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Participants:
PETE JOHNSON
DAVID McCLELLAND
DEBORAH ANDERSON
BRANDON WASHINGTON
ERICA CHRISTMAS
DUANE SLICK
ALERION ANGELIN
Length: 01:10:18

Preface

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

Readers should keep in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word and are encouraged to refer directly to the original audio if possible as some interactions and utterances may not have been transcribed due to the nature of unscripted group conversations. The views, thoughts, and opinions expressed in the text belong solely to the roundtable participants and do not necessarily reflect the views of Black Lunch Table.

START OF RECORDING

JINA VALENTINE: You guys are set. Whenever you have your food, and are ready, you can open up your packet and start.

DA: Okay.

[Pause]

PJ: Wait, what's everybody folding right now?

DMC: This is the one I'm taking home.

PJ: Oh, gotcha. Okay.

DMC: And this one, I guess, is for Heather.

[Pause]

PJ: So this is the packet? [Mic feedback]

DMC: That'd be great. I'll let you open.

[Pause]

PJ: So, just the four of us? [Sings to the tune of Bill Withers' *Just the Two of Us*]

Just the four of us.

[Pause]

PJ: All right, *Discuss the recent influx of non-natives to New Orleans as it relates to housing prices and community.*

BW: We'd already kinda started talking about that.

PJ: Right. Uh--.

DMC: We did.

DA: Make sure you say your name.

BW: We can start over.

PJ: Oh, yeah.

DMC: We might wanna introduce ourselves. I think they're gonna do voice recognition. [Mic feedback] Is that on?

JV: Voice recognition? Yeah, it's on. You are being recorded.

DMC: Yes.

PJ: Mm-hmm.

JV: [Laughs] Um, did you all go around and introduce yourselves?

DMC: We did not. We're just about to start.

BW: Do we have to hold it when we speak, or does it just pick us up?

JV: Okay, so this is table number two/eight--.

BW: Yes.

DA: We were originally slash eight- er, eight [chuckles].

JV: Um, at New Orleans, and everyone's gonna go around and introduce themselves and--. Yeah, however you guys wanna divvy up the cards, there's a lot of questions. Thanks.

[Pause]

PETE JOHNSON: I am, um, my name is Pete Johnson. I'm from Kenner, Louisiana.

DAVID McCLELLAND: I'm David McClelland, from Andover, New York.

DEBORAH ANDERSON: Um, my name is Debra Anderson. I'm originally from Detroit, Michigan, and I've been in New Orleans since 2008.

BRANDON WASHINGTON: Hi, I'm Brandon Washington. I was born and raised in New Orleans, East, and spent a good chunk of my life in Mississippi.

ERICA CHRISTMAS: My name's Erica Christmas. Uh, I've been in the city for about a year now, I'm from New York.

PJ: Okay. So, uh, again, the first question we have here is: *Discuss the recent influx of non-natives to New Orleans as it relates to housing prices and community.*

DMC: I may defer this question to you guys, because I'm a non-native who doesn't live here and I haven't seen very much of what's happening.

BW: Um, I was thinking about what you said earlier, about people moving to the city because of the beauty and the visual and the culture, and I think a lot of the culture that's in New Orleans itself is the people, so if they get priced out, what does that do to the culture? Since most people who've contributed to the culture tend to be lower income, also, in the city. When I say 'culture' I mean like- just like brass bands and mostly music.

DMC: And food.

BW: Food, yes, but the food is more- less socio-economic than the- than the music.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DA: I think, um, it's a--. I-I've asked this question of how do- how does New Orleans progress as a city, but also keep its culture at the same time? Like, it's like it seems impossible in-in what New Orleans culture is based around, because, yeah, um, they're remodeling of, like, where I used to work in O'Keefe, in (inaudible: 00:04:23) area or it looks totally different from where- when I worked there two years ago, and I'm like, 'Who're they doing this for?' And because--. Okay, we have G.E., but who else is buying these houses that are priced so high? I don't--. Like, what are- what other companies are here that pay that amount of money where these people could take? Or is it the Airbnb people who buy and then--? Because that's a situation that's- that I've read recently in an article of how they're gonna have a lawsuit with that because you're coming to-into a residential neighborhood and then, all these tra- like, these visitors are coming into your neighborhood and messing up what your neighborhood should be, and coming in drunk when there's like areas for that. Like, even those areas, like in

Frenchman, people are complaining, 'Okay, I'm in- I moved by Frenchman Street, but why are these people wild at night?' And it's like, 'Did you know where you were moving?' [Laughs] So it's like all this stuff.

BW: Kind of. I feel like a lot the, like, the bars in the residential areas, they're all very intermingled, so the-the loudness--. I'm not sure how to describe that, 'cause I'm thinking of, let's say, the issue that came up with Mimi's in the Marigny all the- all the houses in the area didn't have a problem with Mimi's, or, if they did, they didn't say anything, and then a new owner moved right next door to Mimi's, and it felt like they're just- they weren't familiar with it and then they started complaining, like--. Then the whole culture of the area changed — well, the culture didn't change significantly, but they stopped having music on.

PJ: And I--.

BW: They stopped having music at all.

PJ: And I think it's that- I think it's a delicate balance because the world is, like, very much the country itself, it is a melting pot. It's people from all over who want to come here and be here in the city, right? So, it's trying to find that-that balance between what is native and what's considered native, and then what, like, what is considered acceptable to, uh, I guess, like, furthering whatever the identity of the city is, but everybody--. Because they're so many layers, and there are so many who have interest in the city now, there is, um, there-there're a whole lot of differing, uh, opinions about wh-what the world is now, you know.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DA: Yeah, and I feel like the people who move down here because they like the culture of New Orleans, and then they move to a certain n-neighborhood and I guess they didn't realize what they were getting into with 24 Hour New Orleans and now they want to change it, and it's like 'But you came here because you liked it and now you're changing it to what--.'

PJ: This is a 24-hour city.

DA: Yeah.

BW: I have a q-question, you guys are from others- you've been to other cities? I haven't been to many other cities, um, with entertainment and with residential--. I guess what I'm asking is that it is very much separated from neighborhoods, like the entertainment's here, the neighborhood's there, whereas New Orleans, it's very much intermingled.

EC: Yeah. I mean--.

PJ: I haven't been anywhere that-that has been, like, where-where things have been so integrated. Where it's just like, 'This is what it is. Like, this is a part of everyday.' Like, you can walk out at any time, anywhere, and-and there is s- there is some type of art, there is some type of life here in the city, you know? And I have--. Like, I definitely have not found that that's the case everywhere else.

BW: Then maybe that's what's causing issues; people aren't used to, like, that happening.

PJ: Yeah.

EC: Yeah. I mean, I used to live in Boston for, like, seven months and, uh, they were having a very similar problem, not in terms of, like, their actual overall culture, but

just in terms of, like, the house show scene and the music scene because they were, like, a lot of, like, underground venues that run houses and DIY spots that were, like, getting shut down because of neighbors' complaints. And so it's really interesting to, like, be here for a year and see that that's happening, and, I mean, I still don't feel like I-I'm adequate enough to, like, really speak on the issue, but, um, it's just kind of strange to me. It's like, why would you come down to New Orleans of all places and then expect it to be, like, quiet and suburban, you what I mean? This is just really strange.

BW: Because I think they expected it to be over there.

EC: Yeah, and not--.

BW: Be very separate. Like, they figured it was all on Bourbon and all Frenchmen, and not at the end of the c- end of the block.

