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Participants:

TIFFANY GAINES

DAWN MARTIN BERRY-WALKER

JULIA BOTTOMS

JASON MICHAEL CATHCART

BRYANT TONEY

RASHAAD HOLLEY

Length: 01:27:20

Preface

The following conversation was hosted virtually over ZOOM in collaboration with the Burchfield-Penney Art Center. 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

TIFFANY GAINES: Recording. There we go. And I figured it'd be good to maybe just start [inaudible 00:00:06] with introductions to just kind of let everyone know who everyone is, what they do. So I'll start. I'm Tiffany. Hey, y'all. I'm a curator at the Burchfield-Penney, a photographer, and a current visual studies student at UB [University at Buffalo]. And I'm going to pass it to Rashaad, who is to my left.

RASHAAD HOLLEY: What's up, y'all. I'm Rashaad. I am a, uh... I'll say I'm a teaching artist. My medium is fashion, particularly apparel design. But I do do work in styling and fashion photography as well. I've been a teaching artist for about six years. And I'm in the process of developing my own design studio, which will function as a lab,

a creative space, and a incubator for fashion, art, and photography. I'll pass it to ToneyBoi, who's next to me.

BRYANT TONEY: Hi, guys. Bryant Toney, as Rashaad called me, ToneyBoi. I am a sound engineer. I've studied sound at Full Sail University. I've been in the Buffalo hip-hop scene for about eleven, twelve years along with Rashaad. And I like to teach people about hip-hop culture; that's one of my main focuses.

[Pause]

TG: You can pass it along to whoever you want to go next.

BT: I'll pass it on to Jason. I'm Jason.

JASON MICHAEL CATHCART: Hey, everyone. My name is Jason. I'm the acting director of The D.O.P.E. Collective, which stands for Dismantling Oppressive Patterns for Empowerment. I'm also a community educator. And I guess I've been involved with the art space for the last six years. Before that, [inaudible 00:02:06] kind of just levels of organizing without realizing that that was considered organizing. I've always been, like, involved in community projects throughout my life [inaudible 00:02:20] different community organizations. Other than that, I'm just here kind of, like—I like what we do with D.O.P.E. because we try to bridge different parts of the culture together. So we make sure we create more, like, inclusive and our own [inaudible 00:02:36] especially specifically artists of color, but have different intersections beyond just race and ethnicity, but also whether differently abled, whether they identify as LGBTQ, but creating [inaudible 00:02:49] space where everyone feels welcome [inaudible 00:02:51-0:02:53]. I always feel like cultivating spaces is so important because it allows people to be comfortable with each other, to be honest.

JULIA BOTTOMS: And I'm Julia. I'm a visual artist here in Buffalo, New York. I focus mostly on figurative work and portrait work. I also do mural work here, and I'm a teaching artist as well.

TG: And Dawn, I see you here. Are you—? Can you hear us? Are you able to unmute or let us know you're here with us?

DAWN MARTIN BERRY-WALKER: Yes, I'm here with you. I am just casually listening in, if that's okay. I'm a jazz presenter here in Buffalo and just interested in this conversation. So, I'm here. Thank you.

TG: Wonderful. So before we dive into it, because I will forget otherwise, I do want to just take a quick screenshot of us just for documentation. So if you all could just give me your best smile, I'll take a quick couple of screenshots. Say cheese.

[Screenshot sound] I'll do one more. [Screenshot sound] Okay. So I don't want to be the one to start the conversation at all. So I would love to pass it along to anyone that has a prompt that they're particularly interested in kind of jumping off the conversation with, or one that, you know, kind of you've gravitated towards that was of interest to you. So, the floor is open.

[Pause]

RH: I'm sorry, my mouth's full. I started eating already. Um, but like the fourth one in says: *What do you think about the professionalization of art practices?* And I think that that's interesting because, working as a teaching artist, I think that I've become less inclined to present myself in a certain way. I think, like, if I have like interviews, I'm comfortable showing up in sweats, in a hoodie. A couple of y'all may know that I got my head tattooed. Like, I've started really paying attention to how I show

up and really showing up as myself no matter what. And I think artists kind of like spearhead that movement of us, like, destigmatizing the 'come as you are' in relationship to being professional and reshaping the whole perspective on being professional. So that card particularly stuck out to me as I started to scroll through. What do you guys think?

BT: I've always based being professional off of, you know, being on time. [Laughs] It doesn't matter like how you look, how you dress, whatever. If you come in and your work is sufficient with what you are, then I don't really care how your appearance is, you know what I'm tryna say. That's always been one of my standards.

TG: Yeah, I think for me—It's very interesting coming into the Burchfield and, like, evolving into this space of, like, moving from, you know, the front desk where I didn't really give much thought to how I looked in terms of like, you know, I would just wear whatever. Keep it a certain level of business casual, but, you know, not really worrying or being concerned, like, if I have my hair wrapped or if I wear something pro-Black or whatever. But then, moving into a curatorial space and, you know, being more in the administrative side, I definitely have seen myself be more conscious of how I present myself, but wanting to use that space to come, like you were saying Rashaad, exactly as I am. And it's so interesting because I never really gave it much of a conscious thought, but I remember during shelter-in-place where we were working remotely, like I would wear my head wraps a lot, because I wasn't doing my hair, to get on camera or whatever. And Renata, your mom, Bryant, she was just saying how empowering that was to see me, as a young Black person, just being unafraid of wearing, you know, like a head wrap or wearing something that's very like pro-Black.

Like, I'll come in like with the Black Women Inspire Me t-shirt or just like not being afraid of, you know, the respectability and how that was empowering for her to feel like she can come into that space and do the same thing. And I think seeing that, you know, be normalized in that space, especially in like an arts and cultural space, like I think that's so important. And that's why I try to be a representation of that, you know, in the small way that I can. You know, being in the public eye, like I'll wrap my hair up any day. I don't care. And I like for people to be able to see that and not take it as a certain like, you know, as me being any less professional, I'd say.

JB: I'd like to bounce off of that. It's shifting the idea of what professionalism is and isn't for the better, I think. You know, it shouldn't be considered unprofessional to do protective styles or to wear your hair natural or to wear a wrap. But that's all professional as well. I think it's just we're finally able to transition into a point in time where people understand that.

TG: And then, I'm curious what you guys think in the terms of, like, art production, right? And in presentation, there's also this, like—I'm curious what your thought is around this idea or standard around what it means to be a professional artist. Like, how do you come into a space showing that you're, you know, prepared to have your work displayed to industry standards or, you know, you've got your hardware on the back of your canvas, for instance. Like, what has the experience been with the expectation of knowledge about like what a professional artist, you know—how they're supposed to, I guess, come into a space for exhibition or for presentation? Like, what has that experience been like? I mean, maybe Julia, that's more directed towards you, but I'm just curious what that's been like?

JB: Well, I think I'm still learning when it comes to what the best practices for presenting in a studio space. Because to me, I think, well, however you bring the work, as long as it's hangable and it's what your vision was, to me, that's fine and presentable. I think where I encounter it more is in my mural work. So I'll meet with a lot of clients that are non-artists. And I think when I go for those meetings, you know, a lot of times it's people that are developers or, you know, investors and stuff like that. And they don't really understand, necessarily, that an artist could just dress however and I'm still going to perform at a level that they expect. So, I find that I'll dress up for those meetings and I'll come, like you were saying, come on time and just make sure that I'm prepared with like all of my layouts and my mock-ups and that everything looks really polished. That way, you know, they know that I'm professional.

