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Participants:
DEBORAH ANDERSON
KALIE FALLS
IMANI JACQUELINE BROWN
CHILL
MALIK BARTHOLOMEW
MICHAEL STUCKEY
ALERION ANGELIN
Length: 00:58:54

Preface

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

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START OF RECORDING

MB: (inaudible - 00:00:04) right there in front of you. No pressure.

[Laughter]

MB: Okay.

DA: What we did at the last session is we introduced ourselves--.

MB: Yeah, introduced ourselves--.

C: Okay.

MB: I mean--.

DEBORAH ANDERSON: Uh, my name is Deborah Anderson. I'm originally from Detroit, Michigan. I've been here since 2008 and, uh, I'm (inaudible - 00:00:24).

KALIE FALLS: Um, my name is Kalie Falls. I am a New Orleans native raised in the Ninth Ward.

MB: Come on.

KF: And I'm a maker and songwriter.

IMANI JACQUELINE BROWN: My name is Imani Jacqueline Brown. I'm a New Orleans native. Um, lived in New York for seven years and came back, uh, in 2013. I'm a cultural organizer.

CHILL: Hey, my name is Chill. I'm a New Orleans native and I produce musicals.

MALIK BARTHOLOMEW: Um, my name is Malik Bartholomew. I am a New Orleans native.

C: All right. Okay.

MB: Um, I'm also a photographer as well as a historical researcher and consultant.

C: Mm.

IJB: We still exist.

[Laughter]

KF: Yay.

[Clapping]

IJB: This is, like, the first, like--.

KF: Table.

IJB: I know, this is, like, the--.

MB: Like, it's a--.

IJB: First setting I have been in since coming back to New Orleans where there's a majority New Orleans natives.

C: Yeah. Right.

MB: Yes.

[Laughter]

KF: What?

C: I'm waiting on somebody to say, 'I'm from San Francisco.'

KF: I'm not the only one. You know, (inaudible - 00:01:20) people were like, 'Oh my gosh, you're from here?'

IJB: Right.

MB: [Laughs]

KF: 'That's so rare.'

IJB: 'That's so exotic.'

KF: 'That's so rare.' I'm like, 'We're in my hometown.'

IJB: 'Hey, were you here for Katrina?'

[Laughter]

[inaudible - 00:01:31]

JV: (inaudible - 00:01:35) quiet down.

IJB: Okay.

[Laughter]

JV: Just because the--.

IJB: Don't tone police me, Jina.

[Laughter]

JV: (inaudible - 00:01:44)

KF: We got excited because we're all from New Orleans.

[Laughter]

KF: We're all--. Us four. (inaudible - 00:01:48) special friend. [Laughs] And we were all like, '(inaudible - 00:01:52) It's so rare.'

MB: Yeah, it was, like, the New Orleans native.

KF: Yeah, sorry about that.

Chill: Yeah, it usually be--.

MB: So how's it--. Do we all--? Should we have- pick up- like, each get a card? And then, we talk about it, and then, we go back and, like, deal them or what do you wanna do?

C: (inaudible - 00:02:06) yeah, I'm down for that.

MB: I mean, come on. Use that as a--.

KF: Hey, Chill. Can you--?

MB: Okay.

C: What you need?

MB: So we're gonna do the cards question one by one and open it up...

C: You want me to throw it away?

MB: You know.

KF: Yeah.

IJB: Wait, can we pause for, like, literally two seconds?

MC: And the Grammy goes to...

IJB: Oh, no.

C: Okay. Oh, no. We'll just get another plate.

MB: Okay, we're gon- gonna shuffle up the cards--.

C: Yeah, (inaudible - 00:02:27).

MB: No, I'm gonna wait for him to come back 'cause, you know, I wanna--. Oh, yeah. Go get something to eat, get something to drink. You know.

[Background conversations]

MS: Is this mine?

KF: Sit right- sit right there, Michael.

DA: Or this side. Somebody's sitting right there.

MB: Sit right here or right here.

HH: Make sure that before everyone talks to you introduce yourself.

MB: Yeah. Yeah. And then you can also introduce yourself when we ask questions. What's up, Mike, brah?

MS: Hi.

MB: Do you want to go get something to eat before we start?

MS: Yes, I do.