PJ: Permeated everywhere, yeah.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

DMC: Well, it also must be interesting for you though in East New Orleans, where you have a Vietnamese community that appears, you know, all of a sudden, literally, because it wasn't a long gradual process. They were refugees in (inaudible: 00:09:01). All of a sudden they've established a spot, and now you're getting a Hispanic community that's intermingling with that and you have, uh, the group of Vietnamese who feel like, 'Oh, but this was our neighborhood,' and you're thinking--. Well, that's a fairly short memory in a way. [Laughs]

[Laughter]

BW: Yeah, I don't know a lot about the Vietnamese community, I was- I guess I was too young to really think about it. All I knew was they had their little pocket in the East. And I-I feel like it wasn't an issue with the--.

PJ: The seafood.

BW: Other communities, they were just--. Yeah.

DA: I know [Clears throat] from- from my boyfriend living--. I mean, he's from Metairie, Kenner — one of those, and--.

PJ: One of those. [Laughs]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DA: [Laughs] Um, from before Katrina, like that- the-the like where, uh, the neighborhood by Lakeside Mall being all a certain color and then seeing so many Hispanic people come in is just, like, new, and then when you go to different neighborhoods in New Orleans where it was all Black and you see, like, some white person jogging [Laughs] down the street, exercising, and you're like, 'They'd never would have been there before Katrina.' And it's--. I like- I-I guess it's like a culture shock for people who live here [Laughs] because the dynamics of the neighborhoods are changing so much, but that's because people were pushed out before people had to take their place.

PJ: And again, that's like when I- when I talk about walking that-that fine line. It's between the-the idea identity of what New Orleans was and always has been, and-and reconciling that with--. I mean--. Like, y--. Katrina--. I mean, er, it changed everything. Like, there's- there is no doubt about that, and it's- it's crazy to think that we were a part of, like, literally, a watershed moment in History, like something that has happened, and

has changed the dynamics of, like, one of the-the oldest cities, here--. And, in, like, in America. And New Orleans is about to celebrate its tricentennial. America isn't even 300 years old, you know what I mean?

[Laughter]

PJ: Like, and it's crazy to think about that. It's crazy to think about we're in this city that has so much history, and so much, uh, culture and the-the one of the-the major parts of what makes New Orleans what it is is the fact that there are so many people that come into the city and love the city, and decide to stay in the city. So, you don't want those people to leave, but you also don't want people to-to shift [Pause] the things that people love so much about New Orleans already, especially the people that have been here all their lives.

BW: I feel like change is fine, it's just--. I guess it's the type of change that people feel like is happening that's the problem.

PJ: Yeah, right.

DMC: Or perhaps the thought that goes behind that change.

BW: The intent, yeah.

EC: The intention, basically.

DA: And, I mean, a big thing about New Orleans is its architecture, and when you're progressing, you're not gonna build, like, a Victorian, or, like, old-school house, you're--.

EC: You're not gonna replicate it, you're gonna make it to your standard.

DA: Yeah, you're--. And because it's more expensive to do it that way, you're gonna build up these, like, skyscrapers that don't look like New Orleans, but that's how people build things these days.

BW: I mean--.

EC: Well, there's cheaper costs and, yeah, they don't have to worry about the repercussions 'cause they're not gonna be living in these houses, you know?

PJ: But, honestly, like, when people come to New Orleans, like, friends and family who've, like, never really been here, who, kinda wanna explore the city. It's funny because I think the-the randomness of the architecture plays into what New Orleans is as well, right?

DA: Mm-hmm.

PJ: And so it's like--. I-I like to always tell people it's like a child designed the city; 'I'm gonna throw this here, throw this here--.'

DA: Especially the traffic. [Laughs]

EC: [Chuckles]

PJ: No, that's right. No, like, seriously, it's just like--. I mean--.

DA: This is the dumbest intersection ever.

PJ: No one had no--. Right, no one had any rhyme or reason.

BW: Have you been on the intersection down Saint Bernard?

PJ: Trying to make a left turn in the city is nuts, 'cause it's like, you know, like, 'I need to go right here, but I have to drive two miles before I can turn here,' you know what I mean? Like, there's this- there are so many nuances to the city. Um--.

DMC: But that's also part of the charm.

PJ: Yeah, exactly.

DMC: I mean, yes, we all do kind of think 'How am I gonna do this when five streets come together (inaudible: 00:13:31)?'

PJ: [Laughs]

DMC: (inaudible: 00:13:34)

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DA: Yeah, but when people visit--. I mean--. First of all, you tell them to go on a diet because food is the tourism here, and then, I take them to Saint Charles to see the houses, like, to see the architecture. That's what I do. I-I mean, if there are any suggestions wherever- for wherever else I should take people to see architecture, that'll be much--.

PJ: Nah, I mean tha- that's- that's pretty good. I think, around that area, you could get (inaudible: 00:13:59).

DA: Yeah.

PJ: Yeah.

BW: All right, you guys ready?

EC: Yeah.

BW: We're on two next, here we go--.

DS: What's this?

PJ: So, we, uh, we just go to the next card.

DS: Yeah.

DA: Oh, introduce yourself right quick.

DS: Oh. Hi.

[Laughter]

DMC: Y-you have to have- you have to speak into it, so that they'll get a record.

DUANE SLICK: Hi, I'm Duane Slick. Is that it?

DMC: Yeah.

DS: Okay.

BW: So, the next card says: *There are 100,000 fewer African Americans living in New Orleans than there were 11 years* — and it stops there. I'm- I assume that it means "ago."

EC: "Ago," yeah.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

DA: If we can do it that way, we will.

BW: Or--.

[Laughter]

BW: *There is national media attention that's centered on solitary confinement, prisoner abuse, death row, and Angola. Discuss the local injustice system; Blacks in NOLA: 59 percent. Blacks in NOLA prisons: 90 percent.*

EC: Wow. I think a lot of that has to do with the schools here, too. Like, the institutions. Like, I do a lot of teaching work in the charter school system as well as for non for profit, and like--. It's just really horrible, like, how they treat these kids; like, they're forced to walk in the hallway in lines with, like, their arms crossed, and, like,

there's very little room for, like, creative expression. And they're kind of just waiting, the teachers --at least from what I gathered-- they're- they're waiting for these kids to fail so that they can, sort of, like, send them to detention, or whatever other disciplinary action they have for them. And, I mean, it just makes you think about, like, how-how fucked the school system is everywhere, but especially here. And, like, how- how can you change this? Because there's obviously a school to prison pipeline, and they're also, too, thinking about Angola and the amount of inmates that are currently residing there. I don't know, it just- all of it just seems really skewered that it's like, whenever I think about it, like, I try to think about, like, how can we prevent this from an early age. Like, how can we, like, curve this attitude, especially towards, like, young Black men youth in general?

PJ: I think it's a- I think it's a vicious cycle.

EC: Yeah.

[EC intermittently agrees]

PJ: Um, talking about the (inaudible: 00:16:15), right? And, like, that's- that's always hard to identify. Like, where- where has this started, right? One thing's own up- that my family has always emphasized for me is, um, your attitude and-and your beliefs generally start at home, right? And so they're homebased and whatever you have there usually constitutes, uh, what, like, what your foundation is. And so, um, I don't know, and that's- that's- it's- it's- that's- that's hard because, like, you go to school and expect to-to, like, that-that's where you go educate, right?

EC: To learn.

PJ: But, um, not to mention the way that the-the school system is set up — even before charter schools. You know, like, I remember being in school and everything was just kind of—. It-it seemed a little bit more-more free-willing, which is not necessarily a bad thing. But I've seen, like, the way that the charter schools are, and everything is very robotic. Everything is very, 'This is how, like- this is how things are done.' And, I don't know, I think that on-on one hand I can see, um—. So I would - I would—. So I served in the military for four years, so I understand, like, the need for-for structure and for discipline. You know, like—. But again, it's about finding that balance, and I think charter schools are unbalanced. But I-I also believe that, like, the-the, like, the school system outside the charter system is, like, thin. We have to be able to find some, like, some type of, like, middle ground and work for people, um, to progress and be able to understand things while also, um, still being able to be themselves. Because I think that's, like at the heart, people still wanna be able to be who they are without being, like, told—.