TG: Mm. Mm-hmm. Yeah, I think that's important, but I also, like... Because I see how sometimes like if you're, like, for students going through like MFA programs or just kind of starting out, there's this gap where, you know, you might not necessarily be learning all the ins and outs of what the industry constitutes as a professional or polished presentation. But then, when you come into that space, there's this expectation that you kind of already know. Or if you're like a self-taught artist and you're not in that formal sort of space to kind of have that insight, there's this expectation that you just know how you're supposed to hang to professional standards or whatever. And I see that there's this gap where, you know, where are you supposed to find that knowledge if you've never—? You know, if this is your first exhibition, like how do you learn, you know, for next time to just embed that into your process and your practice as you get more exhibition exposure. And for me, I always like to take the opportunity, like if I'm

working with an artist that, you know, this is their first exhibition, I like to like bring like art preparator to give advice about like, 'Okay, so this is what you can think about in terms of like frames or, you know, the best way to hang and just like making those spaces for education and like sharing of knowledge without this stigma of, you know, you don't know what you're doing. You're not a professional artist because you haven't learned.' I think that's so important because there's no real way, like real concentrated space, to learn a lot of those like small logistical sort of details. But it is important to know for your own presentation when you're going into spaces and working with institutions that kind of expect you to have that knowledge already.

JC: I feel like that kind of draws the line between professionalism and actual experience. You have experiences like you have everything that they need, but it's not presented in a way that they feel like it's marketable. It dismisses you from the conversation. And I think it's frustrating for a lot of people, I guess, in like a lot of fields or markets where the labor you produce can be really determined by the market, whether you're an artist, educator, promoter, what have you. And it is just kind of like there's people that sometimes show their body of work in their most authentic way possible without professionalism and they get the job position and they get signed, whatever. But it's like, as far as the weeding process, they want for the person—it's like, 'Can you prove it? Can you prove it?' versus just like, 'I have lots of proof,' but it's like, 'No, where are the numbers?' Which are important, but on the [inaudible 00:13:11] it's like, sometimes people are afraid to take the loan and just experiment with the person and just see whether they have the professionalism or not from your standard, they know what they're doing. You know that they know what they're doing. A lot of times,

you know it tends to use a lot of people who put their labor on the market like that. You know, they don't really see the value in what's [inaudible 00:13:33] because it's not done in the professional standard, but they still see your potential. But they can't trust potential, even though their potential might just be success.

BT: I definitely had to deal with that in the audio world. Being a young Black man in an industry where most of the guys are probably in their fifties, sixty years old, because, you know, people stay in that industry for a long time. So I had to work my way up and, like, be on time, and be professional, and work my way through the ranks to get to where I am today.

TG: And I think there's this evolution of, like, what constitutes "professional," which I think is starting to become a little bit more, sort of like, fluid in terms of what you were saying, Jason. Like, this idea of having the potential versus the experience. But then, also this idea of, like, just exercising mutual respect almost. You know, like I'm gonna come on time because I respect your time, and it is also professional, but if I come on time, and I'm dressed down, and I'm not with the polished briefcase, that doesn't minimize, you know, who I am as a professional that I'm coming to the table. But I am showing that respect for your time, what we're doing, you know, the craft, is all still there.

[Pause] [Card prompt sound effect]

TG: Oh, okay. So I found a question that I think might be interesting. *Discuss factors that contribute to the changing cultural landscape here and how have they affected your practice?* That's, um—Oh, let me see. [inaudible 0:15:36] yeah.

BT: The changing cultural landscape has, in a way, taken away from a lot of performing artists, musically. We do not have venues. And the few venues that do house music, they're only taking like rock bands, white bands, or whatever [inaudible 00:16:01] to say it. There's been a lot of things. Je Ne Sais- Je Ne—ah, I can't say—Je Ne Sais Quoi, that's one of the places that they play a few. Like, I remember DBGB's [Duke's Bohemian Grove Bar] used to have neo-soul nights on Sundays. There was a lot of places where we could perform. Now, it seems like it's kind of fizzled out.

TG: Why do you think that is? What do you think contributed to that?

BT: A lot of the, like—they just changed the landscape of how a lot of those places where bars are. So like Allen, Chippewa changed. The noise ordinance of a lot of places with a lot of venues, it all changed. And now they're residential areas, some of them now.

JB: I think part of it too is, particularly with that kind of thing with music, there is a desire on Allen in particular to have Black music but not Black people in the place.

TG: Mm.

JB: I see that like with certain hip-hop events that we have and stuff like karaoke and things like that. You know, you go in there and the crowd is pretty homogenized, but—[Laughs]

RH: I feel like that's like a everywhere thing. I think, you know, the desire is to always enjoy Black culture but not welcome us overall. Or limit us. Or put a ceiling or a cap on, you know, how much we get to take advantage of things—especially like the equity part. Like, I always talk about equity in all of these discussions. Like, we are the last ones to get any type of equity and anything that is the benefits of our culture. Um,

so I think that's a universal thing. It crosses over all of our mediums, you know? And in spaces beyond art even. I think that's just ingrained into the identity of America in general.

TG: Right. I'm curious what you guys think about, like, so we're seeing now with this reckoning that America is going through—and I use that very pointedly because nothing is really changing. But like, how that has led to this newfound interest for, uh, I guess promotion of Black art, right? Black artists. It's very much in trend right now. It's very hot in, you know, the art market, and like you're saying, Rashaad, across culture overall. But it doesn't seem like that is opening doors to real ownership or agency. But—

RH: You know it's crazy you say that. I'm sorry to cut you off.

TG: No, no, no, please go.

RH: There's two parts to this. The first thing is—I was really thinking about this when I was talking to Mr. Ott [Aaron Ott] last time—but you know how it's super trendy for people to visit museums, visit galleries, and post, and do all of that? I'm thinking about how that's gonna look inside the Albright when it opens back up and how social media users are going to be active within that space. I'm very interested in seeing how that goes because I feel like that's gonna be a thing, right? But I'm also noticing so many different galleries opening up in Buffalo. Like, I literally see a new one every two or three weeks like getting worked on or whatever, right? And I know they're white, but I think it's going to be interesting seeing, like, you know, once they're open and once they're active, like what is going on inside them. You know what I'm saying? And you know, I'm not like... Like, I don't have my hand in the art scene like you guys probably

do. But like, I'm seeing gallery after gallery after gallery. And, mind you, so many of them—excuse me—so many of them close, but now it's like there's new ones all the time. So I'm really interested in regards to seeing what art is going in these spaces, who's gonna be in these spaces, how are they going to be presented, and all of that. I'm super interested. If y'all know anything, let me know. 'Cause like I went to, um, what's that? There's a coffee shop downtown right next to the library. Public or something like that.

TG: Oh, yeah. Mm-hmm.

RH: I went in there, and pardon my French, that shit was just white as fuck. It was white. And I was like, yo, I don't think I could come back here. It's too white. But it's super nice, but it's just too white, right? And across the street, there's gonna be a gallery. There's a gallery getting worked on.

TG: I did see that.

RH: So I'm like, yo, I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. 'Cause I'm, you know, I'm into all of that stuff, but...

BT: It's funny, that coffee shop used to be Black owned too.

RH: Word?

TG: Really?

BT: It used to. My dad's friend, Will, the Empty Cup? That was their second location for a while.

TG: Wow.

RH: No, no, no. Not that corner.

BT: Not that corner?

RH: No, it's the Hotel Lafayette.