MB: (inaudible - 00:02:58) he was like, 'Yeah, I do.'

KF: Like, 'Do you want--?' 'Okay.' [Laughs] Don't do that. [Laughs]

MB: I won't get in the conversation and be like, 'Ah.'

KF: 'I'm hungry.' [Laughs]

MB: Yeah. Finish up this curry.

C: Had to grab a drink. Okay, I'm ready to discuss whenever everyone else gets here.

KF: I wonder how good the mic is. Like, is it picking up everything that we're saying?

C: I-I'm sure it can.

MB: I'm su- I'm sure--.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

C: Should be able to project.

DA: As long as we speak-speak loud.

C: Yeah. If-if I can hear you, then that can hear us.

KF: Okay.

C: It's kind of like--. Yeah, it's projects good enough so.

KF: Okay.

C: I mean, we're waiting on two more people.

IJB: [Laughs]

KF: Do did say you were gonna (inaudible - 00:03:37) [Laughs]

IJB: I had to. Had to.

C: We're waiting on two more people.

KF: Yeah.

C: So, should we--?

MB: If anybo--. We're-we're gonna wait on, um--.

IJB: Michael and Maya can come.

C: Mm-hmm.

MB: Yeah, and then we can get, um--. And then, Mike can introduce himself.

C: Mm-mm. They're here.

KH: Mikey looks so cute today.

[Laughter]

IJB: He always looks so cute, though.

C: Mike always comes, like, so, like-like, just A1.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm-hmm.

C: Fashion sense: impeccable.

KF: Yes.

MB: Are you doing the, um, are you going to do the next, um, bike ride, uh--?

C: Uh, I'mma try- I'mma try to make it whenever they do it, yeah.

MB: Well, they--. I think is the 20th. The only problem is that's Super Sunday.

C: Oh, yeah.

MB: So, I don't know if we're gonna be bike riding to--.

C: That would be dope.

MB: The, uh--.

KF: What is that?

MB: To the Second Line.

C: Uh, we do, like, bike rides.

MB: Yeah, on Sunday.

C: So.

KF: Wait, is that one of the (inaudible - 00:04:26)--.

C: I'm so- I'm sorry?

KF: Are you talking about the (inaudible - 00:04:27) thing? 'Cause I saw somebody post--.

C: No. Not-not-not-not--.

KF: About biking towards Second Line.

C: Not that. Not that.

KF: Okay.

MB: It's with The Away Team.

KF: The what?

MB: The Rockaway. D.J. Rockaway and The Away Team.

KF: Oh, gotcha.

MB: So he hosts, like, a monthly bike ride throughout the city.

KF: Oh, cool. I didn't know that.

MB: And, yeah.

IJB: That's cute.

MB: So.

KF: That's dope. I like that. I just got a bike, y'all. So.

MB: Come on now. Yeah.

C: All right.

KF: I could bike.

[Laughter]

MB: Come on now. You know, I'm sayin', so we meet up at St. (inaudible - 00:04:53).

KF: My new bike. [Laughs]

C: You're official.

KF: Huh?

C: I said you're official now.

KF: I'm a what?

C: You official.

KF: Official, yeah. I have a bike,

C: Biking is so fun.

KF: And I (inaudible - 00:05:02) first came down, I was like, 'The bikes. Always in my way, 'cause I'm a driver.'

C: [Laughs] No-no-now you like, 'Get out my way, car.' Like--.

KF: And I'm just like, 'Oh, now I know how to navigate it. I already know what this care 'bout to do. I'm gonna slow down.' [Laughs]

MB: And you see you gotta be smart because when you in New Orleans, you know what bike lanes not to use with, like, this is really a street lane or bike line, so you don't want to get hit and get up on that si--.

KF: I'm just gon' hit that backstreet.

MB: Hit that sidewalk.

KF: Exactly.

MB: 'Cause then, you can't be using the bike lane not on this street.

KF: Yeah.

C: (inaudible - 00:05:34) no napkins. That's a major flaw. We have some extra napkins? Yeah.

IJB: Oh, yeah. Thank you. [Laughs]

MB: No problem. I always come prepared.

[Laughter]

C: Good look.

[Pause]

IJB: I'm all about this food.

[Pause]

C: Shit is so good, like--.

IJB: Mm-hmm.