EC: Judged or criticized.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DA: There was just recently a, um, a seven year old somewhere, where he got in trouble. He—. They threatened to suspend him because he had like a long part in his hair and it's just like... Like, when I was in school, high school, like, people came, like, spiked — even in middle school — people came with spiked hair, how does that distract? Like, all you're doing is, like, 'Oh, my gosh, they have spiked hair and then you're with class.'

PJ: (inaudible: 00:18:35).

BW: The why is really important.

PJ: That what's up?

BW: The why is really important.

PJ: Exactly. Why-why're you distracted about this? Don't worry about--. But, like, why are you distracted by that?

DA: It's the administrators and teachers that are dis-distracted more than the students, but--.

DMC: It seems like this is a microcosm of the larger problem, which is controlling behavior, and who gets to define what behavior is really threatening? I mean, is it really, honestly, gonna disrupt school if it's on the left or the right? Your part?

DA: Yes, the right--. Yeah, because, um, when with this zero tolerance policy, broken window policy that's in the charter school system, it's setting them up for failure. And, like, you were saying earlier, if you compare to wherever else in the world that they do this is in prison. Like, what, you have to walk on a line, or you have to, like, raise your hand--.

EC: Or you get points for being good.

DA: In a -in a s- in a 90 degree angle or you're in trouble. And--. It's just- it's, like, ridiculous.

EC: Yeah, that's just crazy. And, like, they actually- in some charter schools, they actually give you little, like, stickers or cards for being good, and it's like they don't really allow these kids--.

DA: In high school?

EC: Yeah, in high school, in middle school, at like elementary school, and it's just like- it's just a really warped way of thinking because it's like how do you what's good for these kids? You don't know their trauma or where they come from, you're not trying to learn that.

BW: I feel like that kind of system would cause trauma.

DA: Yeah.

EC: Yeah, exactly.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DA: It's a- it's a different culture because it's, like, whether it's Teach For America or teachNOLA, people who are either white or of a different socioeconomic s-status, and, like, how do you determine what is proper behavior for someone you don't know? So it's like if you go to these schools that they came from, that's not how you discipline the children, so why is it how you discipline Black children? Like, where do you get this from? That is not from your history. [Laughs] And we're just like--. I mean, I'm not personally a loud person, but that's--. I mean, we're just flamboyant sometimes and expressive, and even when I become and en- expressive about stuff, people are, like, intimidated and it's just like, 'Well, I feel, like, strongly about this, so I'm gonna, like, raise my tone and be more expressive, but I'm not gonna hit you.' [Laughs]

PJ: You just wanna express that.

DS: Are the p- are the people enforcing this? Like, imposing us where (inaudible: 00:20:58) children. Are they, um, Black or are they white?

DA: They're mostly white.

EC: White, mostly white. Yeah. And mostly through, like, Teach for America or like, you know--.

DA: Like--.

PJ: Mostly people who are not from here.

DA: Yeah.

BW: A lot of the teachers here aren't from here, yeah.

DA: Yeah because New Orleans is very different in that way. And when I first moved in to New Orleans, I was working in- as an intern in, um, one of the, um, elementary schools on the Westbank in Algiers and they had--. During that school year --I only worked there for a year-- during that school year, they had three sixth grade teachers, all Teach For America, and the first one was the one that lasted the longest, and she was pretty good. She just got tired, I guess, but the second one, it's like, where are you--. It's a different culture; where are you from if you come to a Black school and just leave your purse and expect it not to be stolen out of? Like, that's stupid. And it's--. I feel like if you're gonna do the Teach For America thing, you need to teach culture, which apparently it's what they supposedly do, but you don't leave your purse out.
[Laughs]

EC: Anywhere, whether it's a white school or a Black school, yeah. Like, some of these--. And yeah.

PJ: And the thing is--. That's- that's another question: how do you teach a culture?

EC: That don't know.

PJ: Yeah, I-I (inaudible: 00:22:14)

BW: Without, um, forming, like, a prejudice or something.

PJ: What's that?

BW: Without forming a prejudice or something.

PJ: Exactly. You know, like, because you're- y-you understand your culture. I-I think until you are actually immersed in another culture, and you've been there for a while, like you can't come to New Orleans and expect to go to, like, some training classes and, like, understand what New Orleans is all about, what the culture of New Orleans is, you can't do that. Like, this place is--. I mean, it's its own space, it's-it's like another country. So you have to come here- but you have to be here to understand what--. I've been here, I mean, almost my whole life, and I'm still, like, figuring things out, you know what I mean?

DA: Yeah, 'cause--. I mean, I actively want to do that and then there's that thing where if you mention, uh, Lusher or, uh, a Jesuit, there's like- people are like, 'Oh, okay.' And there's like whole- this whole story that people have in their minds if you mention a-a (inaudible: 00:23:10) thirty-five, and it's just like, 'What is that story?' I'm so lost. Like, when you're going into this conversation, there's this whole back story that people bring with them, so that they're all on the same page and I'm just like outside looking in, like, 'Okay, I guess--.'

BW: That's going back to the previous question about how, like, people don't leave their communities. Like, it's very much--. Even within the city, every community is like--. It's like going to a different--. It's like a different country, but like there's definitely a change in the culture from block to block — not block to block, but from, like, community to community.

PJ: So, I feel like we addressed a lot of stuff...

[Chuckling]

PJ: But we haven't discussed--. Ali right, *There are 100,000 fewer African Americans living in New Orleans than there were 11 years ago.*

EC: Wow.

BW: They're in Texas.

PJ: There- they are.

EC: Yeah.

DA: Or in Florida.

EC: Or Atlanta.

PJ: (inaudible: 00:24:01) Katrina--. I mean, I don't think there's anyone that can (inaudible: 00:24:07) really argue --and people have tried to-- that-that Katrina was not, um, like the (inaudible: 00:24:14) experience for, like, the city. There are people--. I remember I was at L.S.U one time when-when the storm happened. I remember watching the news and seeing all the stuff happening back here in New Orleans. It was nuts, but we would have discussions in class and I remember there were people who weren't from New Orleans who would say things like, 'Well, that is- that--. It was probably for the- for the best,' you know what I mean? I-I would hear people say that, 'Oh, it was probably for the best that that happened.' You know, like, New Orleans needed to be--. It-it-it's crazy 'cause it, like, there were--.

BW: Is this, like, a Christian community maybe? I--.

PJ: No, I mean--.

DA: Like, Vodou and Sodom and Gomorrah? [Laughs]

BW: 'Cause a lot of the times they have a bad reputation.

[Laughter]

EC: Yeah.

PJ: (inaudible: 00:25:00) talk about the city being purged. You know, and-and New Orleans, and-and Katrina being a good thing for the city. Um, so-so the discussion for me is less about, like--. I can- I can in some ways agree with the fact that New Orleans- I mean, that Katrina was both a-a curse and blessing. I think a lot of people, just like we talked about earlier, would've never left from the confines of New Orleans, had to, they forced to and sometimes that's what life is, right? You're forced into situations that you're not comfortable with, but it makes--. It-it helps you to grow as a person. There are people who have like seen different stuff now, and they-they're probably out like exploring the world now because it's like, 'Woah, there's- there's a whole lot more going on than just New Orleans.' But it also opened up a door for a lot of people to come in and change what the city was originally. Uh, but, you know, like, pre-storm, and I think that's kinda now, like, eleven years later, that's still like things that we're grappling with, you know, with trying to figure out how to accommodate, um, the-the outgoing of the natives and the influx of the non-natives.

