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Participants:
JOSIAH GOLSON
OLGA DE KLEIN
D'ANDREA DAVIS
SARAH BERESTECKY
ERIKA ROBERTS
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Preface

The following conversation was hosted at Stove Works, facilitated by Aja Scarlato. Consent was given by the participants to have their conversation recorded and transcribed.

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START OF RECORDING

AJA SCARLATO: There you go, all set-well, I think that's kind of on the cord
[recorder being moved] Alright. Have at it.

JOSIAH GOLSON: Thank you.

ERIKA ROBERTS : Wanna pull the first one, my love?

SARAH BERESTECKY: Sure. It just, does it matter how?

ER: Yeah, doesn't matter.

SB: [clears throat] Oh, *What monuments are in your neighborhood and whose history do they represent?* Um, so I live in East Lake, uh, and I cannot think of a

monument [laughs] that's there, honestly. I don't think that there is one. Uh, what history, whose history do they represent? Yeah, I don't think there's a monument there unless somebody can think of, for East Lake.

ER: Is there monuments, does it mean that it's just the statue, or does it, or does a park serve as a monument?

JG: I think it can be different forms, yeah.

SB: Oh, okay. Yeah.

JG: I think if there's a space or something that's titled or named a certain thing.

ER: Yeah.

JG: Or after a certain memory or. I think that you can include that also.

SB: I mean I think certainly the East Lake Park is used in our neighborhood. Um, whose history do-does it represent? Uh, I think I don't know the individuals that made a decision to redo the park but it was not, um [clicks tongue] it was not asked of the community what they want, what they, they were asked what they wanted. And then the, I believe it was the city, um, took down the playground that was there. It was really used by a lot of the kids that lived there. Um, and they put a nature-rock-thing um, [laughs] that nobody uses. Um, in that sense. I guess, I mean kids crawl on it, whatever. But, um, I mean, if anything, it represents [laughs] decisions made without the community.

ER: Woo.

SB: F-for me, when I look at that, um, I know there was a lot of work done to put some swings in. So some swings recently got put up there. And everybody was really happy about that. Um, certainly doesn't remedy the overhaul they did of that park, which is beautiful.

D'ANDREA DAVIS: Yeah.

[Group members intermittently agree]

SB: Um, it really is, it's a beautiful park, but, um, they took down an important piece, which is, I think, the playground. Because we have a lot of kids that play there, so. It, the, the community still uses the park, um, you know, for various reasons—there's pavilions and things like that. But, yeah I would say that's a big monument of East Lake, is the East Lake Park. I don't think there's really history of the community. We have a large Latinx community that lives there now. What was the history before that? Um, you know, because they haven't always been there. And so, there's certainly not any kind of memory, anything left to to memorialize what that community looked like before. So, yeah.

DD: [Clears throat] Yeah, I agree. That's definitely something to reflect some type of community aspect.

SB: Yeah.

DD: A central point, but

SB: Yeah, certainly

DD: Not taking into account what the community would have preferred

SB: Yeah

DD: You know, that's the representation of that too, so I agree.

SB: Yeah, it was, it was definitely done that-done without them, for sure

[Group members intermittently agree]

ERIKA ROBERTS: In my neighborhood there's a park that's named Sheila Jennings Park. Um, Sheila Jennings was, um, a woman in the neighborhood that was, um, an entrepreneur, um, an old school entrepreneur in the sense of [inaudible 00:03:45] lady vibes and hamburger lady vibes and candy lady. Following that same tradition but she took it a little bit further. Um, she opened a restaurant in the community. She also became an activist in a way for the community. Um, s-helping gain a part of, um, I think, uh, the place is called "Home Girl's Cooking." Which is super dope. Um, so when I see that park being utilized in my neighborhood, um, it represents a legacy of [group member clears throat] of, uh, what it looks like to, um, to work in your community. Um, and what that looks like. I know for me, my first entrepreneur's meeting were Candy Lady and Candy Man. That was the first person.

DD: Yep, same

ER: You know, that I met as an entrepreneur.

DD: Same.

[Group members intermittently agree]

ER: And, a lot of those entrepreneurs, they don't always get the same privilege to move into a bigger, you know, like, own a candy shop. Or, own a grocery store. But this woman, Sheila Jennings, she actually pushed it forward. Her and three other women opened up that little spot right there in the community and then they branched out to be able to help working with, um, the parents in the community to save, um James A Henry school, um, helping resources even in the community, food wise, when it was at one point a food apartheid. Um it wasn't, you know, a grocery store, um, close enough that had the healthy stuff they were trying. This is years ago. Um, and it's been there ever

since. So, to me when I see that it's like a different kind. And maybe even James A Henry is, the school is maybe even a monument in a—

DD: Yeah.

JG: Yeah.

ER: So James A Henry school is named after the first principal of Howard high school.

DD: That's awesome.

ER: And was 1800s. Like, late 1800s.

DD: That's awesome.

JG: Wow.

ER: I mean, if my grandmother, who's ninety seven graduated from Howard, that tells you how—you know what I'm saying? Like it told you—

DD: Yeah, that's where my grandmother graduated from.

ER: Yeah, yeah, yeah

DD: So, Howard is a staple, for sure.

ER: Yeah.

DD: Howard could be something that's like, a bit of a monument.

ER: Yeah.

SB: Yeah.

[Group members intermittently agree]

DD: Because so many people in my family are connected to Howard. And even if they didn't attend Howard, but they attended maybe Brainerd high, or maybe Kirkman.

That's still a community that interconnects. You know, those schools play such a pivotal part in my history because my family attended those schools when the neighborhood was a different kind of neighborhood. And that community is so central. Like, Howard was like, family, you know, faith. They represent themselves and identify with that school.

ER: And some of the fiercest alumni.

DD: The fiercest alumni.

ER: Ever.

[Group members intermittently agree]

DD: So that definitely represents connection, it represents pride. I think that's a monument that represents pride—Howard, Brainerd, Kirkman, Tyner, um CCA, or 21st century, you know. Those schools, those buildings, it's like art. Those are the same bricks and stones my history used to be a part of and used to live. So, I consider, you know, that a monument too, I'm glad you said that. Um, downtown, I spend a lot of time downtown. I know they have the Trail of Tears by the aquarium. And on the, that was an intentional monument that was created to memorialize an actual event. And I wish I was more educated exactly on the particulars of that story that it represents because all I can say, as far as what I know on the history, is, I just see sadness. Because obviously tears are usually affiliated with sadness. If it's not happy tears, and for me, I'm thinking those are tears from being sad on leaving what was driving from them.

ER: Driven out.

DD: Driven out, they're crying, those tears are leaving a trail of their path away from home. So I like that they did that, um, because my children play in those waters

and it sparks a conversation for them to learn about why this is here. And it's a beautiful scenery. And, um, it's a reminder that it's something that's happened and it acknowledges that. So, that's something historic, I guess.

ER: Even on my way here, um, I live on the west side, Howard was letting out for their graduation. And they were leaving the Marriott and they were celebrating.

DD: Yeah.

ER: It was beautiful.

DD: Yeah.

[Group members intermittently agree]

ER: I mean, they were obstructing traffic a bit, but they were crumped. Like, they were so hype and it was beautiful to see this sea of maroon and gold. And which, it was beautiful. It was beautiful to see the celebration. And so that was like a monument of, of, you know, but, well, history, but, um, the schools and the landmarks that are named after people, I think those, we have more of those there, I think, than we do have, like, monument monuments. Like y-like the ones in New Orleans, or the ones that politically, we have conversations about removing because they're in places that you know, we feel like they shouldn't be.