BT: Okay.

RH: It's on that corner. So then there's a—yeah. Then there's a gallery getting opened up on the opposite corner that's getting worked on. And you know they're not giving that to us. I mean, are there any more Black galleries? The one that was on Main?

TG: There's one on Hertle. Princessa is—yeah, that's her name. I can't remember her last name. But she—

RH: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Williams.

TG: Yes, yes. She opened that on Hertle, I think, maybe like last year. In terms of other galleries, that's the only Black one that immediately comes to my mind. [Pause] But it's like, even for me—so like working as a curator, like, you know, there's just so much like... Like, I hate it. Like, so much attention around, you know, oh, first Black curator at the Burchfield-Penney. Like, I think maybe like the only Black curator in Buffalo right now. And like, for me, that feels like such an insane amount of pressure, you know, to be the only one. And the attention around that—for me, the more important question is, where is the space for all the other Black curators that are coming or are interested in, you know, moving into that pipeline? Like, where is the room for all that? Like, why am I the only one right now? Like, can we talk about that side of the conversation? And to your point, like with all of these galleries and new spaces, Buffalo's definitely becoming like a major—and it has been forever, but I feel like people are finally kind of starting to see how Buffalo really is a prominent hub for art and for

culture. And it's like, okay, so since we are now getting on the same page about that, where's the representation, not just in artists, but in, you know, ownership, in curators, in art educators, in art critics, right? Like, there are all these different facets that contribute to the ecosystem of the arts, and that diversity is still not quite where it needs to be.

Unknown: Mm-hmm.

JB: I love that that's your mindset too, because I feel like so many people are just concerned with securing their spot in whatever that area is. And then, it's like, 'Okay, there's only room for just me,' and they protect it and guard it. And then, you know, don't try to make room for other people. So I think that's great that you're already in that mindset. 'Cause there is room. There's plenty of room. [Laughs]

TG: And there's plenty—like, there's so much history, so much talent here that like, for me, I could never do justice as the only one to tell all of those stories anyway. So, first of all, that's a lot of work and that's a lot of pressure. And that is very limiting because it's all coming from one perspective. And I don't speak for all Black people. Like, none of us do. So why would I feel entitled to be that gatekeeper, you know, for my community? It just doesn't make sense to me.

JC: I think it has to do with what institutions people acknowledge. I feel like for a lot of the work we all do, whenever we create the space we create for our artists, we're technically engaging in curation. Whether I've, or my members in the collective, have done like an art show based on whatever subject from Black femininity to—I don't know—talking about legalization of marijuana. It's an art show. It's like we curate an art show. But because the Burchfield-Penney is like the major art institution in Buffalo, it's just like, this is the one Black curator who's probably actually from a larger network of

people who curate arts culture within Black culture within Buffalo, New York, or just even in the culture of Buffalo in general. But people actually determine as the institution—or yet again, we're talking about professionalism.

TG: Right.

JC: A lot of people end up in those institutions because they came from the spaces that a lot of us have helped curate and created with just whoever we were in community with at whatever given moment. And it's great that you're in that position, but it's just like the fact that you said that they have you here and you see all of what's going on between Buffalo as far as Black creators and Black organizers and what have you, you're noticing the actual disproportion that comes who they're letting into these spaces.

[Pause]

JB: I think also to jump off of that a little bit, I think we have to demand with institutions that it's not enough for them to just check a diversity box and say, 'Oh, well, we have our one Black curator, artist, performer,' whatever it is and say that's not enough. And I think so often with groups you see that be the case. They're like, 'Oh, well, I guess we're done.' But I've literally heard somebody say something along those lines before. It was like, well, they had added some new people to the roster and like, 'Well, we have a Black male and we have this and that.' And it's like, you just check off boxes? [Laughs] Like?

TG: Right. [inaudible 00:26:20] But actually, so that segues into another hot topic, I guess, from the cards, which is number eight, which is: *White gatekeepers for Black cultural producers*. So I'm curious what your experiences have been with that or your thoughts or, you know, critiques of how that transpires here locally.

[Pause]

BT: I can get very touchy here. You see how Rashaad's face is getting.

TG: I know, I see it.

[Laughter]

BT: We can get kinda touchy here. But, um, I mean, in almost any art industry, like we just said, we don't have any ownership of our galleries. So, like, we have to work with these people. We have to deal with these people to a certain extent without, you know, selling yourself out. So it's always a battle trying to find the balance of, you know, not being taken advantage of.

TG: Right.

JC: I think sometimes going with that is also the fact that we live in, like, a white supremacist culture as it is. You're always gonna have to deal with white people. But then, sometimes people get caught up with actually networking and using it to actually build your own infrastructure while working with another institution. People have that need to center the institution that's actually creating all these boundaries for you, for you having to work with them, and people center so much of, 'What are they doing? Like, if we don't do it this way or we're not respected enough, we're going to fuck it up, we're going to lose everything.' It's just kind of like, but what about your rainy day fund, which is the communities you're investing in. You're actually investing in your own community—it's like, once we get cut off, we get cut off. But we'd, hopefully, be invested enough into our own institutions that we'll be self-sufficient that we don't have to actually care about working with them because they're going to end up wanting our resources anyway, which is the reason why they have us in this gridlock. So once they get rid of us

and we're good enough, especially good enough for us, we have the room to do better and they're eventually gonna to be like, 'Hey, we've seen that you did this new thing,' like they always do. 'How can we use this—?' And it's just kind of like, 'Well, talk to this guy.' It's like, there's that fear of being—it's that fear of actually allowing the people exploiting you to actually determine your wealth and like finding that balance or actually understanding what it is to know your worth is. Especially within the industry and the world being Black, you're always told to question your worth. That's pretty hard.

RH: I think the way that I've been trying to combat it is by always, like, searching for some type of equity in all of the deals and in all the contracts that I'm getting. So over the last year, I started writing supplies budgets into my actual contract so that I get to dictate—well, so that I get an extra little whatever. And then, I get to dictate what happens with my supplies afterwards. So I can either give them to students as a way for them to actually break into whatever I'm teaching them. Like, I gave away sewing machines or whatever tools or whatever supplies for dedicated young people who are, you know, really considering growing in the area as opposed to leaving them out of sight and they sit around for two years. I actually had a contract from last summer, a sewing workshop, and they bought like ten sewing machines. I didn't get a contract for a year after that, and all of the tools and supplies are just sitting in a room. Like, for what? I could've either took them with me and had them accessible for other workshops that I'm doing, or we could have just gave them to the students and seen what they could've come up with, you know? So I took this step of, actually, you know, like no more supplies budgets, right? All of that money into my contract. I'll figure out what we're doing with this stuff afterwards. I actually got turned down for a contract for

that particular reason, speaking to this white gatekeeper thing, right? Because I'm taking that shift, I know that there are some people that are going to tell me no. They have told me no, but, you know, that's what happens, you know what I'm saying? But we've gotta continue to take those steps ourselves and bet on ourselves, I think. Sometimes sacrifice or whatever. But that's definitely happened to me more times than I can think of. But, you know, something we probably are all combating continuously.