EC: I mean, a similar thing has been happening in New York, um, especially from like, I feel, like, the 70s and 80s of New York City, like, it was, like, completely desolate, it was crime filled according to most people. Uh, it was mainly, like, African Americans and people of color. Um, white flight had happened, people were moving to the suburbs and then now that you look at New York now, and kind of just like--. It makes me afraid

for here because it's like, you know, if we don't strike that balance here then it will become like a Brooklyn or like- you know, it will become what New York City is right now, where it's just too much money coming in, too much power being assigned to, like, the top 3 percent, or the top 2 percent, and the locals not really having a say in, like, what goes down.

PJ: That's exactly what's happening now.

EC: Yeah, but I mean--. Yeah, yeah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DA: And that--. I went to school in upstate New York. Like, I have a lot of people who I went to school with who are from New York city, and sometimes they're like posting these articles, in jest, tongue-in-cheek, where they'll say, 'Oh, the- the, um, the ten best Caribbean restaurants in — er, new Caribbean restaurants in New York City,' and it's just like- all these people are like, 'These aren't new.' Like, do you know what New York City is? And then, what if that, like, happens to New Orleans, like, 'The-the ten new-new--. A new trend of cajun food.' And it's just like, 'That's always been here.'
[Laughs]

EC: Yeah, I mean--.

BW: It's to sell the city. It's not for a- you. Yes, it's for somebody else.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

PJ: And thar--. I-I think that is- that's- it's hard to reconcile how it feels because--. All right, so I left from here from, like--. I moved away, I guess, from New Orleans in 2004, and moved- I was out in Baton Rouge, going to LSU, right? So, I wasn't too far, um, but I-I still wasn't here. And then, after- so Katrina happened, that was in 2005, I left

to go into military in, uh, the summer of 2008, so coming back here in 2012 and seeing the city, on one hand it was- it was- it was awesome because of it's like, 'Man, there's so much going on in New Orleans.' You know, like--. You know, I mean, there's always been a lot going on in New Orleans, but the attention and the, like, the money that's coming into the city, it's like it's- this is awesome. At the same- at the same time--. Like, all right, so you drive, if you drive through these streets, (inaudible - 00:28:43) you see are all these places that are just banged up and, you know, let's talk about (inaudible: 00:28:51), right? When you wonder about the motivation of what is being done in the city because you can drive through certain places and these streets have been terrible for, like, years, decades, you know? And then you go to other places, now there's all this construction going on, but who's it being done for? Who's it being done for? And it's good that it's being done, but what is the motivation behind what you're doing? And that's- that's the question that I always have. Like, I'm glad this is being done, but--.

BW: It's how I feel about the streetcar line being put up.

PJ: Right.

[Laughter]

EC: I mean, for a while--. When I first moved here, I was living at 8th ward I think technically, so I was on St. Ferdinand Street and N. Roman St., so past the overpass, it was like really close to St. (inaudible: 00:29:35), um, it was really crazy how that-that area's changed, because when I first moved there, everybody was like, 'What are you doing? That's such a, like, sketchy area, blah, blah, blah.' Um, uh, I really loved it, I got to meet all my neighbors, like I really, like, put my time in because I knew that, like, I wasn't from the city and, like, it'd be really disrespectful of me, being if it's, like, assume.

Um, and I moved from there in October and I've been back since, it's crazy, like--. Now people are calling it the New Marigny, they're like paving in the streets, like, people--. All these homeowners, who have owned their homes for thirty, forty years are selling their homes like crazy. I've never seen so many --no disrespect-- but I've never seen so many white people walking down that street. Ever. And now it's like people are walking their dogs, people jogging, people like walking up to St. Claude to go out. It's like, wow, like--.

DA: And you've only been here a year.

EC: A year, yeah. I've lived in that place for, like, eight months.

BW: It's changing really fast.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DMC: This is an interesting point though because it's the same in our neighborhood in Philadelphia; my neighbors bought their house eight months before we did for \$10,000, and they had it on the market for \$400,000. Two years ago. And as it turned out, um, they did not sell it because they wouldn't go below their price, but that speaks to this issue of the economics. They're African American and they are benefiting from the gentrification in the neighborhood, because they wanted to move to another neighborhood and the issues was schools. And this is so, sort of, universal. Everybody has these-these ideas, like- like, 'Yeah, I'd like a little (inaudible: 00:31:17) because we're a rural house area where they're no- there's no greenery; we're right to the sidewalk. I want a yard for the kids and I want good schools, and now that the neighborhoods gone up, I'd like to cash in on that rise.' So it is- it's an interesting point.

They had the same issues that we did about parking and about the construction of the new condos down the street. It-it's almost, uh, colorblind at that point.

BW: (inaudible: 00:31:47) socioeconomic.

DMC: It's--. Well, it- it's--.

BW: Or economic, yeah.

DMC: Issues. And the issues revolve for around everybody and you can point at them, but where you expected the fault lines to run between the groups, they're running in other directions. And I-I thought that that was a fascinating thing.

EC: And it's very blurry, it's a blurry line because, you know, if you've owned your home for, like, thirty years, twenty years, and they see an opportunity to sell it for more than they bought it for, and to help your family and to, like, feed your grandchildren or feed your kids, then, yeah, you're gonna probably jump on it. But--.

DMC: And not have to fix the roof and not worrying about the foundation that's crumbling.

EC: But it's also really- it's really a gray area because it's like, number 1, who's gonna move to these houses? Number 2, who's approaching you to sell your house? Usually it's like a bigwig investor type who wants to flip it and make it either into an Airbnb or just rent it out for like \$1500 a month. So it's like, you know, where--? Where's the moral high (inaudible: 00:32:46)? Yeah.

PJ: Like you said, it's a gray area.

EC: Yeah.

PJ: Because it's like, should you care about those things?

DA: If you're leaving.

PJ: (inaudible - 00:32:52)

[Laughter]

PJ: (inaudible - 00:32:54) should I care?

EC: (inaudible: 00:32:56)

DMC: Well, this is--.

BW: But, I think you--.

DMC: It's an interesting issue because at the corner of our block, there was a Roman-Catholic church, which was multiethnic, amazingly multiethnic: Native American, Irish, and African American. All three. A very interesting church. The Catholic diocese decided that the congregation was getting too small, and they closed it and they sold it to an African American Baptist congregation, who were then approached by those developers who said, 'Hey, if you wanna sell out and move your cramped, no parking lot church, and we can make twenty-six condos, you could walk out of here with \$5 million bucks,' and they did, and you'd think, 'Woah'. It's like you say, those lines get so blurry.

DA: I mean, from a church's perspective, that looks like a blessing, so. [Laughs]
But it--.

DMC: That's- well, that was exactly it, they said, 'We can go to another place where we can serve our congregation's needs. You know, we're not tied- we didn't build this church. It's not like it's rooted in our hearts,' and the Catholic church was like, 'Well, you know, we do what we need to do,' and then the developers, 'I see an opportunity.'

EC: 'Yeah, let's jump on it.'

DMC: Then the homeowners are all like, 'Where in hell are we gonna park now?'

[Laughs]

DA: But what you said with schools, it-it-it reminded me of an article I read where it was saying how--. [Clears throat] I can't remember the city, but there was a-a-a school that was mostly African American that was doing very well and getting higher test scores, and, um, they- there was a friend--. I think it was a white woman who wrote the article, how she was- lived in this neighborhood and people were like, 'Oh, you should take your child to this school and this stuff,' but it they-they liked how the African American school did, and they liked that their-their child was in a diverse area, and then they had an idea, 'Okay, these white people over here are gonna create a diverse school,' even though there's a diverse school right here that's mostly African American, but this diverse is according to what they think the word--. It's like less Black people in this school. So, 'This is our diverse school and we're gonna do the same thing that school is doing, but our diversity is gonna be on our terms. [Laughs]

PJ: See, and that's--. I that's- that's--. It's funny that you mention it because I always say, define your terms.

