker intermittently agrees]

RW: Plus with the whole idea, like the ten year plan.--. Like, I don't think I have a ten year plan, but I think it's something more intangible of like-- being to- getting to a place where, you know--.

RW: The things I feel I'm deficient in. You know, I can go to the people I care about and, like, draw from their experiences to help me become a better person along the way. You know, so it's like- that's why I like the first one I went to and then this one is just, like--.

JA: And you went to the one this morning?

RW: Mm-hmm.

JA: How was that?

RW: Man, yo, it was- I was- like I was telling 'Toine, I said--.

[End of JA and RW's separate conversation]

[MJ and AW's separate conversation - 01:08:11 to 01:09:33]

MJ: Technically, this is our first time sitting and talking with you. But, I met at your opening.

AW: I love that. At your opening, I love what you used, like, 'So where's the Black art community in Charlotte?' Like, that was when you was at your residency.

MJ: Right, right, right. I was still--. I was seeking new (inaudible - 01:08:29)

AW: Yeah, it's okay 'cause that was my last show before I left to go to grad school.

MJ: Wow.

AW: Yeah, and it was like--.

MJ: Here we are back at this table right now.

AW: Yeah, I just--. Yeah.

MJ: I still haven't really founded, like, without feeling like--.

AW: Yeah.

MJ: That's how (inaudible - 01:08:41) you really really worked hard for this.

(inaudible - 01:08:46) This is how I feel. You're the only one that I think has really extended a hand.

AW: Oh, really?

MJ: Yeah.

AW: And that's so weird, like I feel bad 'cause it's just like I want to talk to you more, and it's like--.

MJ: Yeah. But you're busy, like you got (inaudible - 01:08:59) is amazing.

Amazing. He's the only reason --him and Susan Paige-- are the only reason why I made it through (inaudible - 01:09:08)

AW: Right.

MJ: That place was murderous. Murderous. [Laughs]

AW: I can see that.

MJ: They were murderous and I didn't even know why they accepted me, that was some tokenability shit. You know what I mean? Like, 'We need a Black person--.'

AW: Yeah

MJ: 'To fill our quota,' you know what I'm saying? But it was- it was excruciating to me to be there. They didn't understand anything I was talking about--.

HEATHER HART: Thank you guys so much today, if you could, like--.

MJ: Chalked it up to a lack of technique and I was like--.

[End of MJ and AW's separate conversation]

RW: Mm-hmm.

HH: Wrap your conversations up or stay all night, I don't care [Claps]

RW: [Chuckles]

AW: Yeah.

HH: That was awesome. Yeah--.

JA: Thank you.

AW: Yeah.

RW: Thank you.

AW: J, this was the first time we talked this long. It was cool, man.

JA: Yeah, it was good.

AW: Damn.

JA: That's what he was saying, but I'm like, 'We've known each other for ten years.

AW: Well, we've known each other, but you know, you were doing- you were doing stuff, I'm doing stuff and--.

JA: Yeah.

AW: To just sit down and talk was cool, man, like--.

RW: That's what's up.

MJ: Wow.

AW: Yeah, I talk about it. While I was in grad school, I would, like, talk about you all the time, like, 'I know- I know this, uh--.'

JA: [Laughs]

AW: 'This, uh, woman in Charlotte. She's like runnin' shit, G.'

JA: Aw. Whatever. No I'm not.

AW: You think I'm joking, you think joking.

JA: That is so funny.

AW: I do it over there. I told him about--.

RW: Know about them?

AW: Like, 'cause I would talk about, like, the shit that we're doing here and I would tell him how different it was when we were--. Like, this sterile grad-school shit, I'm like, 'Nah.'

JA: Right.

AW: Like, I would--. John, God Gity, like-- I would say, like 'There's people doing real stuff.'

JA: Yeah.

MJ: You guys be careful. I just want to jump over there and see what they're talking about.

AW: No, you're good.

JA: Yeah, absolutely.

AW: We gotta get out.

RW: (inaudible - 01:10:26)

JA: This courtesy. I gotta head out.

Unknown: Go on and get in that conversation.

JA: My, um--. You know what (inaudible - 01:10:31) cordural? Coma?

MJ: Is it--? Oh, wait. Huh?

JA: The jeweler in (inaudible - 01:10:38)?

AW: What's up (inaudible - 01:10:37)?

JA: That's a new rock and roll--.

RW: You going over there? You're going over there? I'mma go over here and bug--.

JA: You used to live in Atlanta though--.

Unknown: What's his name?

MJ: Just name him to me--.

Unknown: His name is (inaudible - 01:10:45)

[Mic movement]

Unknown: He's my (inaudible - 01:10:49) he's out of town.

JA: Oh, okay.

AW: He's like, 'Yo, that's crazy 'cause (inaudible - 01:10:58) the same thing.'

[Distant conversations]

[Mic movement]

CLT_042316_ART3

AW: Just hit record again? [Chuckles]

END OF RECORDING

Transcribed by: Andres Molina 02/13/2021

To be copyedited.