DD: Right.

ER: I mean, I'm cool with some memorials being in a cemetery. 'Cause that's where they supposed to be.

[Group members laugh]

ER: You know, they out here it's showing something else.

DD: Right.

ER: I don't know.

[Group members intermittently agree]

SB: I love ideas of thinking about monuments in the sense of like not a typical, like you're saying, you know, just like a plaque or something like that. Just think about all the ways that I think particularly Black and Brown folks like, memorialize their, their history. And the way that it's very personal and particular and nuanced. There's a collective, you know, memorializing I think. And then there's, um, maybe familial, it happens within your family. I'm thinking even of the um, the, my Guatemalan neighbors that will plant corn in their front yard, and the corn grows really high.

DD: Yeah.

ER: Ooh!

SB: And they'll just like, it's so high up.

DD: Yeah.

SB: And it just will cover the whole front yard. And even they're like, as high as their house sometimes, and I think of like, oh, is that, too, a monument of like—

ER: That is.

DD: That is.

SB: Of our history, of our land, of our culture and the ways that that—

ER: Oh wow.

SB: Is also can think of. As you were talking it made me think of that.

ER: That's actually a beautiful monument.

SB: Yeah, yeah.

DD: Mhmm.

SB: A piece, a piece of home.

DD: Mhmm.

ER: Yeah.

SB: You know.

OLGA DE KLEIN: Well, I live in Highland Park and I arrived there in 2005. Um, originally I'm from Amsterdam, the Netherlands

DD: Ooh nice.

OK: And, um, I arrived in Chattanooga in '87 via South America.

[Group member laughs]

OK: And so, when I arrived in Highland Park, it, it was kind of an upcoming neighborhood again. It used to be a very nice neighborhood in the early 1900s. Um, people were going there because it was high up. And that, w-and then there was like, too much rain. But they would be prevented from floods and as a monument, I think that as a female there that I consider a monument in the, in the, uh, neighborhood. She's unfortunately not alive anymore, but she was an icon. As soon, I mean, I knew her, got to know her, and she single-handedly got rid of drug houses and prostitution in the area. And, um, but was making sure that people were living well, that they were taken care of, that. And so, she would walk through the neighborhood and have other, like us, walk with her-

DD: Yeah

OK: And would greet people that were sitting on their porches. And, um, and was very nice and you're like having small talk and how are you, and um, she, um, as I said, she unfortunately passed away and, um, I think I, to me, she represents somebody that can make a change. And that change was very significant for the area. And right now, the houses are like, a bit, they have renovated a lot of houses, there's a lot of young families are coming, and have bought their, their homes there, so. I think she wouldn't like the neighborhood anymore, but, um, I think she, to me, represents somebody that's changed the history actually of that neighborhood. And, um, well that's my story.

DD: Yeah. I love that. Highland Park is beautiful. They have a lot of nice homes and I notice that a lot of the older homes are being renovated now. And it's interesting to see how the neighborhoods earn. You have a really, really, old, old home and then right next to it, the old home that used to be there is now like this renovated version of what it was before.

JG: Uh huh

DD: Which is beautiful to look at, but I also wonder if, you know, like—

OK: It loses character

DD: Exactly. Exactly. I wonder like, how much of the history are they keeping there, how much are people paying to live there.

OK: Yeah

DD: You know? It just, that dynamic is kinda conflicting for me because that older home houses someone who's been living there probably decades. Or has family that's lived there decades. Or maybe they moved in because whoever owns that house is renting it to them for an affordable price.

OK: Yeah, yeah.

DD: And then someone comes and wants to buy that property so the person that's renting it, they have to leave.

OK: Yeah, there are a lot of people in my neighborhood have been pushed out

DD: Yeah.

OK: Yeah, which is really very sad.

DD: Which is, yeah. So I'm glad you shared that. 'Cause that's, you know, that's important to remember.

ER: See, there's one monument that, the, the one that I mean I should have done that first probably in my head but it [inaudible 00:14:39] Ed Johnson. The Ed Johnson memorial. But I don't know which, I mean, who, what community would we say that represents. I mean, because there was so many people that worked on getting it here. It wasn't just Black people that worked on getting it here. That was the one project that's like city-wide that had fingers from different, that it was a diverse group of people that was working really hard to make sure it was happening. And what, how many years? It took a couple years, right?

DD: Right.

ER: Yeah, I don't, I don't know how long, but I know it took a couple years to, to get it happening. But, but the plus side, I mean, some, some people may be like, 'Took too long! It's taking too long!' I think the plus side of that long time is that it gave time for people to learn the history though. And it gave time for people to understand that part of...you know, 'cause you sometimes think, 'oh, yeah, lynching had happened over there. It didn't really,' and then when you realize how many.

SB: I really, I mean...this might be uncomfortable to, to say.

ER: Let's get into it.

SB: Or hear.

DD: Yes [laughs]

SB: But I also think it represents white people history.

ER: Yeah.

SB: That doesn't want to be talked about.

ER: Word.

[DD intermittently agrees]

SB: Or wrestled with. So when we monument, when we talk about these stories of Black men that were lynched and remember their names, um. This is also white history and the violence of white history. And so I think that's important to know and to pass down.

DD: Yeah.

SB: You know? Um, yeah.

ER: And we were performing for it when they asked. They'd write something f-you know, to perform for one portion of the, of the unveiling of it. And, and me and another poet were talking about it. He was performing too. And me and him both ha-were thinking from that same standpoint where like, so, there are families in our city who has ties to that mob of people that went to get that man.

SB: Absolutely, absolutely.

DD: Mmm.

ER: And they're somewhere being really, really quiet right now.

DD: Mhmm.

SB: Yeah .

ER: They're somewhere being super silent.

SB: Yeah

[Group members intermittently agree]

ER: You know. In, in my head at the time, I'm like, "So, is, has justice really been addressed in that sense?" Not to say we're supposed to go rampaging, jack these people up and whatever, 'cause that's not realistic. But [sniff] there's this, we know who to kill, we know who was killed. We know where he was taken from. Only thing we don't know is this group, this mob. But we know what they look like in the sense that this was a white mob. And so, somebody's family who's not wanting to talk about it—

SB: Absolutely.

ER: You know? Or if they did, they talked about it a really, really, really, really, long time ago

SB: Yeah.

ER: And are not wanting to revisit it ever again. Um, and that erases it. It, it gives him freedom from the crime.

SB: Yeah. I, and I really think, I mean, that, that energy, uh, I mean there's, I really believe those things are passed down in our bodies.

DD: Mhmm.

ER: It is. Epigenetics.

SB: Like our hist—in the same way that our history, our, the parts of our history that are beautiful and it would be, we celebrate. But also those traumas and the trauma of being the oppressor

DD: Yeah.

SB: Also lives in their bodies.

DD: It does.

SB: And their family's history lineage.

DD: Yeah.

SB: So.

ER: Epigenetics.

SB: Ok, you can tuck it away and not talk about it, but it's gonna show up somehow

ER: Mhmm it's still there

DD: It's still there.

SB: You know? Um—

DD: Yeah.

ER: Yeah.

OK: Yeah, you, you talk about that because I was not aware of a shooting on Martin Luther King uh, of four Black women.