JC: It's kind of like you're always looking at either your—People feel like, I feel like from [inaudible 00:31:20] when I hear these people are between strategy and integration. We wanna work with these people so they know that they mean well, but you still notice that they're still operating from a place of privilege and confirmation bias from [inaudible 00:31:34] experience. Like, I've dealt with that with like certain shows that me and my members went through with D.O.P.E. [inaudible 00:31:40] groups of people not knowing why we want a large artist [inaudible 00:31:44] for a festival. But the people who are giving the budget are benefiting from putting us on, like—by saying that they've donated to this festival that we're doing. And they're so busy trying to control it 'cause they see it's a success from all the people we can bring out or all the organizations we can bring together, but they still are afraid that if we do it their way, it's going to do whatever the fuck—they can't control whatever we're going to do. But you've benefited from the thing you cannot control. And it's the thing, it's just like, when you start noticing that they want to control more, that's when it's just like, now you have to negotiate. Now it's just like, now you have to strategize. It opened us up to the community in a way of building bridges for everybody, because they're trying to control the toll.

TG: I think that lends itself to the need to have conversations about what it means to really be an ally, right? And like, how do you show that you are, you know, in utilizing your privilege to support and to be a true ally versus a performative sort of approach, where it's like you want the accolades of supporting the community or amplifying these Black artists, but not necessarily doing the work of understanding that that means taking a backseat and allowing the artists to have their own agency, right? To dictate how they see their production going forward, or how they would like for something to be done. And I think when people who have this vision of allyship that is more performative are challenged—like Rashaad, like how you challenge this idea of, no, this is what I need to happen with my supplies. Like, that's where you kind of—it becomes clear who really is an ally for what the mission is for what it is that you're doing and who just wants to give that impression but still have control over the puppet strings.

JB: I feel like I saw a lot of that last summer. Like, a lot of people requesting Black Lives Matter murals and, you know, things surrounding that, work surrounding that, only to see now, just kind of like all of that fall off and people not really being interested in doing anything beyond that. Like, somebody wanted to tack up a mural and then just be done with it. And I mean, I don't know. On the note of white gatekeeping, I think it's a reality. And in the fine arts, at least with visual arts, most institutions are run by white people. And I think, yeah, if it's performative, you're going to learn very quickly that it's performative. And sometimes it's just about being willing to walk away from that and say, 'Well, I'll pass up on this,' versus compromise.

[Pause] [Card prompt sound effect]

RH: I think I'm done compromising [Pause] at this point.

TG: Gotta draw a line in the sand. Have to draw a line in the sand.

[Pause] [Card prompt sound effect]

RH: Totally. *Discuss gentrification and its effect on local arts communities.*

[Pause] Are all of us—? Well, Tiffany, you're not from Buffalo. But is everybody else from Buffalo?

[BT, JB, and JC nod]

RH: Mm. [inaudible 00:35:28]

TG: [inaudible 00:35:28]

JB: It's a very clear line [Laughs] here in Buffalo.

TG: How have you seen that divide? Like, I came here and just learned about the Main street divide very early. But I'm curious for all of you that are from here and have lived here your whole lives, like how have you seen that change or not change at all over the course of your lives here?

RH: Well, I grew up near—you know where the medical, do you know what the medical corridor is?

TG: Oh, yeah. Mm-hmm.

BT: [inaudible 00:35:38]

RH: Okay. So I grew up over there.

TG: Okay.

RH: My neighborhood's gone. You know, I grew up around the corner from the Langston Hughes [Institute].

TG: Mm.

JC: [inaudible 00:36:09]

RH: Right. I was at the African culture center [African American Cultural Center of Buffalo] all the time. All of that. So... Yeah. But, you know, at the same time, like I went to church across the street from where The Freedom Wall is. You know, so it's kinda—I think we were talking about gentrification earlier—it's like a both ends as far as like our community is concerned. It's very complex and there's a lot of depth to it. Of course it's ugly. But, you know, now we're talking about it. Now since we're—I mean, we were forced to see it, but now we're talking about it, you know what I'm saying? So it's interesting. It's interesting.

BT: Yeah. I think in Buffalo, gentrification is like... It's weird. [inaudible 00:37:02] how I want to word it. But like, they take all this money and, you know, they start in North Buffalo and they go downtown and there's supposed to be a big budget for Bailey. And they started Bailey, did, you know, some stupid indentations on the side of the streets or whatever, and then they stopped. And then, Bailey is still Bailey. Like, but everywhere else is getting, you know, all types of restaurants and, you know, businesses. But, you know, they still treat the East side and the West side like nothing.

TG: And even like, we were talking about this, like, growth of, you know, arts communities and, you know, just the growth of the art and cultural scene here. And, you know, I'm thinking about like, what about the Michigan street heritage quarter? Like, I've heard and just through my research, working on Langston Hughes—'cause I haven't been here—but just seeing that there've been so many, like, stops and starts with really turning that into a cultural hub for African American history and culture and the significance that it has here in Buffalo. And it seems like it starts and then it stops, it

starts and then stops and, you know, it remains unchanged. But then, like you were saying earlier, Rashaad, like all of these other galleries and cultural spaces are able to, you know, emerge and flourish, but then you have these Black spaces that are not.

BT: Right. I think my mom has been working on the Michigan street preservation for most of my adult life. I'm thirty-two.

TG: Wow.

BT: So, you know, like you said, this starts and stops, starts and stops. Like, for them to just put up like a banner—like, I don't know. I felt kind of... I was upset about that, 'cause, like, if you're going to do all that work just for them to put up a banner, like actually put like—then they put a Tim Hortons there.

TG: I heard, yeah, that was like highly contentious, right? Cause it was just like this, you know, this chain restaurant that had nothing to do with the cultural significance of the area.

BT: So, yeah. I just—[Laughs] It always feels like, as soon as we get there, they kick us back down a few steps.

TG: Mm, mm.

JB: I think the money is invested where they feel like and when they feel like, and then taken away, you know, when it—I laugh 'cause I think about The Broadway Market. I was born on Sweet Avenue like right off of there. And it makes me laugh so much to see like Easter time, it's this very okay thing for everybody from the suburbs to come out and be there—which is great—but then it's like, what about the rest of the year? [Laughs] Like, you know, it just goes to waste 'cause they don't do any investment in really, like, building that up.

TG: And it just says there, like—I, like... This might be a little touchy, but this whole thing with Langston Hughes. Like, I've been so consumed into it, you know, for work and for research or whatever. But just seeing, like, everything that went down with it and, you know, for it to still just be sitting there, empty, with nothing—Like, for me, it's like, what was the point of, you know, everything that contributed to it not being used as the Langston Hughes Institute anymore for it to literally just sit there.

JB: Yeah.

BT: That's why I really commend Lindsay for using the Terminal [Buffalo Central Terminal] last year, you know, for bringing back into the city and, you know, trying to uplift that area. So, I mean, if we can have more events like that, that'll be beautiful. Or like, even have people open up businesses back on that side so that we don't have to keep going to, you know, Buffalo, Kenmore, or whatever.

RH: How do y'all feel about Elmwood Village?

[Pause]

BT: What is there to feel about it?

[Laughter]

JC: I mean, it's—

RH: Well, I mean—Okay, so. Well, you know, we went to school over there, you worked there, you worked there, you know, so what are your—? How do y'all feel? I'm interested in knowing 'cause I have my own sentiments, but I want to, you know, I want to hear, you know, how do y'all feel about it?