[Laughter]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

PJ: Like, what-what do you mean by that? You know, so let's dissect it because maybe-maybe what-what I think the word means--. Uh, you know, so if you think about it, diversity, what is diversity? What constitutes diversity? And it's gonna vary amongst everybody, and I think that's--. It's a- it's- it's interesting to kind of navigate that space in trying to define what is what according to your definition and me comparing it to your

definition, your definition, and going--. You know, 'cause everybody has different concepts of everything. So, I guess trying to like find--. It's- it's always difficult to find, like, a common ground amongst billions of people, you know what I mean? Like, it (inaudible: 00:36:13). We're never gonna get there, but it's- but it's--. This is why this is cool. First off, this food was amazing, so let's--.

[Laughter]

PJ: This food was great. Uh, but this like--. This--. I mean, just being willing to-to have a dialogue and being able to like, talk about things like this. These things are super, super important.

EC: Yeah.

DA: 'Cause I think--. When you think about colleges and universities, they'll say they're diverse because, okay, 'We have this many international students, we have this many women students, we have this many out-of-towners, we have this many disabled people, but it's not necessarily people of color.' Like, maybe some other people would think of diversity as like, 'Okay, we have this many of this economic status,' it's not necessarily centered around color like people usually think it is. It's diversity in other areas of handicapped or stuff like that.

EC: Yeah. Anything.

BW: It--.

EC: And, like, I mean, I would say it's always about the intention at the end of it, you know, 'cause like we can say one thing, like people would say, 'Oh, yeah, we wanna be diverse, but--.' A lot of it, recently, is that people are using diversity as a ploy. Um, and that could mean anything, not just between like Black and white, but (inaudible:

00:37:16). I think the intention is like--. It has to be pure enough in order for things to really- to really work.

[PJ intermittently agree]

BW: I was thinking about what you said when you said we have to define the term 'diversity', because, let's say--. When you talked about those different communities within the university, even though your schools say it's diverse, those communities also live separate from each other, so then it's not really diversity, even though you're going to the same institution.

DMC: It's also interesting that we sometimes use 'diversity' as a class marker, not just as an ethnicity marker. And think that this--. You know, ostensibly, we're a classless society. You know, this is America, everybody can rise up and down and yet we all know the reality of living in this country. And... y-y--. Like you say, you have to define it. What do we mean when we talk about these terms? And--.

DS: I had a professor who, uh, um, prided herself on her intellect and now--.

PJ: (inaudible: 00:38:26)

[Laughter]

DS: She, uh--. You know, she could understand Foucault, she could go here, she could go there. Um, and then I graduated and I got my first teaching job in Santa Fe in the Institute of American Indian Arts, and, uh, I ran into her in a conference and I was talking to her, I said, you know, 'I'm doing great,' and 'How are you?', I said, 'I'm teaching at a- an art school, just mainly Native American students.' And she looked at me, and we was just like [Makes expression] that was her physical reaction. She goes, [vocalizes] 'Don't you want some diversity?'

[Laughter]

DS: I said, 'Diversity?' I said, 'Well, it's true we only have a student population of 250 students, but we have ninety-one tribes represented. Um, we have a gay and lesbian population. We have first generation, second generation, third generation early Native Americans, kids straight off the reservations. Um, we have inter-tribal; we have African Native American students, we have Asian Native American students, we have white Native American students. Is that enough diversity for you?'

[Laughter]

PJ: But again, like, uh--. I think at the heart of this, it is important just to have the discussion, you know, like--. And being willing to- to listen, you know, to what other people have to say, and being willing to offer what your experiences are as well so that you can--. You don't, you don't have to agree, you know, but it's just like (inaudible: 00:40:22) these are the things that I think, this is what I've experienced, and then we can agree to disagree at the end of the day, but at least have the dialogue. 'Cause I think when people decide 'You're that, I'm this, we don't have anything to talk about.' That's where the issue, like, really comes up.

DS: Oh, yes. It's sorta like differentiating between you saying your 'other', versus saying 'you are another'.

PJ: Exactly.

DS: Right.

PJ: (inaudible - 00:40:54)

[Laughter]

BW: Could you repeat it?

DS: What's that?

BW: Could you repeat what you just said?

DS: Oh, I--. Differentiating between the designation of 'other', going through otheringness to--.

BW: Saying you are another?

DS: Another-an-anotherness. Puts everything on the same plane.

PJ: Good. All right, so we're back to this one: *National Media is centered on solitary confinement, prisoner abuse death row, and Angola* [Louisiana State Penitentiary]. *Discuss the local injustice system --justice or injustice system-- Blacks in NOLA constitutes 59 percent of the city. Blacks in NOLA prisons constitute 90 percent of the prison population.* So, I don't--. I mean, we get to talk about the--. That whole--. The-the-the institution of the prison and the business of prison 'cause that's what prison is. Prison is a business at the end of the day. It's- it's not about- it's not about correction, it's not about, uh, trying to really--. The more and more I learn, and I'm still learning, prison is not about making a society better, prison is about control. It's- it's- it's a--. Prison- prison is controlling, at the end of the day. We have decided that these are the laws and these are the people that are influenced by the laws that have been set forth, and there are so many ways around laws and, unfortunately, the Black population in New Orleans (inaudible: 00:42:47) are very ignorant of the laws and how to be able--. Because a lot of people that are not Black, know how to get around the laws and we don't. We-we-we-we succumb to the law.

BW: Or just not affected by it.

PJ: Yeah.

DA: Or you could pay to get out of it.

PJ: Right.

DA: Affluenza. [Laughs]

PJ: Yeah, no seriously--.

EC: I mean, I--.

BW: That- that's insane.

PJ: Right.

EC: I actually read a really good, uh, story in the New York Times that talked about, um, the rise of heroin use within, like, white, middle class families and how like back in the 80s, like lower class income, like, Blacks and persons of color were looked down upon for their, like, substance abuse, who were criminalized, were basically given drugs by the, like, Reagan administration, um, and how it was basically like a set up. But now that, like, middle class white people are on heroin, they're getting more sympathy from cops. They're being treated better, they're being told to go to rehab, they're, you know, they're being given suboxone, like--. It's just crazy how like--. It--. Sometimes it really does- a lot of times it really does boil down to race and like, especially when it comes to drug use, it's crazy to me how many people are, like, stuck in jail, especially persons of color who are (inaudible - 00:44:01) because they have, like, weed on them. Like, they had like the tiniest bit of weed, the tiniest, you know, and it's just like- it's insanity. Like, A- even Alfred, uh--. What-what was his last name? , Alfred?

DA: Alfred Woodfox?

EC: Yes, yeah.

BW: (inaudible: 00:44:13) like two weeks ago.

DA: And then there was the, um, the white girl who had the DA agent as a father, and they called her a 'cute kingpin,' and she was like--. She wasn't literally a kingpin by drug standards, but she was doing much more than Black people with an ounce of weed had on her, and they're like--. And just the- like the media- that's how the media portrays her, 'She's a cute kingpin,' even though she's selling drugs. [Laughs]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AA: So, to sort of mount off of both of you guys' ideas and then, also, add something to that, so I think that when it comes to Black folks and the law, it isn't really a situation of not knowing, I think there's plenty of times where people do know the options that are available. It's about access, and it's not 'Oh, I didn't know that could get paid to get something expunged I am a systematically oppressed person that does not have the capitalist means in order to achieve that, or to even do that.' I was just reading an article that's talking about how lots of people in this state go to jail without ever having had a lawyer though you are supposed to have one. Um, and so I would definitely say that and then I would say that Louisiana, when you were talking about schools, when you're talking about prisons it like- could literally be a cherry picked example of what happens when you allow capitalism into social institutions. Because what you have then is these institutions are not being motivated to do what they are actually supposed to be doing. They're motivated to do whatever is best for them financially. For example--. I mean, prisons obviously, it's like why would I invest in you getting out of prison and never coming back when you are free labor basically. So like that doesn't help them, and then for exa--. I work as- I work at Clark down the street and

it is run by FirstLine Schools. FirstLines took over Clark and they've had five years to bring Clark from an F-school up. Clark was an F-school up until last year when the end of that five year period came up and they going to potentially lose that school and the associated money from it. For the last four months of the school year, they poured a metric shit ton of resources into the school and, in four months, they managed to get the kids from an F to a D, from an F-school to a D-school. So, it's like you had this school under your purvey for five years, and you didn't put any money or resources into it until you were being threatened with losing this money and this is what happens when people are in it for the money. It's like 'I don't care what happens there as long as the cash flow is still going.'