JG: Mhmm

ER: Oh, yeah.

[Group members intermittently agree]

OK: And, uh, actually, I became aware of it because John Lee [inaudible 00:18:38] made a documentary about it. And it was like, I mean, I didn't even realize that the shooting also left scrapnel [shrapnel] in, in the skin of the females. It couldn't be taken out for it was so tiny. But it caused a kind of diseases too, like so it was a long after-effect of the actual shooting. I, it was not, you know, like, uh, it was like a, a ripple effect that continues.

ER: It wasn't in our history books either.

DD: No it was not. Because you're actually telling me something that--

ER: Yeah we didn't know, I mean

DD: Has not been exposed to me.

ER: We, we didn't .

DD: We didn't even think about that.

[Group members intermittently agree]

ER: Yeah, I mean, I remember my grandmother talking, you know, talking about that girl. You know, as I was growing up and I was doing different projects in high school and she would talk about, you know, things that she remembers happening. Things that did happen. Um, we knew from that standpoint. But it was never a thing where you could go to a book in your school and turn the page and read it. It just wasn't--you know, and there's so many of those stories of downtown and who owned land and who that is not gonna ever make it to a text book in the way that we're rolling now

DD: Right [laughs]

ER: It's never gonna, it's never gonna make it.

[Group members intermittently agree]

OK: But there are so many actual stories written out, too, that people don't even know about. About individuals that go to a store and are followed because they have skin color that is not the same as them. And, um, it is a continuous process that hasn't been taken care of. Or, doesn't look like. I mean, even though people are more aware, but

ER: Yeah. Alright, let me pull it and pass it on.

SB: Pass it?

[Pause]

OK: *What prevents coalitions from forming between local communities? How can those be better facilitated?*

DD: Mmm.

OK: Whoa.

ER: Yeah.

DD: Hmm.

ER: Whoa.

OK: Yeah. Um

DD: [Laughs]

ER: Pause.

[Group members laugh]

OK: That's

ER: That's, that's a pause

DD: Yeah

ER: Huh

OK: I mean, we're living that.

DD: Yeah

OK: Um, I think I even coming back to my neighborhood when I first moved there, it was, but I've what was called a diverse neighborhood.

DD: Uh huh

OK: Right now, I don't think it is diverse anymore.

DD: Mmm.

OK: Um, and I think it's also that I think it is hard for people to sit down and communicate to problems, resolutions, uh, talk about how they can make things better. Um, because people at present to me are so into themselves. Um, people don't even know anymore how to talk like, but like, like, we're sitting around a table. Where do you find that? Um, when I grew up it was dinner time. Well, as I grow up in the Netherlands it was probably different, I don't know. But we were sitting at the dinner table and that was when everything was discussed. And it was always at six o'clock and if you were not there at six o'clock, then there was no more food. I mean, it was like a rule and regulation and, and then you talked about what happened the whole day. Right now, I don't see that. I even didn't see it with my sons when we were gro-when they were growing up. And, my oldest son is forty-six. So, it was almost like they-they come in and it, that is just like a tiny little thing about like people that are not mixing or a family that it kind of goes in all kinds of directions. How can we expect communities not to go in all kinds of dir-kind of directions

DD: Right. That's a good point

OK: And, and how can those be better facilitated? My experience has been that when we try to get people together, um, it's always the same people that come.

JG: Mhmm

OK: And, um people have so many things on their agenda and they're all so busy and that there is not much time for making a community. Um, at least that has been my experience.

[Pause]

JG: There's this, um, artist worker named Carol Zou. I-she's worked a lot throughout the south, specifically in Texas. But I think, um, also like in the West coast and she wrote this essay years ago, I think back in 2017 that was titled, hopefully I don't mis-paraphrase it too badly. But the the title was something to the effect of *Community is: A Mythical and Sometimes Violent Dream*.

DD: Mhmm

[Group members intermittently agree]

JG: And, and it was specifically speaking to, to some of the elements that you're speaking of when you have people in what geographically and on a map is the same area. But as far as values and interests and backgrounds and, and, uh, and character when it comes to them entering a room, some people are still present and then some people get erased. In some ways, just by virtue of the presence of the other person that doesn't share the values. That has other interests, that has a different level of proximity to power and, and I think that's one of those things that because they're never addressed at the outset or they're very rarely addressed at the outset of these

gatherings or these coming-these ways we come together, even by the people that lead the coming together. Um, the coalition is failed from the start. It's doomed from the start because if, if we're showing up, you know, for a little, like coffee and cake, and the, and the, and we're supposed to be able to, to get along. But if their systemic issues and systemic beliefs and different systems and, and, uh, things that are not being made clear, um, that continue then all that we're doing is empty ceremony when we gather as and we, and we present as coalitions because the, at the end of the day the, the actual, like consensus has not met the action that's not taken. And the, uh, and then that leads to people being demoralized, which leads to even less action.

DD: Mhmm

OK: And I think a lot of people are also afraid to address the elephant in the room

JG: Right

SB: Oh yeah

JG: Yeah

SB: I was gonna say, just as a, light skinned Latina in the organizing space, um, from my community that's very diverse [laughs]

DD: Mhmm

SB: We are not just a, you know, we're very diverse. We come from different countries and, you know, have different nuances and cultures and, um. It-it's anti-Blackness

DD: Yeah

SB: And I'll, I'll say that. That is, that is, um, one of the elephants in the room is anti-Blackness for Latino folks. And, what, whether what they carry from their own countries and the colonization that's happened there. Um, the colorism, the, you know, anti-Blackness that made them come here [coughing in background]

DD: Yeah

SB: They bring that here to this big pot of dysfunction [laughs]

DD: Yeah [laughs]

ER: Say that

[Group members intermittently agree]

SB: And, and you add in, you know, the layers here and you have a Latino community that needs to deal with their anti-Blackness in general. But specifically here. And I think when you have—and scarce-scarcity's a byproduct of white supremacy. Um, but when you have scarcity of resources for the Black community, and they haven't been given what they deserve. There hasn't been reparations for that community. You have a new community come in, um, and that scarcity, that byproduct of white supremacy is gonna run rampant. Um, because there are few resources to be shared that the white people in power are handing over. Um, and I feel that in my bones about the Black and Brown community that we will not have a more equitable Chattanooga until the Black community, Black and Brown community can come together and begin to do that work of healing for, within themselves and then collectively. Um, to build power. Because, um, you know, white supremacy will come in and say, "We feel more comfortable giving to these Brown, you know, Brown kids, these Latino kids, these Hispanic—" is what they'd say. "And these Hispanic, we feel more comfortable giving to

these Hispanic kids but won't deal with their own anti-Blackness and how they deal with Black children. Um, and I see that specifically framed within church folks. Evangelical, um, white supremacy. And how that gets layered in with missionary ideas and colonization. And how there is a more comfort, I mean I see it happening in East Lake all the time. There's a comfort, uh, well, we'll just, you know, we're with the Hispanic kids and learning Spanish. Um, meanwhile, this Black community, they won't deal with their own things, this, this group of peop-people in power. You know? And so there's just layers on top of layers on top of layers. And that's not even talking about, you know, s-I stand back for that because I am, I'm seven years in this community and there's so many things that I don't know, you know? I'm not from here. And, you know, I stand back and just the nuances within the own communities here. Like nuances within the own Black community and what needs to be healed there. And, you know, um. But I think like you were saying, the same peop-peop, the same people being used in these spaces and, and they're for this meeting or that thing or this thing, you know? Um, and as somebody, I-I don't do as much anymore after I became a hermit and was traumatized by Covid [laughs]. But, uh, you know, um, I-I'm palatable for white people in power. Because I'm a light-skinned Latina that's the third generation and English is my fir-like, I'm palatable.