JC: Regular fake woke art shit. Like, it's—[Laughs] It's just like, you know, everything else, but just on the white liberal arts side. 'We love BLM,' because it's

trendy. I never really had any real feels; I knew what it was, I just always—if I had any feels, it's yet again about centering whiteness and dealing with a lot of people of color that centers Elmwood Village as like this hub of culture and art. Like, you just mentioned the Langston Hughes Center, the African Cultural Center. There's a lot of people who will center this of, like, all this power in regards to the art world and whatever. And it's just like, Buffalo's a lot bigger. And those of us who either are attached to different organizations, whether it be the Juneteenth coalition, whether it is like the African Cultural Center, it's like the introduction to arts in Buffalo is very different. And like, their cultural sphere versus in that space is just like... We're consuming more shit so we can access more power and have more control. My problem is when people center spaces like Elmwood, especially people of color, as that space. It's like, people end up becoming really self-sacrificing. It's not operating as a community, but operating out of a sphere of not being allowed into the space where you can access power. And Elmwood is Elmwood.

TG: And I think it goes back to your point that you made earlier, Jason, about there being like specific institutions or hubs that are, you know, given the impression of being the most like the gold standard, the reputable, you know, these are the institutions. And it's like, that allows like all of the other cultural hubs that exist in all the other spaces where these things are happening to kind of be overshadowed by this impression that, you know, the arts and culture scene in Buffalo is Albright, Burchfield, you know, and that's it. And there's so many other hubs and not even just in a traditional like institutional sense, but you've got these organizations that move across different spaces and may not be in one central location, but, you know, bring these different

facets of Buffalo's Black culture to these different hubs. And yet, that becomes overshadowed by these institutions.

JC: Yeah.

[Pause]

TG: So I guess the question I have—I'm curious, kind of like dovetailing off of that—like, what would you guys like to see more of from these big institutions? And I know it's weird because like I'm Burchfield, but also I'm Black and I'm like, you know, for the culture too, so I navigate this very interesting sort of space. But I'm just curious, like what does doing the work look like in your mind for these institutions?

BT: Inclusion, more Black faces, more people that look like us so that, you know—not to say that it makes sense, but it's... We can actually pinpoint and do the things that we need to do to uplift everybody.

JC: With inclusion actually giving us the spaces we need. Sometimes spaces—well, not sometimes—actual spaces without [inaudible 00:44:54] spaces, we need to talk about to talk about them and understand inclusion comes in a multitude of ways and looking at our multi-faceted identities and also looking at other organizations similar to what they want to include to actually help build out that network where things aren't also being exploitative, but we can actually both benefit without exploiting anyone.

TG: Right.

[Pause]

JB: I think with inclusion, I want to see accessibility. Like, an awareness of that. You can put on all the shows you want that include Black art, but if it's not being advertised, you know, in the Challenger, it's not being promoted, you know, in Black

spaces, nobody's going to know. And if all of those spaces are centered in Elmwood or, you know, areas where people don't always come to or don't feel welcome, then it doesn't matter.

TG: Mm-hmm.

RH: I think that's where I would make my point too, is the accessibility. I think that, you know, especially in an age of where art is so popular, you know... The Burchfield is still open, you know what I'm saying? Like, I know there was tons of kids in my program that had never stepped foot in the Burchfield, you know what I'm saying? But loved art or, you know, 'I want to go see some art.' 'How come—? It's right across the street? How come you never go there?' 'It's because—I don't know. Like, you know, what's the reason there?' And I think there has to be some type of investment into that, because that's not necessarily the consumer's responsibility, it's the responsibility of the institution to know why, you know, why are these kids not coming here? Why is it not interesting to them? Why is the community not, you know, making some type of investment into this, whether it just be their time, whether it be whatever, you know? I think that accessibility is probably the most important thing that I would think of too.

TG: And for opportunity too. Like, one of the things that I'm really excited about working on right now—so I'm working on an exhibition that I'm curating with LeRoi Johnson; it's a retrospective that's opening in November. And we're doing this educational collaboration where we're working with students from BPS and Squeaky Wheel and BCAT and all these other spaces to get them involved with LeRoi's work and to create their own work in response that's going to be included in the show as well. And just, like, rethinking this idea of access and transforming it from being this reactionary

thing where it's, like, you, you know, come in and we bring you in and you see art, but what it is that you're looking at has already sort of been determined and whether or not you see yourself reflected is, you know—it just is what it is. And I like how this sort of approach is transforming that where it's like, no, you're having a stake in forming the exhibition, you're involved in the process and developing the meaning that is coming, you know, from the themes in the show, and you're literally reflecting yourself into the exhibition because your work is included as well. And I think that's a very important sort of avenue of access as well. And, you know, having it be this, like, proactive engagement as opposed to, you know, 'Okay, we just want people through the door.' Like, I'm really interested in like how do you cultivate those deeper and more enriching sort of spaces of engagement where you're not just seeing yourself, but you're also being activated to be a participant in shaping, you know, what is being reflected in the space as well, too. So, yeah. I think that accessibility factor is so important.

[Crosstalk]

JB: I think one other—

JC: This is something—

[Crosstalk ends]

JB: Oh, sorry, go ahead.

JC: I'm talking too much. You go. [Laughs]

JB: Oh, no. No, no. You go. I'll go after you.

JC: I guess, sometimes where it's like, one thing I know is like being in tune with your curation. And it's like, especially if you're putting together something that you realize is important or you're invested in for whatever reason. Whether you're really

dealing with the audience or you're behind the scenes, but you're, like, dealing with the people the artists that you invite to the curation. Whether it's sonically or visually. It's a lot easier for you to, like, not just feel proud of your work, but feel like you accomplished your goal, seeing people having a good time or even like speaking with people. I think sometimes what happens is what people have is a burnout. It's, like, you're curating so much of this—maybe not the same thing, but more so still battling the same barriers in curating so many different things. You may get slightly jaded and it's just kind of like, 'Let me just throw a show. Let me just do this. Let me just do that.' And sometimes it's taking a step back and remembering what you're doing. It's, yet again, the standards thing. It's like, 'Okay, other than what I'm battling, everyone else had a good time. I met a couple people here. I actually did get to speak with some of the guests, some of the other people.' And then, the fact that people enjoyed themselves and met new people, it's just like, that actually sometimes helps because it allows you to know that you actually put something good together and it actually achieved its purpose, which was to bring people together.

TG: Right.

JC: Whether a business that may come back between you or them shows even more how it's needed, because now you're a space where people are comfortable and actually exchanging ideas.

TG: Right, right.

JB: I was just going to touch back. One other thing I'd really like to see from institutions is for them to stop making like one Black person the voice of, you know, everything. And I say that 'cause I'm thinking back to a show I went to in New York this

summer. It was... I was, like, in shock. I didn't know what to say. There was an artist that had put dirty towels that he had wiped his body down with up into frames and like over canvases, and that was the exhibition right in the front room. And he wasn't there, but this white curator told us that this was the result of his melanin wiping off onto the towels. So [Laughs] I stood there, I looked around, I'm like, 'Are you serious? Is anybody going to say anything about this?' And like, I brought it up, but... Yeah, that's what she legitimately thought. And I don't know if the artist had told her this but, to me, it was just wild that she didn't have the presence of mind to go back and say, 'Is this real? Is this accurate?' And I don't know what his deal was, but like the fact that she didn't have—I don't know—the sense. [Laughs]

TG: What? [Laughs]

JB: Yeah, that's what I said. It didn't make any sense to me. But that was the exhibition. It was just dirty towels, wiped off, and that was his melanin. [Laughs] [Pause] So I think, uh... I don't know. Stupidity. It can't- it can't... If you're curating, especially like a New York City gallery, how do you let that slide? And how do you not do some sort of like [Laughs] looking into that? I was just in shock, so.