EC: Yeah.

DA: Can you introduce yourself?

ALERION ANGELIN: Oh, sorry. Hi, my name is Alerion Angelin, also known as Brown Girl Kitchen. I made the food that you're eating.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Thank you.

AA: Glad that you guys enjoyed it.

PJ: It was fantastic.

EC: It was amazing.

AA: I thought I would stop by and see what people are also talking about.

DA: Well, uh, when I'm- I'm part of The National Urban League Young Professionals and I went to a conference in Memphis, I believe, and one of the guys from Atlanta, he's a police officer, and he did a session on, like some things that he teaches teenagers about what they don't know and it-it was a thing of--. Okay, there's a

situation where--. Okay, somebody has an idea to go rob somebody's house, okay, they tell their two friends 'Okay, we're gonna rob this house.' One person backs out and the other two go and do this and all this stuff and he ends up, um, assaulting someone or something like that--. Okay, if the person who backs out- the person that backs out, if they don't tell on them before it happens they're gonna get in trouble for--.

AA: Yeah, it's conspiracy.

DA: Yeah, conspiracy is a big thing that teenagers don't know about. If you know about something before it happens and you do not tell on them, you're going down for it. And then, uh, another woman, uh, I-I saw an older woman, she's been in prison for twenty-something years, she just got out because President Obama gave her, uh--.

EC: A clemency?

DA: Yeah, and she was in an abusive relationship, and she wanted to leave her boyfriend, her husband, who was a drug dealer, and once she tried to leave, he, like, c-clung her close to him and made her do the stuff of the- of the- of the business. Like, before she was just kinda on the wayside but she--. He made her be involved and because she--.

AA: Oh, yeah, I saw this story.

DA: Yeah, because she didn't wanna leave because he was gonna threaten her family, she got- she went to prison for twenty years because of that situation, and she just got out because President- [Coughs] of President Obama. So there's like--.

AA: Yeah, because in that situation, she wasn't being regarded as a victim, she was being regarded as a perpetrator, though she was literally doing these things by force.

DA: Yeah.

AA: The blind eye (inaudible: 00:49:13)

[Pause]

PJ: *How is Black life part of your daily life? Discuss spiritual, physical, and mental well-being.*

BW: This feels like a weird question.

AA: Well, I woke up being Black this morning.

[Laughter]

AA: And when I looked in the mirror, I said, 'Damn. What a great day.'

PJ: I woke up like this. [Laughs]

BW: Yeah, I thought that was a weird question.

[Laughter]

EC: Like, what about you two?

[Laughter]

DMC: Oh, it's perfectly valid to ask what part of life Black life is for me. I live in a Black neighborhood, I have Black friends and neighbors, but I can only experience it outside my own life because when I look in the mirror, all I see is that I haven't shaved again.

[Laughter]

DMC: And--. But it's--. It goes back to a question we were talking about, that question of culture and New Orleans and being in a New Orleanian, you can never know something unless you're there. And some things, being in a wheelchair, I can't

know except what Peter tells me, because I'm not there. It's the same thing for another ethnicity, for another culture, for another class, you can only peer in, and you hope that you are receptive enough to understand what you can glean from that experience.

AA: Which is super important, I hope I'm not repeating anything that was already talked about, but I think what you're talking about is, like, super relevant to the whole, like, colorblind issue where it's like, 'I'm colorblind and everything is the same and I don't--.' It's like, no, everything actually isn't the same, and what you're actually doing in saying that is you're ignoring my completely different experiences and you're not appreciating that, or this idea--. I once had a pretty heated argument with someone who went to Tulane because he was basically trying to tell me that he knew what it was like to be Black, and I was like, 'No, you don't.' [Laughs] I was like- I was like- I was like actually--.

BW: That's a life experience.

AA: I was like, 'How do you- how do you know what is like--.'

BW: It's not something you can just think about.

AA: He was like, 'We do the same things,' and I was like, 'How do we do the same things?' He was like, 'Oh, well, I eat and you eat,' I was like, 'You sound stupid.' I was like, 'Please stop, sir.'

BW: It's an emotional thing.

AA: Yeah. It's not even just emotional, it's a cultural thing, it's an emotional thing, it's a socialization thing.

PJ: It's a spiritual, physical, and mental thing.

[Laughter]

AA: There we go. (inaudible - 00:51:47)

BW: (inaudible: 00:51:48)

AA: You have different expectations, you have different socializations. To touch on the subject of criminalization of Black folks, I know for sure that you didn't get the conversation that I received as a teenager — I went to Lusher, here — and I had lots of white friends 'cause that's a school that is mixed race, and I went to go and be a teenager and do reckless things, and my mother, she'd stop me and be like, 'You need to understand that you're not these white kids. If y'all got into any sort of trouble with the cops, first and foremost, you're most likely to go to jail, they might walk away from it. And then, if you all go to jail, you don't--. They have way more access to, like, political power, they might know somebody who knows somebody, you don't know if they might have the funds to get out of this situation. You don't have any of those things, and so you need to understand that that is going to affect you completely differently,' and so I was like, 'I'm pretty sure your mom never gave you that talk.'

[Laughter]

AA: For sure.

PJ: That-that's super interesting that you talked about the-the concept about being colorblind, right? 'Cause I think people wear that as, like, a badge.

AA: Oh, they do.

EC: As like a--. Yeah. (inaudible - 00:52:52)

AA: And it's super insulting.

PJ: 'I don't, you know, I don't- I don't see color,' and check out--.

AA: Also, it's a lie.

PJ: So the- so the- the-the interesting thing--.

BW: It's grayscale.

PJ: About my growing up was that my mom, uh, is very much, pro-Black, right? She would say things like that. She would say--. Like, she would- she would- she would--. When growing up, I would hear her talk to people and she would say, 'Oh, I didn't raise my kids- I didn't raise my kids to see color,' and again, I- even growing up, I thought that was cool thing, right? I was like, 'Yeah, I-I hang out with everybody, I never, you know, think about these things.' But, uh, I heard--. Actually it was Cornel West, however you may feel about Cornel West, I heard him say- that he talked about the-the-the, uh, the idea of being colorblind, and it was so profound to me because it wasn't until I was in my twenties, before I was like, 'Oh, that's not necessarily like a-a good and great thing.'

AA: I never (inaudible - 00:53:47)

DA: The Cornel West quote is "To love is not--." "To love is to not be colorblind, but to be color embracing."

AA: Mm-hmm.

PJ: Exactly. I've seen--.

DA: You see my color and you don't treat me differently because of that, not that you don't see it.

PJ: 'Cause it is foolish to say, 'I don't- I don't see color.'

BW: Acknowledge the difference, but don't.

AA: And I mean, that was the thing, I've always--. My-, I don't know what- I don't know my mom was a weird person. She like- is like sometimes not--. Like, I don't know, she's not super pro-Black at times, but then sometimes she's super pro-Black, and I'm like- I'm like, 'I don't know what you're doing (inaudible: 00:54:18). Growing up it was like: *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, Maya Angelou, Randall Kennedy, *Nigger*, these are like all the books that my mom was buying me, and so of course I grew up to be the person that I am, and sometimes my mom acts confused about this, and I'm like, 'Mom, what did you think you were doing?'