DD: Yeah.

SB: Um

ER: Hmm. Yeah.

SB: So, you know, they'll let me in a room [laughs].

DD: Without question

SB: Uh, you know, but, yeah, I mean I think there's just so many layers. And so when I'm the representation for the Latinx community, um, I don't feel that that's a win.

DD: Right

ER: Oooh

SB: When I'm the only representation

DD: Right

ER: I see what you're saying

DD: Right

SB: Because we have a whole indigenous community. I, I've got generations and I've got, I've been carrying privileges by this third generation here, growing up in Texas and can navigate spaces, um, all kinds of different spaces. But I don't think it's a win to call me as the representation, you know? Um—

DD: That's important

ER: That's like, it's like the easy way out

SB: Oh yes, the easy way out. I'm the easy way out. Yeah.

DD: Acknowledging that privilege is important

SB: Yeah

DD: And I think there's a lot of opportunity for more people to do that

SB: Certainly

DD: And the white community to acknowledge that they have that privilege

SB: And and I think certainly in the white community but I also think of my own community—

DD: And yeah

SB: It's important for us

DD: Yeah, I agree

SB: To recognize the ways that we can [inaudible 00:31:08] as Latinos, or the, because of the way that I look, because of the way that I speak, I know that those, that that's important, you know. We do [pause] it's not a all-POC. Do you know what I mean? Like, like there's Black, there's Indigenous. Like, we gotta name these things—

ER: That's what I say.

SB: Specific things.

ER: Yeah, like, stop saying this, this broad term—

SB: This big pot. Yes.

ER: That speaks very easy—

SB: Yeah.

DD: Right.

ER: For you to say that and slide back, but call a thing a thing

SB: Call a thing a thing.

ER: Who you're talking to?

SB: That's right.

ER: Who are you talking to?

SB: Yes.

DD: Right.

ER: Be specific, or I'm gonna ignore you, 'cause you must not be talking to me.

DD: Yeah

SB: Yes, yes.

DD: 'Cause your community is so layered.

SB: Yeah! Absolutely.

DD: There's not, we just can't lump in your community into one particular set of group of people.

SB: Yeah.

ER: It's, and it's us, too.

DD: And that's our community as well. Like, they think, I'll say this. In the work environment and in the school environment, like at my job. They might go to me to get the Black perspective.

JG: Mhmm. Hm.

DD: But I have to remind them I have my perspective.

ER: Right, right, right.

DD: I don't represent all Black people. And diversity is not just bringing in one person and saying 'okay, we got that covered. We got that race covered.'

ER: But they will check that box off real fast.

SB: [Laughs]

DD: Exactly. Exactly.

ER: Glow in the dark ink pen. Got it!

SB: [Laughs]

DD: We got, we got D'Andrea, she's representing our Black people, we have Ian, he's representing our Asian people, we have Jose, he's representing the Mexican community, or just Hispanic people in general. And we have John, he's gonna represent white. 'Cause white people are not just, you just can't have one white person to represent all white people either. Like, diversity is so much more than just us. It's so individualized and, um, as far as like addressing that, for me, like, I think when I have seen it addressed, because I'm not gonna say it's never addressed. I do see where people are trying to make an effort to address it. And whenever I see that, I'm seeing it from someone up top. Like, the people at the bottom that's affected the most, we can only do so much. But the people in power really have to acknowledge that those, um, layers exist and they also have to acknowledge that they have the power to do something about it. Um, I respect how, um, Mayor Kelly started bringing in other people to be leaders that weren't white into, you know, his initiatives. I respect that. But that's just not gonna be enough. Like, [laughs] we, we, I like that he's setting that tone, but I do want other leaders to do the same because it's not just gonna, it just can't fall onto Mayor Kelly, it just can't fall onto the CEOs of different companies, but it's important for those CEOs to bring in their CFOs of color. To bring, they just, and then I keep seeing companies hiring VPs of diversity and inclusion. Like—

ER: Which is interesting.

OK: That's, that's a word [laughs]

DD: They created this Diversity and Inclusion role. So they're VP of Diversity and Inclusion. I like that, but we just don't need the person of color to just be the VP of color. [laughs]

SB: [Laughs]

DD: We need the person of color to also be a CEO. Like, I need these CEOs to start training up people that's not white to replace them one day. The CFOs need to start training up people that's not white to replace the CFOs

JG: All the, all the leadership in these companies should have the qualifications that's it, that it takes to be a VP of diversity.

DD: Absolutely

JG: Because they all should be doing that work

DD: Absolutely

ER: Actually that's what I was gonna say. Yeah, like why, why is it, you know not even a part of the job?

DD: [Laughs] Right.

OK: But think also about like, let's say we might do the step forwards while the rest of the nation takes four steps backward.

ER: Yep.

OK: Like, for instance, DeSantis, like it's not, uh feeling subjected to public schools anymore that have a DEI statement. I mean, where are we going?

DD: Yeah [laughs]

ER: Yeah, I mean in 20-what was it? In 2020, you know, putting up your black, your, your black square

OK: Mhmm

DD: Yeah

ER: Um, that was supposed to be—

DD: Yeah

ER: The call-calling card

DD: Right

ER: That we are rethinking our strategy

DD: Exactly [Laughs]

ER: But then when you go deeper, you're like, wait. You just put up a black card.
That's all you did

DD: That's all you did [laughs]

JG: You're saying something without saying anything at all. But, yeah, yeah, yeah

DD: Or doing anything [laughs]

SB: [Laughs]

ER: And, and so when you ask more questions, they're like, 'oh, wait, we were
supposed to do more?' [laughs] Yeah—

OK: And so,

ER: It's bigger than pushing the send button.

OK: How do you deal with that? I mean, you, you have this vision of all you, how
you know and feel how it should be.

DD: Right

OK: But it is almost the train that doesn't get out of the station

DD: [Laughs] Yeah

ER: It doesn't. Yeah. It sits there

DD: [inaudible 00:36:21] Yeah

OK: It's—

ER: It sits there

OK: You know, and it, it makes me sometimes think, 'what am I doing?' You know? Like, I'm just a tiny little drop and

DD: Right

OK: Can I make a difference?

ER: Yeah

SB: Uh, um

ER: And that's, and that's an important part to, I think we all feel that way sometimes and

SB: Oh, absolutely

DD: Yeah

ER: I feel like daily, and I'm like—I'm like I make a better impact if I just have coffee

[Group members laugh]

ER: You know? Instead of doing all this other stuff. 'Cause it—

DD: Yeah

ER: Like I'm complicating things—

SB: Yes

ER: And I'm still not getting ahead.

SB: Yes, need to be moving

ER: Yeah

SB: Um, Adrienne Maree Brown, is that, that's [inaudible 00:36:52]? She, uh, they are an author, um, orga-community organizer and they say, uh, I'm gonna butcher it exactly, but basically, organizing is science fiction

DD: [laughs]

JG: Hmmm. Mhmm.