TG: I would be so interested to know what was in the artist's mind. Like, if that was like their context for what the work meant to them, that is a whole other conversation. But like, wow. Okay. [Laughs] Wow.

JB: I mean, from what I read from their statement, it really wasn't going deeper. It was like and I feel like I lost a lot of respect for that artist after going through there because I'm like, they really just left it at that and gave this woman this information and she was dumb enough to, like, not read into it more. But I'm like, to an extent, if

you're doing an exhibition that has something to do with race, you have a responsibility to, you know, not just put any dumb thing out there that's—especially when there's curators and white people out there that will believe that and walk away with that and then spread that information to other people.

TG: Right.

JB: [Pause] I was in shock. I'm done. [Laughs]

TG: Oh, man. But I think you really hit the nail on the head in terms of the responsibility of the curator. The responsibility of the artist in terms of what you're putting out there, you know, lives in a certain context and you have to be very mindful about what your work is contributing to the conversation and how that can be perceived by other people that, you know, may identify with you but come from a different experience or don't relate to their Blackness in the same way that you do. And like, how do you find that, sort of like, balance between, you know, being true to yourself and your artistry and what you want to convey, but also recognizing the responsibility that comes with that? Especially, you know, when we're in the space where Black artists or Black curators are still being looked at as being the voice for everyone, all Black people, even though that's not accurate or fair or true. But the reality is, we're still dealing with that, you know? And so you have to be very mindful about what you're putting out into the world. And that actually makes me think about what we were talking in the earlier table. I had a couple of, um—There were a couple other artists, documentarian, a multidisciplinary artist, and a professor. And we were just kind of talking about, you know, this idea of art history, creating a very particular sort of narrative, right? And this very linear idea of what constitutes art and like why it's so important that documentation,

archival records that preserve the artist's intention, those are so important so that these ideas or these artworks are not co-opted to then signify something that's completely different than what the original intention sort of was.

JB: I completely agree. I mean, if we look at Walker's [Kara Walker] work out of context, like all the silhouettes, like I could see if there was no archive that, you know, people would take something totally different.

TG: Any, any, anywhere.

JB: Yeah.

[Pause] [Card prompt sound effect]

TG: Mm, okay. So this was one that came up in our people session, so I'm curious what folks think about this one. So: *How is cultural memory passed down to younger generations? Discuss legacy, intergenerational advocacy, and mentorship.*

[Pause] [Card prompt sound effect]

BT: I feel like there's not a lot of that here in Buffalo.

TG: Hmm.

BT: As far as like people—

TG: Why do you think that?

BT: Just bringing up younger artists, I don't really see that a lot.

TG: Mm.

BT: And then, I feel like a lot of people here really don't know the history of Buffalo, like notice how great of a, you know, art culture we have here. But I could be

wrong. I could be in a circle—I [inaudible 00:56:29] in a lot of music circles. You guys might have, you know, a different perspective.

RH: I think, you know, from what I see about Buffalo and, you know, repetitively, is that Buffalo is really cliquey. And I think that that eliminates the possibility of, you know, reaching younger generations just because of just the way that it's set up. I don't honestly think that that's really anyone's fault. I think that's just, honestly, just the way that the city is. The city is really like a neighborhood to neighborhood to neighborhood type of setup where your neighborhood could be one street, you know what I'm saying? But then the next neighborhood is the next street and y'all don't mix. You know what I'm saying? So, you know, it's really interesting in that way. I think that now there's a—I think there's a couple of initiatives that kind of are trying to- that are breaking through that. And just speaking to myself, right? Like, in us, right? Us being, you know, somewhat pioneers in what we do. You know, there's not many of you, there's not many of me, you know? And us taking on the hat of being the facilitators and being the ones who are bridging that gap between our age group and the next, you know what I'm saying? And I mean, I guess it kind of is... It kind of speaks to our success and our resilience and, you know, us just not giving up on what we believe in, believing in ourselves. So, I think that we're kind of turning that over a little bit. I think with social media, it kinda helps that too. You know, you get the visibility. And we, you know, our pulse has never really weakened, you know what I'm saying? Like, people still look at us. We still gettin' the looks from the young people and crossing over those generations. So I think that that's kind of—I do think it's kind of changing. And, you know, I came from a family who is, like, really deep rooted in, you know, passing down

cultural memory. So I think it was kind of like something that I was born into, you know what I'm saying? Like, my family was really strong in the Kwanzaa community. Like, I talk about all these things. I talk about the center and Langston Hughes and all of that. So I guess I kind of like was born into that. You too, you know what I'm saying? So I think, you know... I don't know. Maybe you might not look at it because it's like your identity like for real, you know what I'm saying? But I think that's definitely something to recognize for you within yourself, because I think we do that. We've been doing that. You know what I mean? And I mean, when you're like really an artist, like your stuff is going to transcend "the now" regardless, you know what I'm saying? Your existence is a legacy. You know what I'm saying? So I think that Buffalo's kind of shifting like that just because now we're really emerging as, you know, like a hub of culture. You know what I'm saying? So I think that it kind of started in getting exposed to the teaching artist profession has been something that is like really cool. You know what I'm saying? I might I encourage you. I encourage y'all to kind of maybe break into that. You know what I'm saying? Because there's room and that's an easy way to reach back and build on what you do in yourself. Like, when I go into these workshops and these spaces, I don't look at it as me just teaching. It's a way for me to sharpen my own skills. It's a way for me to collaborate, even, with young minds while you're exposing them to certain things, you know what I'm saying? And then you add on the fact that these organizations, sometimes they be having a little bit of money so you could build on your assets and build on, you know, what you could how you can push the culture even further through your own goals and your own agenda, you know what I'm saying? I think that that's one of the things that we really gotta focus on is us really having an agenda

for our culture. You know what I'm saying? And by all means and whatever it takes. If we got to take somebody, then we taking from somebody and putting it into what we believe in and pressing forward in us developing within our own cultural space. So I think, you know, that's definitely something to think about. But I think it's happening. I believe in it. For sure. Like, I've seen all y'all get busy. I'm a fan of all of y'all. You know what I'm saying? So... I'm an optimist though, so.

TG: But we need that. We need that positive energy. And, you know, we need that acknowledgement that even if it sometimes doesn't feel like it, that we are moving forward from where our elders were all these years ago. And, you know, they've laid out a certain blueprint and have experienced certain shortcomings or mistakes that become opportunities for us to learn from and move past so that we don't repeat them. And with that, we can move forward, you know? And I think to your point, Rashaad, like collaboration is so—and like, community and collaboration is the future. It's the only way that we're gonna get anywhere where we are right now. And I think that sometimes with that, people have this idea that if we're collaborating, that we have to have the exact same vision; and like, that's not necessarily true. Like, I think there's a lot of power and opportunity in difference, and having different perspectives, having different ideas. But then there's also power in respecting those differences while also celebrating the overlap that exists as well, you know? And I think, sometimes, just like reflecting back on, you know, past attempts at collaboration in this mass, like, community mobilization, you know, I think getting caught up in whose vision is the vision to follow has been like a major shortcoming when I think the conversation is more about how do we mutually

respect each other's differences and allow the overlap that does exist to help propel us both, you know, ten steps forward.

[Pause]

RH: I liked a lot of what you said. I think that we just have to constantly ask ourselves, what more can we do?

TG: Mm.