C: So good.

[Pause]

MB: See, we not getting started on the conversation, I feel left behind.

DA: [Laughs]

MB: I feel like they talking.

IJB: [Laughs]

C: And we just--. Everybo-everybody-everybody in the discussion already.

IJB: Are they coming?

C: You could tell we from--.

KF: (inaudible - 00:06:9) slow.

C: You could tell we- you could tell we from New Orleans. Everybody [Laughs]
everybody started their discussion--.

KF: And we like, [Vocalizes].

[Laughter]

MB: Like, it's gon' ge- it's gon' get done. It's gon', you know, it's gon' get done
[Laughs].

KF: Eventually. Like, this is the natives' table.

C: Right, right, right.

[Laughter]

KF: Okay.

C: This is the Big Easy table.

KF: We take it nice and easy.

[Laughter]

MB: So Mike, are we waiting on somebody else?

KF: No. No, Maya's going- at the other table. Introduce yourself.

MB: Yeah.

DA: Yeah. Uh, say--.

KF: Say-say your name and what you do.

MB: Yeah. Where you from.

MICHAEL STUCKEY: Okay. Um, my name is Michael Stuckey. Um--.

IJB: Sultan.

MS: I--. Sultan, that's my title..

IJB: [Laughs]

MS: Um, no mister or missus. Sultan. Um, I grew up in Virginia. I'm a violinist.

MB: Cool. That's what's up, that's what's up. So, we got these cards, and you
(inaudible - 00:07:13) we got these cards and we supposed to discuss each of these
topics on the card. I'm going to--. Think I should shuffle it up? Or what should we--?

C: Shuffle it up. Yeah, yeah. Uh, like-like a little--.

MB: I know you- you, like, you play Pitty Pay or Spades. You wanna shuffle it up.

C: [Laughs]

KF: I can't- I can not- I can't do the--.

MB: You know, the people be--.

KF: I can't do that. I mean, I could do a little--. You know what, you got it.

MB: You know--.

KF: I can't ch-ch-ch.

MB: I was the person in high school, it's like, 'I'm not playing cards (inaudible - 00:07:33).'

KF: I was like, 'I can't. Everybody used to be like, 'You can't play spades? You not Black.' [Laughs] I would be like...

MB: Oh, you can just shuffle them. It's good to have a little random mixing now.

DA: Well, yeah. The blank cards--.

LJB: What's the blank cards for?

DA: If you wanna create a question.

KF: Add a question.

IJB: Oh, yeah.

DA: Yeah, these aren't real cards so it's hard to shuffle them.

KF: Yeah, I'm like--.

MB: So the first card says--.

IJB: Oh, they look so real.

MB: Bow. Oh, this is a great one. *Discuss the impact on a tourist economy on the cultural economy.*

IJB: Oh, wow.

C: Mm, we was just talking about that.

MB: Come on,now. So--.

KF: Appropriation.

MB: *Discuss-discuss the impact on a tourist economy on a cultural economy.*

C: I went- we went to a bounce show: Katey Red, Big Freedia, and Vockah Redu.
Some, like--.

MB: Vockah a cool dude.

C: Yeah, you know, some--.

KF: You said "vockery"?

C: Yeah, Vockah-Vockah Redu.

MB: Redu.

KF: Vockah Redu.

C: Yeah-yeah, Vockah Redu. And when I tell you, it was the pastiest thing I've ever witnessed in my life. But I can tell they made, like, a lot of money. But the- but to see that culture watered down to, like, just no, soul no nothing was, like, v--. It was hard to see. It was- it was, like, my first time witnessing gentrification on even, like, on a social level, like, 'Whoa, this is what happens when like--.'

KF: Hipster white people move to your town.

C: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, pretty much. Like, people--. And they almost look at it like-like it's theirs. Like, even though nobody was dancing, it was the kind of atmosphere where it's like, 'Whoa, this belongs to us. Like, what are you doing here? Like, you're an outsider?'

MB: They--.

KF: They paid for it, so they own it.

MB: Well, hol' up. I had to--. I-I gave you the side eye when you say it like that was theirs, I was like.

C: No. It was--. No, like- i-it was like--.