SB: And that you really are creating a world, you're pushing and working toward a world that you cannot see yet. Um, and it always sticks with me every time we, es-especially these days I think where I just feel so burnt out and not sure what, what to do next. Where do I belong now? Um, the idea of this is science fiction, we're, we're thinking up a world that doesn't exist but we work towards it, right?

DD: Right

ER: Blindly

DD: Yeah

SB: [Laughs] Blindly, yeah

ER: I was wondering when it says 'coalitions,' so like, are, I-I guess in our space are we, does that mean like, orgs? Like, nonprofits? Companies? Um

OK: It's broad [inaudible 00:37:52]

SB: It's broad, yeah

DD: Yeah

SB: Seems broad.

DD: I think fear plays a lot into what's preventing from forming between communities, you know. People are scared to do what they are unfamiliar with and what makes them comfortable. I mean, personally speaking, um, I had to push, like I was telling you earlier, I had to push through fear to even come to an event like this where I'm not gonna know a lot of people personally. 'Cause fear easily woulda kept me at home, where I'm comfortable and, um, avoid being awkward. You know? Like, instead of being awkward, I'd rather just stay where I'm in my comfort zone and just be comfortable. And so a lot of people are scared to be uncomfortable.

JG: That's [inaudible 00:38:38]

[Group members intermittently agree]

DD: And you ha-you just gotta push through that. Um, I know I live, um. I've lived in Chattanooga for years. But specifically recently moved to Dalton, Georgia just because that just had a more affordable housing, you know. Dalton is very affordable because it's a very small community, very rural, but I love it out there because it is, it is out of my comfort zone and I'm, I've been exposed to a lot of the Hispanic community out there. My children, um, well, my oldest daughter goes to, um the high school zoned for our house. And the student body, I kid you not, a lot of her friends are from Mexico or, um, they're, uh, from like, the country-est side of trailer parks. So, it's, you know, a different dynamic than what I went to school with. And I love to see that she's outside of her box and flourishing. And it's not as scary as I would have thought it would have been, you know? I n-and sometimes I do think when I go into like a restaurant owned by Mexicans and they have like the most authentic tacos and they, sometimes they do take, take double look at us when we come in and we're repeat people [laughs] and

they're like, 'um, okay, so you like our food? You're not looking for a different type of food?' I'm like, 'no, I want exactly what you're making, exactly how you make it. I don't need ketchup, I'm not looking for sour cream [laughs]

SB: [laughs]

ER: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah that's happened to me before [inaudible 00:40:27]

"Are you lost?" I'm like, "No."

[Group members laughs]

DD: No!

ER: I know exactly, I know exactly where I'm at

DD: Yes, a lot of people—

ER: I smelled it up the block—

DD: Yes

ER: And I know exactly where I'm supposed to be and I'm gonna get it all.

[Group members intermittently agree]

DD: Yes, so, so I love that they're, you know, we both are kind of like addressing our discomfort with each other. You know, they're like, 'are you sure you want it?' Yes! [laughs] they're all, they're looking like, 'are you lost?' Nope. I'm exactly where I wanna be. And I know that's how the school felt when I was registering her for school, 'cause her, there's not a lot of Black people in Dalton at all. And so, they're like, why are you here? I'm like, 'well, it started off because you guys are affordable. But now I'm gonna continue to stay because you guys have made me feel like I'm at home.' You know? No one, yes, no one has given us any problems about being there. My street is filled with,

there's probably one or two white families on my block. Which is beautiful 'cause it's like a brand new neighborhood but the community out there is supporting non-white families and we're all doing well. And I have not seen that in Chattanooga. You know? Like the best neighborhoods I've seen are filled with white communities and s-s-sprinkles of Black or Hispanic, or you know, it's sprinkled out there. Whereas my block in Dalton is sprinkled with white. So that's a shift that, you know, I appreciate and I did not let that deter me from living there, not seeing a lot of people that look like me because, um, they'll accept you. You know, they will accept you if you just push through the potential of it being awkward or if you push through the potential of being rejected. And that's just something where, uh, it just takes acknowledging that it's possible to be accepted instead of automatically thinking okay, they're different from me. They're gonna have an attitude 'cause I know, even with, within my own community, I avoid, I ha-I have avoided different events where there's a lot of Black people 'cause I know even within my own community I get scared of, oh, they're gonna have an attitude because I don't talk like them. I, you know, we didn't go to the same school growing up, so I don't wanna be uncomfortable. I don't wanna be judged, I don't wanna be made fun of because I talk different. But I have to push through that and every time I do, it, it plays out in my favor. Like, they actually accept me even though we do talk differently. They're not judging me like I would have thought

ER: That's a good thing.

DD: So—

OK: Well, then I came to the States, uh, for the second time. It was my kids because they were born in Mexico

DD: Mhmm

OK: So they only spoke Spanish. And I moved to Jicama mountain. Well, the kids were called street [pause for background noise] and I was the foreigner

ER: Oh no

SB: Wow, yeah

ER: [sighs] wow. Huh

OK: That's a strange feeling

ER: [Laughs]

SB: Yeah, yeah

DD: Mhmm

ER: Yeah. You got a card, Josiah?

JG: Um, that's a blank one. I can't remember what those mean

OK: Oh we can

ER: We're supposed to write in a question

SB: Yeah, if you had a question

DD: If we had a topic of our own

OK: If you have a question

SB: You can write your own questions

JG: Hold on, it's a lot of blank ones

ER: Yeah, I think there's four

DD: [Laughs]

SB: Are there four? Oh.

OK: Oh, you gonna choose the one [inaudible 00:44:12]

[JG and OK laugh]

ER: I think we counted them. I think we counted them in our last group, there was like four of them

OK: Oh, more blank!

JG: Uh, we've actually kinda spoken to the, this question: *How has your community changed since you became a part of it.* Do you all want to speak further to that, or want me to pull another one?

ER: Let's see what else you got, yeah, yeah

OK: Pull another one

JG: Ooh. *Discuss your own, uh, personal experience with microaggressions*

DD: Ooh [Laughs]

ER: Oh, oh, really? Oh

[Group members laugh]

JG: You wanna roll with that, or want me to pull another one

ER: I guess we can do it, but dog. That's rough. Where my notebook at

OK: Let's go for it

SB: Yeah, lets do it

DD: [Laughs] Yeah [Laughs]

SB: I feel like you just gave one

DD: Yeah

JG: Yeah, you, you actually just speaking to that. Like

ER: Yeah

DD: Yeah

ER: Wow

OK: You and your kids.

ER: Wooh!

DD: [Sigh]

ER: Okay, so

DD: I mean, I deal with it at work almost every day [Laughs]

ER: [Laughs]

JG: Mhmm, mhmm

DD: I work for, um, a major health insurance company, so you know, top dollar, top dollar business and, um, when you deal with those industries that make a lot of money, um, a lot of people in charge are not going to look like me. Um, and I know they're trying to get better about it. But, um, and I know they mean well, you know, because they're trying to become better about it and so there has been situations where [sighs] something tragic has happened in the news and so they wanna get, you know, my take on it [laughs]. And then want to, you know, see how to go about it. And I'm like, well, I can give you my take but that doesn't mean it's the best way to go about it. And singling me out feels like a microaggression because, you know, it's gonna take more than just me. Like, I need you to bring in a collection of us. And then there's also, like, what my daughter's school-like, one daughter lives in our zones, where she goes to our

zoned school. But I do have another daughter that goes to a private school. And so, I have those two different dynamics and, and my youngest daughter's private school experience, she comes across microaggressions I think and she probably doesn't even realize it. Because, you know, she's young but—

ER: And she shouldn't

DD: Yeah

ER: She shouldn't, she shouldn't

DD: Yeah. She doesn't even realize it but when she comes home and she tells me, like, someone asked, like, um, if they could do their hair like hers. And, um, or when they don't feel intrusive when it's the tale as old as time: touching our hair. You know, like, people don't even understand there's no barrier between feeling the texture of our hair and being curious. And my daughter has come home with things like that. Like, "someone was touching my curly puff today and they didn't understand why I didn't like it." [Laughs]

OK: [Laughs]

ER: From, from what you do in the worl-real world, where do microaggressions come from?