[Laughter]

AA: Getting all these books, you know what I mean? And just, like, read them and pick up a thing or two. But--. Yeah, no, like, the whole colorblind thing and me being raised as such, my family being very embracing of who they are, when people would say that --and like, I've always been, like, a very proud Black person-- to say, 'I'm colorblind,' I'm like, 'I'm Black. I want you to know. I don't like it. I don't want to be your grayscale. I'm a Black person and I would like to be addressed as such.'

PJ: And I think that's what the--. I mean, of all of the-the intentions involved like (inaudible: 00:55:08) Black Lives Matter movement and all, like, this-this uh, embracing of Black culture, like very (inaudible: 00:55:18). And it's- it's not necessarily something that is new, but I think now that it's just being talked about more.

AA: Yeah, it's recent.

PJ: Because it's being--. It-it--. Exactly. And I think a lot of that has to do with the proliferation of, like, social media. People address constantly--. It's like--.

[MULTIPLE SPEAKERS]

AA: A lot of things that maybe they wouldn't have known about- maybe wouldn't have known that it was happening on such a large scale, because it's one thing for me to be like, 'Oh, man that, like, crazy thing happened in my city,' and it's another thing being like, 'This is literally happening everywhere,' and I'm so tired of hearing it.

PJ: Right.

EC: Yeah. I mean, speaking on what you said, I was raised the same way. My mom was always like, 'Okay,' you know, 'Be friends with somebody if they respect you and treat you right and, like, don't judge you.' And it wasn't until I got to college where I was like, 'You know what like, yeah, like racism exists.' Like, I'm going to an all white college in upstate New York, like, I'm constantly being, like, prejudiced against, like, judged, and it's like I-I-I--. It's taken me so long to realize that, like, racism can take so many different facets and faces. And, like, I wouldn't say that I felt stupid, but, like, I- you know, I really believed what my mom was saying to me, like, 'Oh, yeah, like, you know, like, everything's all good Erica.' Like, 'You're a star.' Like, you know, 'You're intelligent. You do your homework.' And it's like no, that's some bullshit. I still do my homework and my coursework (inaudible: 00:56:39) and I'm still being judged and, like, put up, like, against the wall like everyday. So, I don't know, I mean, I think to be Black today in America is (inaudible - 00:56:47) a certain type of sadness, and it's like not really resilient, but, like, hyper aware, and like you can't experience that, not unless, you know, you're Black, so I mean--.

BW: Or a person of color.

EC: Or a person of color. You know, it's just a certain type of sadness that, like--.

PJ: (inaudible - 00:57:03)

EC: Yeah, yeah. I--. It's just hard to describe, but I mean I think there are other ways to-to listen as a non person of color. I feel like there's ways to be woke, but, yeah.

DA: But to go with, like, the how Black life is part of your daily life, I can't can't remember the name of the documentary, but there's a documentary where, it's--. It's not *Growing Up White*, but this Jewish girl--.

EC: Oh, I saw it.

DA: Yeah, she's half Black, half white, and she was raised by her Jewish parents, but it just so happened that her mom tipped on the side, and she's half Black. And her darker skin, they always explained it away like, 'Oh, your great-grandfather was kinda dark skinned, olive toned--.' [Laughs].

EC: Or he's Italian. Yeah, yeah.

DA: Yeah. So that's--. And then, once she found out she was Black, like, I had like this--. Okay, so, she tries to talk to her mom about it and her- like her-her mom just ignores like--.

EC: (inaudible: 00:57:58)

DA: Throughout the whole documentary, and her dad is pissed off. I mean, he doesn't--. He-he-he couldn't been more whatever, but I mean, he was cheated on and all this stuff, so I kinda gave him more of a pass, but it was like she-she-she grew up white, but then as soon as she was--. As soon as she found out she was Black, she was confronted- confronted with it everyday, and that's like how Black people have to live, and then she's trying to confront her white mom about it and she just ignores it, and it's just like that's sometimes how white people are. Like, you're not confronted with it every day, you choose to ignore it, and I feel like her relationship with her mom was like how

Black and white people live and that, now that she's Black, she's more aware, she--. It's just so-so much in her face everyday, and she went to a HBCU [Historically Black College and University] and stuff like that, and that's where she kinda found out more about things, and it's just like we're just confronted with it everyday and we can't turn it off.

PJ: Right? And I-I think it's easy- it's easier to be colorblind until you are confronted with, like, with the actual experience. I'll never forget--. So, my family, my dad's side of the family, he's from, uh, Tarboro in North Carolina, it's very small. My dad is one of sixteen kids. It's insane. So, uh, so we would go there every summer, we go there the-the first Saturday of July every summer, right? Um, so I was out there, I had to be about seven or eight. I can't remember exactly what age I was, but I remember it was around the time they had reissued--. I-I didn't realize it was the reissue of the, uh, *101 Dalmatians*, apparently it'd come out, like, decades before, you know, when I was a kid, I was just like 'Oh, this is awesome.' So, they had the, um, they were giving out, like, uh, at McDonald's, you know, they had a whole bunch of the-the dalmatians that you can get, right? So I had a pretty good collection of them 'cause I ate a whole lot of McDonald's.

[Laughter]

PJ: So, I remember being at the park, and I was sitting there and on, you know, I had my dalmatians out, and two, uh, two white girls, they came up and we were playing, having a-a great time. I remember after about a good ten, fifteen minutes of us playing, the, um, their dad, I guess, you know, called them over- called the-the oldest one over. She went over, and she comes back, and she- they had the dalmatians as well

(inaudible: 01:00:21), so she comes back, she looks at me, and I remember, like, clear as day, it was the saddest face in her eyes and she just starts picking up her dalmatians, and-and I'm just kind of looking, and she grabs her sister, and she says, 'We have to go,' and then she looks back at me and she says, 'My dad says we can't play with Black people,' and that was it, and then she just walked away, and I remember just being, like--. Now I think that--. I remember being--. At first it was just confusing, I was like, 'What does that even like--. What does that mean?' Like, I was surprised--.

BW: I'm surprised that she said it in that way.

PJ: I was like s- like seven, or eight. I was- I was--. Yeah, I remember just kinda being like what does that even mean? And then we told my mom about it and I can't imagine a parent, like, who knows what that is to, like, really have to sit there and, like, 'We need to talk about this now. Like, this is something that you need to understand about life because of the color of your skin.' You know what I mean? Like-like, because this is a part of-of--. 'This is always gonna be a part of who you are for the rest of your life now. Now you-you need to know that.' Insane.

EC: Something similar happened to me, too, when I was like seven. Uh, I used to go the, like, the YMCA, like, after school program, and so I had this friend, Maria, who's like Italian and then, like, we were gonna have, like, a sleepover at her house, and then, like, everything was all good and then she comes up to me and she's like, 'Erica,' and I was like, 'Yeah, what's up?' and she's like, 'I can't have you over my house,' and I'm like, 'Why, like, you know, what's wrong?' And then, she was like, 'Yeah,' she said, 'My parents don't like Black people,' and she's like 'They don't want me to be hanging out with, like, another Black girl,' and she's like, 'I'm really sorry,' she like, 'We can't hang

out after school.' And like, I was- I was also confused, 'cause I was like, 'What, like, what's happening?' And I was, like, I remember crying to my mom. And I was like, 'I'm a nice person,' and like, 'I don't know what went wrong,' and my mom was like, you know, she's like, 'It's not about you.' She's like, 'It's about racism,' and from then onwards, I was just kind of--. I don't know, it's just, like, it was such a profound moment for me because that had never happened to me before.