[Speakers intermittently agrees]

IJB: Like, well, that's the attitude you know, it's like when you have like this, like, capitalist culture coming in where it's like, you know. New Orleans, like, neoliberalism, like, came really slowly here. And it's because we had all these, like, the cultural economy was, like, its own thing and was its own, like, insulated thing within, like, various neighborhoods and within the culture. So, like, a culture supports itself and it supports its own people through, like, you know, you, like, go, like, from Black owned business to Black owned business, you know? And that, like, that kind of thing. Versus, like, now the cultural economy is something that's being extracted from, you know, by people who want to profit off of it and the profits are not going to the people who are actually producing the culture.

MB: Right.

C: Yeah.

MB: I agree with you on that.

KF: Exactly.

C: That-that's-that's something they don't--. That's-that's perfect.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MB: In the past, um, the --'cause I was at the other discussion-- but I'd say the problem is people value, um, Black New Orleans culture but they do not value Black

New Orleanians. And that is problematic and we have to--. And sometimes, um, and honest, sometimes other outside people appreciate our culture more than we do because we grow up in it and so we-we look at it like it's a everyday thing.

KF: It's like, 'Oh, whatever.'

IJB: We take it for granted.

KF: We do.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MB: They-they take it--. It's like the, um--. Like, see, I don't want to--. It's like somebody like a big predominant institution here has a hip hop cultural archive, a New Orleans hip hop. Okay, and it's like, 'So and who all is hip hop Okay, so what are you doing studying, you know, our culture like you--. That not yours.' But somebody saw it and realized the importance of it and decided to archives it- archive it and study it. So in a way you can't really be upset, but you have to realize that we do have something precious here and we have to put a--.

KF: Cater to it.

MB: Interest and value in it and not just allow outside people to do it.

IJB: Right.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DA: Sometimes I feel like people come here to visit and they like the New Orleans culture, so they decided to move here, and then it's like they didn't realize what they were getting into and realize New Orleans is 24/7, and then they complain about

New Orleans culture. But that's why you liked it and you moved here, but now you're trying to change it.

IJB: Well, that's where the noise ordinance came from.

DA: (inaudible - 00:11:27)

C: That's so annoying.

MB: Or be smart and learn the culture. You can't come here and say you love the culture and you just fell in love with the French Quarter and stuff, and then, like you said to say, you move here--. And we know you don't--. Like, if you move on Frenchmen or the French Quarter, you probably staying--. You think you gonna stay up, you work at night. Don't go to sleep and think, 'Oh, I can't get no rest.' You moved on Frenchmen. We didn't tell you to move. We know not to move on Frenchmen.

C: Take- take yo' ass to Metairie.

[Laughter]

MB: Exactly.

IJB: That's why Metairie is there.

KF: (inaudible - 00:11:53)

MB: And not even Metairie, Gentilly, some parts of Bywater, like- but don't move in the Quarters and complain about the noise.

C: It won't- go right next to it. 'Oh, thi-this seems like a nice place to move, where this loud music is.'

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MB: Just 'cause you have the money, that don't mean, you know. So, you have to really understand a place. Like people who live- who live like in--. Like, if you live on Frenchmen, you're telling me you have a job that you stay up all night. You sleep most time during the day, because I wouldn't live on Frenchmen and complain about the noise at eight, nine o'clock at night.

IJB: No.

[Laughter]

DA: Something that's interesting, like, I met somebody who has a, uh, restaurant here who's also from Detroit like me, and she was talking about her grandson and how her daughter or son was correcting her grandson on how she- he was pronouncing things. And she was like, 'No don't correct him 'cause he 'bout to have--. He needs to be out in New Orleans culture 'cause this is where he's growing up and living. He can't--. Just because they pronounce it "Burgundy," like that's how they pronounce it. Don't correct them.

MB: No, that's the- that's the word, the word is Burgundy. And Calliope, it is "Calliope."

[Crosstalk]

IJB: It's "Calliope."

KF: It's "Calliope."

C: Who-who-who--? Nobody asked you. [Laughs]

MB: A-and-and Tch--.

KF: It's "Burgundy."

MB: Yeah, and “Tchoupitoulas.” It ain’t “topa-chrop-shibaliba-licious.”

KF: “Tchoupitoulas.”

MB: Yeah. Exactly.

IJB: Right.

KF: Say it right.