SB: Um, oh, let me, let me forget what I used to do [Laughs]

ER: Yeah just forget, just forget it. Don't worry about it

[Group members intermittently agree]

SB: No, I mean microaggressions are, I mean they're rooted in, I mean, racism, you mean, right? Yeah. It's stereotypes, biases, I mean that's where they're rooted.

They're these those little, small, seemingly small. Um, there's this video of a little cartoon where somebody's getting microaggressions constantly. Like, all day. They're small. Like, little, like sim-like a mosquito, just kinda biting you little by little, but you think of the culmination of all of them. The constant, and what that does to the mental health of somebody that's constantly getting these microaggressions. But, yeah. They're rooted in racism, and stereotypes and biases of things that we are socialized to think about one another, because of our racist society. Um, and that's where we get, we get these little things.

ER: You think people know they're, that they're perpetrating the microaggressions?

SB: Do I think people are? No.

ER: Do you think they know it always?

SB: No, I don't think they always know it. Um, the, the touching of the hair really still trips me out at this point of social media and all that's available online—

ER: 'Cause you figure they would know

DD: Right, you figured they would know

SB: 'Cause I'm like at this point—

JG: It's ubiquitous

SB: You should know

DD: You figured they would know

SB: At this point

[Group members intermittently agree]

ER: And it's the, it's, and sometimes it's the, sometimes it's the way the touching happens, right? There's one thing to be like, 'oh my god, your hair is so beautiful. Blah blah blah blah.' And then that's endearment touch, right? Then there's the other part where it turns into petting. And that's where—

SB: That's ownership of

ER: I'm ready to fight. You know, 'cause I'm like, 'yo, [smacks teeth] you rubbing me like you rubbing you, yeah [Laughs]

JG: What breed are you [Laughs] How old are you, like, right

[Group members laugh]

ER: You rubbing me like you rubbing your cat. You know what I'm saying?

SB: Yeah, yeah

DD: Right

[Group members intermittently agree]

ER: And, and I wanna fight, you know? 'Cause I'm like, now you really crossing it. But then I wonder about, there's those other microaggressions that happen and I can, just being transparent, I've seen it between working with white women as a Black woman. And as a Black woman in a professional setting at times with white women, right? They're professional, I'm professional, right? And there comes a moment where I'm, I'm no longer a product of their work. Maybe they hired me, maybe they have put me in a job with them. But then, my career went up and now I'm neck-in-neck in this weird way. But our relationship just changed.

SB: Ah yeah.

DD: Right

ER: Almost instantly. And so now there's these weird quips and the microaggression comes from, I remember when you didn't, I remember back in the day when you were, I remember you couldn't, when you were, you know? And to me, that's a different kind of a microaggression, but then I wonder, it feels like it comes from a DNA level. See, this is me and my thoughts. And I, I could be wrong, but in my head, epigenetics thinking back to, if we believe that we have that same DNA memory, then the oppressor has it, too, right?

DD: Right

SB: Yeah

[Group members intermittently agree]

ER: So then, looking at the master's wives. Right? Master wives, he know, she knows, you know, Thursday night he's about to go into such and such field to be with whomever, right right right. She knows it's gonna happen. It's understandable. She's understanding, she knows. She might be ticked off this is the way of the world, then. That microaggression plays a role in the relationships now, I think, um DNA-wise. So, looking at us differently from this standpoint of, you're still in the back, and that's where you're supposed to stay. How dare you darken the door of this positivity, this greatness? How dare you be more than what you're supposed to be? We already declared where you're supposed to be, and it's in the back. And here you come out, and so then they, I felt, in my, in my experience it was as if I was constantly getting this reminder of, 'I remember when, and then you couldn't, and I had to help you.' Um, and forgetting that the person at the [inaudible 00:52:20] didn't have much to do with what you did. But it

comes off as a microaggression that gets bigger when it's consistent. Like you said, the pricks [snapping] they consistently happens, then I become the 'angry Black lady.' That nobody wants to deal with, right? And then that's the one thing that I try my best to stay away from, but that's, that's what happens, you know? And Black women choose, we were choosing at one point to defend ourselves and, or, not defend ourselves.

Camouflage ourselves behind code speaking and, um, trying to, uh mimic what we thought was the, the right way, um

SB: Well you're, you're hitting on such a—

ER: But I'm so not code-I don't code switch anymore. I'm not doing that.

SB: Yeah

ER: I'm not about that life anymore

DD: Yeah

SB: Yeah, yeah

ER: If you can't take the full

SB: All of me. In every space.

DD: Yeah, take it. Take it as is

ER: Feel free to, free to walk away

JG: Mmm.

DD: Yeah

[Group members intermittently agree]

SB: And, but you're hitting on that dynamic between Black women and white women. I think it's really, you're exactly right of this kind of like historical relationship that

has gone on for so, century- you kn-I don't know, centuries? I don't know. You know. All these ages, right? That this dynamic is still there and present that sure there are microaggressions that come out of like stereotypes, biases. Kids learn it from things they see and watch and hear and whatnot. That rel-that particular relationship with white women and Black women and because of our history there.

ER: It's rough

OK: But how about-

SB: You gotta know

OK: Oh sorry, how about sarcasm?

DD: Yeah

OK: Um, you know, I, at one time I went to, to try to buy a car and they saw that I was the female and didn't know anything about cars.

ER: They treat you some kind of way

DD: Mhmm

OK: The the guy was trying to explain to me what, whatever it was and he said, "Do you understand? Do you understand?" And he lost a f-sale right there

[Group member laughs]

DD: Yeah

[Group members intermittently agree]

OK: Because that, to me, is not not a way to treat another human being. Just, giving you the feeling that you are like, you, you don't know anything about anything.

Just be, you know, like, not up to their standards and whose standards are we talking about?

ER: Who made the standard?

DD: Right

OK: Yeah

ER: Which we, we all agree. Yeah. Like, that's a, that's a whole thing

JG: And like that desperate patriarchal desire to be the expert—

OK: Oh yeah

ER: Come on, Josiah.

JG: And no one el-like just spews mansplaining—

SB: That's right

ER: [snapping] [laughs]

[Group members intermittently agree]

JG: And, and then what, what you all were speaking to, it makes me think of like, that dynamic, um, between a, a, a white person and a, and, and a Black person or a Latinx person. And the proximity to privilege that the white person has, so that you think when you may be working or collaborating if you do, what is your responsibility, which is to speak up when that person's being made invisible or to, um, or to rightfully connect with them or make sure you put their name in the pot for this opportunity. One day, are getting to the place that they deserve to be in from the beginning, then you think you're owed something. Which is also false and I think yields a lot of problematic behavior and,

and some of the sarcasm and the, you know, the 'Oh, I remember when,' it's, it's, it's, you're still trying to hold the chain on that person.