RH: And what new ways can we support each other? What better ways can we support each other and just building better habits of doing so. And believing in each other, no matter what it is. I think, you know, being artists, you get lost in your sauce. Like, that's so easy to do. And so easy to just put your head down and be focusing on what you're doing, but sometimes we gotta look up and check in. Um, you know, every time you see the possibility of, you know, an opportunity, pass it along. You know, I'm saying every time you see the opportunity to be able to support somebody, make sure you do. You know what I'm saying? And just building better habits with that, instead of getting lost in it. You know, I've been a victim of that so many times. Um, and just becoming more responsible and breaking out of that I think is something that is going to push us forward. Again, you're not from here, so, you know, you weren't born into like the "me vs. him" mentality that is very prevalent in Buffalo. But, um, you know, the more people see people coming together and being together and building with each other, I think the better that it's going to be—and challenging each other. You know what I'm saying? Like, we got to keep challenging each other. If you see something that you think you can, you know, push somebody to be better in a certain space or whatever, do it. You know what I'm saying? Like, I know I've been extremely outspoken for as long as I

can remember, and, sometimes, it may rub people the wrong way. But, you know, if you're not challenging people and trying to get them to be thinking about how they can be better, how we can be better, and how the collective can be better, and us be better culturally, like it's not gon' happen. You know what I'm saying? We got to get uncomfortable sometimes to have those uncomfortable conversations amongst ourselves. I know it's, you know, the times will tell us that we supposed to be having uncomfortable conversations with white people, but we got to have uncomfortable conversations with ourselves too. You know what I'm saying?

JB: Yeah.

JC: It's kind of like what you were saying about community earlier, the whole idea that people don't have to actually agree. I think we could [inaudible 01:06:05] community, it's like everyone has to like each other, opposed to everyone needs to respect each other.

TG and RH: Mm.

JC: It's kind of like, maybe your mother doesn't like the woman down the street, but for whatever reason, because you're both neighbors, you're both parents with children, they know that if she's not home and you need to get somewhere, she's going to open up her home. Because from mother to mother, they came to some conclusion that we need each other just in case something happens. Or like, you know, I don't need my kid just locked outside or whatever. And it's like people forget that context that people need to like each other, or people have to be friends [inaudible 01:06:45] all those things can come in due time the more you get to know someone. But sometimes, as far as working with each other, we don't have to like each other. We don't have to

necessarily be friends. We have to actually value and respect each other for what we're doing within our communities, and what's our capacity and what's our doing capacity in what we're deciding to do.

Unknown: Right, right.

TG: And like keeping that bigger picture, you know, kind of center. Like, Rashaad, I think you said it perfectly in terms of getting lost in your own sauce, right? And just getting so caught up on where your trajectory is going as an individual that sometimes the bigger picture of, you know, what you're hoping to contribute to bettering your community kind of gets lost. And then, if someone does something that you don't like or doesn't agree with where you're trying to go as an artist, then that takes the focus away from what the ultimate goal sort of is. And then, it gets into, you know, the egos and all of these extra things that take energy, time, focus, attention away from how coming together gets us further.

RH: Mm-hmm.

[Pause]

TG: So, this is like a lot of work, and effort, and intention. So this question, I think, is a good one to kind of—I'm curious what you guys are thinking, but: *Discuss strategies for maintaining your practice and your spiritual, physical, mental well-being as an artist or art worker.*

[Pause]

RH: Hmm.

BT: I take many days off.

[Laughter]

TG: That's good.

BT: I have some me time, you know, small trips. I like to take drives. But definitely got to, you know, make sure that my mental is always right. And that's the main focus—and your health. Like, feel good.

TG: Mm-hmm.

[Pause]

RH: I—

JB: I think one thing for me is—Oh, go 'head.

RH: No, go ahead.

JB: I think one thing for me is having my “no” be in place and be ready for when I need to use it. I feel like, particularly as an artist, you're putting so much of yourself into your work, and so much of that can be personally draining. And there's definitely a time to be able to just say no to certain things. And, you know, even if it's not anything bad, it's just you might have given all you have to give within this span of time. And I think to protect your own well-being, sometimes you just have to be willing to say no to things—which I hate doing because [Laughs] I wanna do a little bit of everything, but...

TG: Mm-hmm.

[Pause]

TG: Rashaad?

RH: I think, for me, I think I've been doing my best to make sure everything in my life is aligned to contribute to my goals. And like, my practice is really like—I

describe my practice as like a lifestyle practice. So I think everything, to a certain extent, that is controllable should contribute in some type of way. Like, most of my relationships contribute in some type of way for like these types of things; whether it be spiritual, physical well-being, or mental stability, or directly related to contributing to my practice. And just making sure that I'm aligned, like everything is aligned. So things that aren't big, you know, if they're not completely removed explicitly, then they kind of just have tailed off. Thankfully, because, you know, this is really my life and my practice is really, you know—everything that is involved in my life I want to contribute to my practice. So, alignment has been another really important thing to aspire to [Pause] for my well-being. [Pause] And yoga.

TG: Mm.

RH: I love yoga.

Unknown: That's good.

TG: I feel like this is like not a great moment in life for me to answer this question because life is in overdrive [Laughs] right now with school, and work, and all the things. But I guess for me, the best thing that I've been able to practice in the midst of all the chaos and all the things has just been really trying to be intentional about setting boundaries for myself in terms of allowing myself to rest and have a break. And, you know, know that work is not going no where. So if I just take this like couple of hours to just reset or recenter my mind or just get myself feeling, you know, better physically, mentally, spiritually, whatever, that that'll only make the work that I produce when I come back to it, you know, that much stronger. And like really unlearning this feeling that if I haven't, you know, shot, you know, any film or anything in a couple of

weeks or if I haven't done this, that means that I'm a fraud or I'm not doing what I need to do and I'm just falling off. Like, giving myself more grace, you know, and understanding that I am a human, and that I do need to rest, and I can't do it all at once right now. And that's OK. That doesn't make the work that I do any less valid when it comes later down the line. [Pause] Ooh, but it's hard.

JB: [Laughs]

RH: Do you guys have self-care plans?

[Pause]

RH: No?

JB: Just trying to remember to eat [Laughs] every day.

TG: Yes.

JB: And drink water.

RH: So I don't know how this got introduced to me, but I was talking to my girlfriend the other day and I thought it was kind of like a thing like people, you know, people have self-care practices. But someone once told me that... Someone once told me to write down my self-care plan, right? And I have like a list of things that kind of either put my mind at ease or are a method of self-care, whether it be like taking a bath, sketching, or yoga, or going for a walk, whatever. Or things that are simple day to day things like taking a hot shower or whatever, like, that are part of my self-care plan. But it's literally physically written for me to refer to, like a list. You know what I'm saying? So, just giving y'all a gem, if you will. I think that that's been—especially since the pandemic. But even before that, like it's something that I have and that I, you know, updated,

whatever. That's definitely something that has worked for me, not just as an artist, but as a person who wants to be [Laughs] okay.

TG: I love that. That's a great idea.

[Pause]

TG: Hm.

[Pause]

RH: I'm flipping through these cards. [Pause] Do you guys have—? Well, of course. *Describe your art communities.* What are you guys as art communities like? I feel like we're all in different communities, right? [Pause] What are your art communities like right now?

BT: I mean, hip-hop is in one of the greatest places I've ever been in Buffalo right now. But then, like we talked about earlier, there's not too many venues for the local artists to really, you know, showcase their work. So, we still make it work. We'll get up in somebody's basement, backyard, put some speakers up and get it rocking. But to be able to even show some younger artists a bigger venue and how it's supposed to look, how it's supposed to sound would be very nice.