PJ: And again, speaking on that, it's just like-like--. I-I--. The thing I distinctly remember is even her being like, 'I don't understand either.'

EC: Yeah.

[Laughter]

PJ: You know, it was one of those things, like, 'I don't get it either. I don't know why I can't play with you, but apparently because you're Black, my dad says we can't play with you, so me and my sister, we have to go. We have to get up all our shit, you keep your shit and we're leaving,' you know, and so, it's- it's interesting because it is--. It's not--. I-I-I truly don't believe that it's something that you're born with. Now, that's not, again, that's not to mean when you come out, you don't look in, you see things. I-I--. I see differences. You look at everybody and you see differences.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

BW: (inaudible: 01:02:59) I was gonna talk about--. The- some people did an experiment where they're like, 'Yeah, we put toddlers together, and toddlers even ch-choose their company by race.' I was like that doesn't count because you pick on stuff that your parents do when you're real little.

PJ: Right.

DA: Right, they do.

DM: Oh, very young.

BW: 'Cause, like, my do--. My boss's daughter, it took her a long time to decide 'Okay, I'm gonna hang out with this Black man 'cause I don't hang out with any other Blacks.' She'd like see me, and just like. And now, she would like come to hang out with me, and like sit next to me. Like, it took a long time for her to like--. So there was clearly, like, something going on.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm-hmm.

[Pause]

EC: And to--. I mean--.

AA: Where--. Oh.

PJ: Go ahead. Go for it.

JV: I just wanted to let you all know that we have about five more minutes, so if there's a card that you're dying to get to.

DMC: We've got to do the rest of the cards?

JV: All of them.

PJ: All of them.

JV: Quickly. Lightning rounds.

[Laughter]

PJ: Alright, let's get to one more. Okay, we'll- we'll- let's see. Let's go through this, 'cause we only got one more card, right?

BW: That's a good one. [Chuckles]

PJ: All right, so we got: *How is NOLA unique in regards to activism? Who or what organizations are chief mobilizers? Discuss historical legacies defining race and class unique to NOLA. Unemployment rates. And Discuss the privatization of public education, literacy rates, and access to college education.*

DA: I think this one is interesting.

PJ: This one?

BW: Which one's that?

DA: *Discuss historical legacies defining race and class unique to NOLA.*

Colorism.

EC: Okay, yeah.

PJ: Definitely.

DA: 'Cause that was actually--. That was what I was about to say before because this kind of ties in, like, um, there was this lady who, um--. Mom-Momma D, or something—I don't know, but she was talking about how when she was younger --she's like 60, or 70-- when she was younger, she was actually playing with a light skinned girl and she brought her to her house, and her mom went in and had a talk with her, and--. The lightskinned girl, and was like, 'Uh, I can't play with you because you're dark.' [Laughs] And that was in New Orleans. It's like, 'Man, there's so many levels to this in being Black.' [Laughs]

PJ: So this is good because, talking about that, that was the first time I --like, as a kid-- that I had even been confronted about race from someone outside of my own race. But, the first time I really experienced, like, uh-uh, like, uh, a separation between a people that were different skin colors was amongst, like, my own community, was in my

own family. You know what I mean? Like, me--. Like, I-I would hear growing up, they'd be like, you know, like, I would hear my own family would say, you know, like, they would talk about, like, me being darker than like other p--. You know, and-and again, it was- it wasn't done in a malicious way, it wasn't I'm like talking down to you. But I-I remember that. I remember growing up and thinking--. Seriously, it did not take me--. It took me until, like, later in my life before I was able to say, 'You know what? This is kinda awesome,' you know what I mean? I don't sunburn.

[Laughter]

PJ: You know what I mean? Like, I'm-I'm doing alright, I have a whole lot of vitamin D, you know, this is a good thing that this skin is for. But it took awhile because again from like a very early age, before other people outside of-of my family, and outside of my community, told me that I was different. I had those things already going on, like, inside of my home. And it's a very real thing, especially—

BW: Destructive.

PJ: Somewhere, like, in New Orleans, you know what I mean? Like, people--.

BW: You can definitely--. You can see it.

PJ: Yeah.

DA: Yeah.

EC: There's also, like, a strong--. I, like--. I sense, like, a really strong, like, servitude attitude here as well, maybe that just harks back to slavery--.

BW: What do you mean servitude attitude?

EC: Um, kinda, like, especially in the French Quarter, like this whole kinda like (inaudible 01:06:46) effect? Like, you know what I mean? It's like—

BW: I feel like I might understand what you're talking about...

EC: I guess, it just has more to do more with tourism, like--.

BW: It feels like ex--. It feels exploitative?

EC: What?

BW: Exploitative. I feel like I said the word wrong.

EC: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

DA: But, like, I work in [Clears throat] at Baton Rouge and we were--. Me and my coworkers were talking about this. Okay, so somehow, like, all of the Black people who worked at my company came and congregated at the same time—not on purpose—it was like this group came from this way, this one came from this way and once we noticed, we were like, 'Oh shoot. We gotta escape this, like, all the Black people (inaudible: 01:07:30) like they're doing a revolution or something like that.' [Laughs]

BW: It really weirds people out.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DA: Yeah. And so, um, one of the guys- um, one of my coworkers was talking about how him and two other of the Black coworkers were talking and, uh, one of the white coworkers came, and I was like, 'Oh, what are you guys talking about?' And he was like, 'Regular stuff,' and it's like- they mentioned the Black codes, how three or more Black people could not be on the street congregated. Like, that residual of how people still live by the Black codes, they don't know it's the Black codes, but--.

BW: It's like a subconscious thing.

DA: When-when-when a group of Black people congregate-- I mean, unless you're like out on Frenchman or something, like if you're at work, you're like, 'Oh, this is too many people.' When I'm in the off- when I'm going past the office, I'm like 'Okay, three Black women, I can't stop and talk to y'all, like I gotta keep going to my desk.'

[Laughs]

PJ: Which is crazy because, like, I-I had that same experience. Like, I remember, um, my junior year of high school, uh, I was in (inaudible: 01:08:32) Arkansas, which you know...

[Laughter]

PJ: What was I doing there in the first place?

[Laughter]

PJ: But being, you know, in that space-- Oh.

JV: Go on, finish.

PJ: Being there in that space, and being in, like-- I-I distinctly remember being in a class where-- And that's where (inaudible: 01:08:51), they were like four of us, right? Four Black people in the whole class, and we ended up all sitting at the same table, right? But, it's-- No one questioned why-- You know, I remember my teacher, he came over, he said, 'Why don't you--' He said, 'Why are you guys all sitting together?' And I remember being so offended by it, I said, 'Well, I guess the same reason (inaudible 01:09:11) sit together.'

[Laughter]

PJ: No, it's just like a natural thing. I'm like 'Why-why is us sitting together a problem?' That's not the say that I don't- I don't want to communicate with the other tables, but this- this is how- this is how it happened. If anyone else wants to come to the table, they are more than welcome, they are more than welcome, but this is--. I don't know, essential--. It's a weird space to navigate.

BW: I don't understand why it makes people feel uncomfortable.

PJ: Yeah, I...

BW: I had (inaudible: 01:09:44) in October, I went to a AIGA conference and, um, I was participating in a lot of non-profits, and one of the, um, women was an activist and she wanted to get all the Black designers together, so there was only like twenty of us, and, like, it's like a hundred- hu-hundreds of people there, and we all, like--. We all gathered at the lobby and I could tell--. I don't feel like I've ever noticed it before until then, but like as I was sitting there talking to them, I could see people walking by like-like heads turning, like I can tell that they were uncomfortable, like, 'What's going on? Is something about to happen...'

[Audio Fades]

END OF RECORDING

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To be copyedited.