ER: Yeah

SB: Yeah

DD: Yeah

ER: It, it, it, it, and it's frustrating

DD: Yeah

SB: Yeah

ER: Um, it, and it can, it can really s-it can really discourage you and stagnate you if you're not—

DD: It does

ER: You're not ready for it. You know? Um, and I shouldn't have to, I shouldn't have to prepare for that.

DD: Right

JG: No

ER: Um, you know, even one, one person said, "You're blowing up, you're gonna leave me."

DD: [Laughs]

ER: "You're gonna leave me." And, and to me, that person thought it was a compliment, right?

DD: Yeah

JG: Mmm

ER: But the way it was coming off it was coming off in the sense like, "I found you—

DD: Right

SB: Yeah. You belong to me

ER: "I done put you on—"

DD: Yeah

ER: "And now you're gonna leave me."

DD: I'm glad you, yeah

ER: Like I, like, like I'm supposed to—

DD: Like you owe them.

[Group members intermittently agree]

ER: Like, like no, they're weren't preparing for m-they weren't preparing for my greatness. They were only preparing for me to be great for them. They weren't preparing for the future of that. And I think we have to prepare for that, but, at the same time they know, it caught me off guard. And I was like, "wait. So, if I [pause] if I don't leave, then I'm supposed to stay on this shelf? And stagnate? Is that what, is that what you're telling me I'm supposed to do? Um, but I think that's al-like I said, I, it felt like it was very rooted um, in that original relationship between um, Black women and, and, white women. Black women being the slaves, white women being, the, the, mistress of the, of the house the, the person in charge of the home and them seeing their husband tip out to be with—and, and also then there would be these, this proof. Right? So, he's going to the, this, this woman, this slave, every Thursday, eventually that's gonna come

back to bite somebody and there's gonna be a baby. So then now you have a baby that's running around the plantation that looks just like him, and that's what the wife has to deal with. Knowing that this is the proof of that. And internalize it, that woman then internalizes that hurt, that frustration, for the s-for the slave and then it turns over as years change and slavery's no longer there, turns over with this frustration toward Black women. And then it shows up in these conversations and as long as they can stay one step ahead, then they don't have to say anything. But the moment that the rising becomes even, then that's when the quips come 'cause, because as long as I was here and just doing hourly and just here, I ain't hear none of it. None of it was being said. "Yep, you a good worker and we so glad. We, we couldn't have done it without you. Blah, blah, blah." But then the moment that it, that it was leveling out—

DD: Yeah, 'cause I think, I mean, 'cause I wonder, like, do people forget there's enough room for everybody at the top?

SB: That's what I was gonna say, I mean 'cause that's again—

DD: 'Cause—

SB: The scarcity m-there's not—

DD: There's—

SB: There's not space—

ER: Scarcity, yes—

SB: This is scarcity

ER: We see that. Yeah

SB: And I think—

DD: An imagined scarcity

SB: Well this could be a whole other conversa-um

DD: [laughs]

SB: Whi-of white feminism, and how white feminism can also be a by-product of white supremacy because it is. It is that dynamic. It is that, you know, 'I also didn't have the privilege so I worked my way here to, to, to really keep this, this place in society where I can hold power. But like, I'm not gonna share it, 'cause there's not enough room.

ER: [Laughs]

DD: That's crazy

SB: There's not, there's not enough power.

ER: [Laughs] It's all mine

SB: It's all mine—

DD: And that's—

SB: And I gotta hold onto it, you know?'

DD: Yeah, it's wild. Because I feel you on how, that, that sense of 'you're gonna leave me.' Like, I feel you on that because you should be encouraging. You should be encouraging my evolution and understand that as I evolve, someone can come into my position and grow from where they were. You know? People get set in their ways and eliminate these opportunities for other people to come up in the ranks. Like, I wouldn't have my position if someone had not grew from it first. And as I grow from my position, someone else can grow from theirs. And it's, you know, it's a stepping stone. Power

shift. And it's like, I desire that from my leadership as well. When I s-g-like, I, for example, I looked at, I just got a Master's but I'm all, like, I've started talking about 'okay, what's what does the doctorate position looks like,' you know? 'Cause I'm in a place where they'll reimburse tuition. So, I'm like why not do it if they're gonna pay for it. So, I talked to leadership about it and they're like, [sighs] no one else in my department has their doctorate.

ER: So they're gonna tell you—

OK: Ahh

ER: Not to

JG: Why do you need that. Like [laughs]

OK: Yeah

ER: Yeah

DD: You know?

ER: It's gon, it's, it's gonna be camouflage. It ain't, it's not gonna be direct and say, 'don't do it,' they're gonna be like, 'why?'

DD: 'Why?'

ER: With, with—

DD: And that's the energy I have been getting. Like, oh, I don't know if they're gonna pay for that. They're only gonna pay for it if it's relevant to your role

ER: [Laughs]

DD: And I'm like

JG: It's relevant enough to have you running the company, and [laughs]

[Group members laugh]

JG: They don't need all that, you don't need a [laughs]

ER: Don't need no extra

DD: So I feel you

OK: And that's the, that's the fear

JG: Right

DD: You know me, I hate that they gave me that type of energy because they don't—if I wasn't a stronger person, I would dial back getting that feedback. But I'm a different person than I was a year ago

ER: Go get it. Got get it

DD: I'm a different person than I was five years ago. That version of me probably would have been like, 'ooh, maybe I need to stay in my lane.' But then, but because I've surrounded myself with people like you guys and communities like this where we're supporting growth and not just like, keeping people where they're comfortable at. They, you know, I'm able to, take that with a grain of salt. 'Cause I, you know, I—

ER: They're saying in the back of their head, 'She's gonna leave us.'

[Group members intermittently agree]

DD: Absolutely! And I, and I hope they understand that this is a ladder and y'all are a step. I hope y'all didn't think I was gonna retire from this. I need y'all to get to where I want to go [laughs] And they're almost like, you know, looking at me as if it's a privilege—

ER: They're threatening now, they're threatening now

DD: To be where I'm at you know what I mean? Where you are is a privilege. And why are you uh, interested in that? And I wish it was the opposite. I wish they woulda been like, 'How can we help you?' You know? What, how do, what do you need me to do to get you to where you trying to go.' So.

OK: That would be ideal

DD: That would be ideal [laughs]

ER: So not gonna say no. Um, the card I pulled next is, *Discuss the rising costs of higher education, literacy rates, and equity in K through 12 education.*

JG: [Laughs]

OK: Oh

ER: Wooh

SB: Ooh!

DD: They getting into it y'all

ER: Mm. That's heavy.

DD: It is heavy

SB: That's not, that's not multi-layered [laughs]

JG: Yeah

[Group members laugh]

OK: It's heavy and a lot.

SB: And a lot. Okay discuss the cost of education...

ER: Higher education keeps peop-keeps people from going to college.

SB: Yeah

DD: Yep

SB: I-and there's a whole, I mean, when you think about maybe first generation college students, there's a whole world to navigate. Like there's a like that li-almost like it's a secret society. There's a way, there's these, these words people use and financial aid and just ways you navigate the system is deeply embedded and I'm sorry [inaudible 01:03:26.3-01:03:28] deeply embedded in these ways and you have first generation college students that are coming from a different class, a low class, whatnot. You know, an economic spot and it, it is like another language. It's like a secret society that you have to learn how to navigate. And there's, I mean, who's helping? Who's helping you learn how to navigate these things if you haven't had somebody go before you. 'This is how you survive in this space.' Um, that's hard so, I mean, yeah. It's expensive, and you know, on top of that, but then there's just that whole aspect that it is. It's just like, it's another world.