[Pause]

DW: I just wanna say, as an elder in this community, you guys are so inspirational to me. It gives me really, really genuine and full hope that Black art has a future in Buffalo. And thank you all so much for what you're contributing.

BT: Thanks, Dawn.

TG: Thank you, Dawn. Rashaad, what about you? What does your community look like? Your communities?

RH: Um. Hm. Well, I think that I've had a great experience building with youth. It's getting more and more vast. You know, I'm touching more and more people and I think that it's growing in regards to the younger people. I'm getting a lot more exposure to younger minds and touching younger people. So that's been very cool to do. I think that, scholastically, there's been a little bit of a hindrance, but hopefully that's on the rebound now after the pandemic. I know that they're going to be doing, hopefully, a bigger show with Runway this year at Buff State that is actually including—Aaron's been reaching out to more community partners and artists. I think Idris is even on board as a partner with the show. So, that may be on the rebound and I think that that'll be pretty cool. I think that there's going to be an upside to fashion creatives in Buffalo, too. I think that that's on the up and up as well. A lot more commitment and people making the investment into their selves and into their art form. So that's been good as a corner that people are turning, coming out of the pandemic as well. I think the fashion community is definitely moving forward for sure. It's being influenced by other art mediums too; whether it be music, fine arts, people dabbling into certain things. So I think the fashion community is definitely making some headway, some good spaces opening up. Brand building is at an all-time high, I would say too. So, people definitely taking to the next level. I think that there's room for more community building and more people coming together and building together. I think that that's really the next step. I've been paying a lot of attention to places like Chicago and like how a lot of the fashion creatives from Chicago have really taken it to the next level from that space. So I think that the

formulas for Buffalo to kinda make some big leaps are there. But I think it's going to take us really working together a lot more and pooling our resources and really pushing for our culture. But hopefully, in due time, that can happen.

JC: I'm thinking back to what you were saying, Rashaad, it's like... But then, I guess, the creative communities in Buffalo, they have everything that a lot of the cities need. Like, you're mentioning Chicago, Philadelphia, it's like a Buffalo times ten. And a lot of their spaces, because I feel like there might have been continuous support throughout the years that are strong enough because there's more people. It looks like what we're doing here, kind of like what you were saying, Bryant, it seems like it might be like a disconnect between people who have more resources, between those who are up and coming. But with our up and coming artists, or people who are doing collaborations, collectives on lower levels, there's still a strong network that has been developed. Being a strong network within independent or indie spaces within the city that has allowed the culture to grow. It's just now it's how to actually tap into these artists and actually really give them the platform they need. Because as soon as that happens, we are going to be on par with any other city that has like a machine or industry that makes it easier for people to really have a spotlight on what's really going on here. So it's not just people aren't putting funding into Buffalo, but they're putting funding into the artists, the communities, and also the communities they come from so they can actually build out more of the talent from those spaces, which will exceed just art. But, like, [inaudible 01:20:49] artists from a low income community, how can we increase the quality of life in the community he comes from? One of these artists are

here, then there should be several artists from here. How can we find a way to even pool our resources to that point?

TG: Julia, what about—

RH: I hope y'all apply for the CRNY [Creatives Rebuild New York] grant. Did y'all apply for that?

JB: [Nods]

RH: Good.

TG: I'm ineligible.

RH: Best of luck with that.

TG: Next time. But, yes—

RH: I think that if we, you know, come through on the brighter side of that, it's going to be good for the community, too.

TG: Mm-hmm.

RH: That's gonna be—honestly, I think that that would be like a breakthrough. That would be like a real shining moment, like the solid foundation that we need. That might be it. So I'm looking forward to that. I'm wishing the best for all of us who apply for that, for sure.

[Pause]

BT: What did you guys order to eat?

[Laughter]

TG: I'mma get fish.

RH: I had a turkey, so.

BT: I got Brothers. It was delicious.

TG: Oh, Brothers is real good.

RH: I love Brothers. I love Brothers so much.

BT: For real.

JB: I had noodles, so I haven't decided yet.

[Laughter]

JC: We're probably doing [inaudible 01:22:30]

RH: What do you guys have—? We got a couple of minutes, but what are you working on or what do you guys have planned for the rest of the year? Is there any goals that you guys want to share?

BT: You know, at some point this year, I'm supposed to go on Sway in the Morning with [inaudible 01:22:55]. That's one of the highlights I'm waiting for. Just kind of letting it go as it goes.

RH: I'm ready for that.

TG: I think for me, one of my goals is to really step fully into myself as an artist and put myself out there a little bit more. You know, I feel like with curating and with working at the Burchfield, like, that has kind of—that trajectory has already kind of launched and I feel like really good about where that's going. But then, there's this other side of myself that I really want to express through my photography. And I have been running away from it for so long that I'm really excited to really step into that and see how that, combined with my curatorial work, will just take me to the next stratosphere. So I'm kind of like excited about some projects I'm working on for my thesis, really like

channeling my inner Carrie Mae Weems, and like really tapping into myself. And I haven't shared anything yet, but I'm excited to kind of get to that point where I'm ready to put it out into the world. So, that's my goal.

BT: That's dope.

JC: I'm thinking about changing—well, I'm changing my career this year.

TG: Oh, what are you thinking?

JC: I'm going from educator to the DEI field. I realized a lot of the work I've been doing translates so I'm just kinda like, 'Why not?' See what happens. I'm ready for a new adventure. [Laughs]

TG: [inaudible 01:24:49] change. Julia, what about you? What are you excited about?

JB: I'm working on the show for Burchfield, [Laughs] so it's going to be that and just being a good mom. I just had a baby, so just focused on that.

BT: Congrats.

JB: Thank you. And just, you know, getting through that first year and doing right by him.

TG: How has that been with balancing artistry, you know, teaching artists, motherhood? How has that been for you?

JB: It's crazy. I mean, it's changed everything. I had a show last night that opened over at BAM! [Buffalo Art Movement] and just thinking about the prep that went into going into that show leading up. I mean, I delivered in December and as soon as I was able to get into my studio, I was just there until like one a.m. most nights, just, you

know, and then trying to balance out being with him and switching off and everything. And, I don't know. It's just changed the dynamic of things in a major way, as I imagine kids always do. But it's been beautiful. I mean, I already see just like this whole experience of entering motherhood affecting the work that I'm gonna make down the road. And just like shifting, I don't know, maybe my perspective on some things, too. And just like thinking about that role in his life.

TG: Mm-hmm. That's beautiful. Wow. Congratulations again.

JB: Thank you.

TG: He's so cute. I've seen pictures on Facebook. He's adorable.

JB: Thank you.

TG: I don't think Rashaad or Bryant answered—or did you answer? You answered, Bryant. Rashaad, you got sixty seconds.

RH: I'm shifting studios now. I'm gonna be looking to hopefully open up my full studio this year. You know, all encompassing for all of my goals and hit every, you know, everything that I set out to achieve. And just be as consistent as I can be with making clothes this year, I think, is my main goal. I had a really good start to the year. So I just want to be consistent and really get back to what I love about fashion and making clothes, which is my best skill. You know what I'm saying? So stay there, I think—and be consistent. Consistency. Hope you guys stay consistent this year.

TG: Yes, we will.

RH: Pleasure, guys.

TG: Pleasure. I'm going to stop there.

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RH: My little cousin, Shaka, said "Hey."

TG: Hey.

BT: 'Sup Shaka.

TG: I'm going to stop recording.

RH: They said, "What's up?"

END OF RECORDING

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