EOLA DANCE: We have about five more minutes, she said

SB: Okay

[Group members intermittently agree]

JG: I, uh, one of the things I really love about Quinta and the team doing Abbott Elementary is how they made such a beautiful, laughable, joyous story line about what's really like, just a horror story. It's really, the the sh-the stuff these kids are up against, they, we were up against and didn't even know it, that you have an experience with, um, in, in trying to, in trying to, like get an education, then also make it work for you because, you know, we're, you, you, we've s-you're sold on the story that you graduate high school, you go to college, you get the degree, you get the job, then the rest of your

life is just gonna show up. And there are all these ways that that's being undermined from the actual content that we're learning, the things that are being ripped from schools left and right, the, the, the whole hassle that is the student loan business and, and, and, and that crap that operates as a parallel to the prison system because it is literally the same thing. You know? And, um, and even when there are attempts with the current administration to like, 'Okay, can we knock some of this debt off that shouldn't have been as much a factor in the first place. Then, people fight that. Claiming that, oh, well, you know, it's not fair to the people who paid their debts. Which, in many cases, you can chalk that up to inequity. And lack of, uh, and lack of employment, lack of diversity, lack of opportunity. And, uh, and systemic oppression. So, it, it's really like, you're fighting on all fronts. You're fighting on, on, and it's really, I think, like, at the end of the day it really does take like, it's gonna take some organizing and just straight up refusal. They way, the way people strike against, um, companies so the way these writers are striking against the industry. The way teachers have had to strike. Students. And students even know how to strike

DD: They do!

JG: They have to strike to try to keep themselves alive in the schools from shooters. So that energy also has to extend to this because, it, it's, it's a game. And it could, it's gonna, s-it's, it has to stop. It's, it's ridiculous. The only option we have is to not play it. As Baldwin said, the only option to deal with these schools is to take our kids out of these schools. Like.

SB: I-I'll say too, having kids, my kids are ten, eleven and twel-no. Ten, twelve, thirteen. Sorry, everybody switches over [laughs]

[Group members laugh]

SB: It's hard to keep up

ER: They keep growing [laughs]

[Group members intermittently agree]

SB: They keep growing! The nerve. Ten, twelve, thirteen. Um, and, the school game is exhausting as a parent. I think. As a parent that's trying to be aware, as a parent that has these frameworks that I live out of, you know, just trying to be intentional that decisions will be made as a family. The way my kids operate as multi-ethnic kids. It is exhausting. I don't know it'd be, like, easier in another city, it's exhausting here. [laughs] I'll just say specifically here. And trying to navigate all these ways and, and weighing because we f-our family sits in between spaces, and so I have to navigate, you know, what privileges my children do have, and ones that they don't. And I'm always trying to weigh them out in the decision making of how my kids are-where they're gonna go to school and how they're gonna go to school, and you know, yeah. I mean, it's just a constant game, at least for me, living in this in-between spaces of am I chill and trying to help my children learn how to live in these in-between spaces. It's exhausting. You know? And trying to say, and, and make decisions I don't, just make decisions just for my kids, but I'm also thinking about collectively, our kids. You know, or collectively, our Black and Brown children. You know? And, our society is set up for you not to live-like—

DD: It is

SB: Like they don't want you live collectively. They want you to live individualistically.

[Group members intermittently agree]

JG: And all of y'all that raise kids here. And have navigated the education system, you're navigating the legacy of segregation, and then, post-segregation. All the private schools that came up because of they didn't want their kids still going to school with other kids. And then, now these schools-some of these schools have held onto those legacies, some of them are trying to fight them and do better. But even that, they're stumbling over, running into walls, trying to educate themselves. And if you have a kid in that system, then you're having to do all the emotional and intellectual labor to help the pivot. And it's, yeah. It-

[Group members intermittently agree]

DD: It's tough. Because I have that dynamic shift in my house. It's split between public and private. And it started out as them both in private. But my oldest realized it just was not for her. Like, her energy, it just wasn't worth it. Whereas, my youngest is understanding why my oldest left and she's in the environment where they're seeing the reason she left and trying to fix it now.

JG: Oh wow

DD: So my youngest is getting the benefits of my oldest leaving. So like you said, sometimes you gotta take them out to see something needs to change. The removal ignited a shift in their approach. And so now they're like, they, they ask for her back all the time, because they're like, 'Look, we know why she left, we're doing this about it. We want her to come back. We're doing this about it.' So, that incident is, you know, can be reflected on a bigger scale, yeah

JG: It's literal, yeah

DD: For sure

OK: But that is one success story. It's one, but that makes it proof that it is possible.

OK: Possible. Yeah

DD: That's all you need is one to take-it only takes one to show that it's possible. It only takes one. Like, when I saw a Black woman being Vice President. It only takes one. Or seeing Obama being President. It only takes one. So now, we know it's not impossible. Or seeing even just my sister, at, just in my household, seeing my sister get like two Master's degrees. It's like, you-sometimes you have to be able to see it to know that it's possible. So, but, it takes that first person, though.

SB: Yeah

JG: And you're like, you see what's happening behind the scenes. You know all the [laughs] you know all the rough work that it takes. But to that point of seeing something, that's the most important person that could see that and get all the impact are the kids. When kids, that visual element—

DD: When kids see it

[Group members intermittently agree]

JG: Or that being, knowing that presence is there for them in whatever way they can sense it. It, it, it most benefits them. Because we know, like, okay. This person is elected, but this is, this is half of the story. This is the tip if the iceberg. What's, but when the kids are being able to benefit from that and they are able to internalize that and say, 'Okay, I belong here, too.' That, that's—

DD: Exactly

[AS whistles]

OK: Woo!

AS: Thank you, I know you're in the middle of some really great conversations, but time has run out, I know.

JG: [Laughs]

DD: We took pictures of some of the

SB: Did you? Yeah.

DD: We took some pictures from earlier [inaudible 01:12:07]

AS: So, um, thank you for coming and giving us your voices. We are so excited to launch this thing and come in search your own self and listen to what you had to say. Um, so for now, finish eating, finish your conversations. I'm gonna come around and stop the recorders. And, we'll just carry on with our afternoon.

ED: Yep

AS: Sound good?

ED: And if you would like to have your portrait taken and you have not, we still have an opportunity to do so. Um, we do need you to sign the waiver, however, so, um we have that at the front desk. And, again, thank you so much. Follow us on all social media, big thanks to Stoveworks, incredible work that you're doing today

[Appause]

[inaudible 01:12:48-01:12:51] and thank you to the BLT team. Aja and, uh, and Eliza would not be possible without them. So, thank you, thank you, thank you.

[Applause]

CHA_052023_PPL3

DD: That was amazing.

JG: Thank y'all so much for coming. This went amazing.

DD: Thank you

OK: Thank you

DD: Yes, this has been good for the soul, for sure. I did not get your name but I
would love to

[inaudible 01:13:23]

[UNKNOWN] Ni-

END OF RECORDING

Transcribed by Aja Scarlato 01/05/2024

To be copyedited.