[Crosstalk ends]

DA: But she was like don’t mess him up just ‘cause we pronounce it differently were we from, he needs to be in New Orleans.

IJB: Right.

MB: So, Mike--.

IJB: We have our own language.

MB: You have something to say?

MS: I co-sign on all of that.

[Laughter]

MS: I do. I mean, and also, I mean, I’m not from New Orleans and I’m not tryna act like I am from here, but, um, so I just feel like I- my position would just be like, okay, listen--. Even though I don't feel like I'm doing that. It's not my space to really complain about that because--.

IJB: Well, I mean but it's the same--. It's not speaking specifically about New Orleans, right?

MS: Right. And not just New Orleans because it happens everywhere.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

MS: It's been- it is everywhere. But, I think when you- you know, people from New Orleans are talking about it, I feel like y'all should talk about it, so.

[Laughter]

MS: But that's why I'm just like, 'Yes.'

IJB: That's fair.

[Laughter]

MB: So-so group consensus? Let me know. We moving--?

C: Okay.

IJB: I mean, but like-like it is the same way. If you, like, look at New York and the history of New York, like that shit is happening here.

MS: Yeah, the same thing--.

IJB: That's why everyone is, like, coming down here from New York.

MS: People in New York are complaining about the same thing.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

IJB: Because it's like, yeah, like, New York is no longer hospitable to artists. And it used to be like- it used to be like a pioneer for actually, like, a lot of the rent control was actually created by artists organizing, like, you know, within their neighborhood and making sure that they could afford to stay there and like when you were in, like, Soho today, which has been totally, like, commercialized it's all shopping, it's all, like, high end, like, nasty just, like, horrible place. But [Laughs] like--.

MB: Well, that's what they tryna do to the Bywater.

IJB: Exactly.

MS: Mm-hmm.

IJB: But, like, when you, like, when you also, like--. I-I used to work for an arts organization in that neighborhood and, like, knew a lot of, like, old artists, like, artists who, like, bought their, like, lofts, like, back in the 70s or, like, had rent control and are paying like \$200 a month for like a full floor. So it's like, now, like, the city is trying to, like, push them out because investment bankers want to move in and that whole situation. But, like, all of those people, now that, like, New York can no longer, like — artists can't survive there. So everyone comes here because they're, like, you know, fleeing from, like, the complete destruction and collapse of, like, of culture in New York.

C: That's a--.

KF: And then, they're kind of like --some of them-- I feel like whites and also people of color are doing the same thing down.

IJB: Right.

KF: It's like, ah...

IJB: 'Cause it's so like--. Like, it's so just, like, unintentional. And it's just like, people need to, like, be very--. Like, we have to be having more conversations about, like, how, like, our body impacts, like, the environment that we're in. How, like, every, like, step that we take, like, impacts the ground and, like, you know, shakes the foundation. Like, we can talk about systems, but we can't talk about our own complicity (inaudible - 00:15:26).

MB: So, we have another person in the discussion. I want her to introduce herself, and where you're from and what do you do.

ALERION ANGELIN: Hi, uh, my name is Alerion Angelin. I am a teacher — uh, educator, I'll say, not teacher.

MB: And what else?

AA: Um, and I also run a food project called Brown Girl Kitchen.

MB: She cooked the food.

AA: I cooked the food.

IJB: I know.

KF: She cooked the food, you guys.

[Laughter]

MS: Yes, Brown Girl Kitchen. She do catering parties, pop ups--.

AA: Lots of things. Um, and, oh, I'm from here, I grew up in the lower Ninth Ward.

MB: Come on now.

IJB: Yes.

MB: Got another Ninth Ward girl right here.

AA: And I live in the Ninth Ward now.

C: Okay, okay. Still poppin' off.

MB: I need to get in the Ninth Ward before it ain't the Ninth Ward no more. Uh, [Laughs]--.

AA: Yeah.

[Crosstalk]

IJB: They already- they're already trying to--.

C: Oh, my God. Oh, my God.

MB: You know they gonna change the name--.

KF: I get so sad every time I ride through it.

MB: It's gonna be "Upper River Community." [Laughs]

MS: What?

AA: It's already the Bywater.

MB: It's gonna- it's gonna- it's gonna be the up- it's gonna be the Upper--.

IJB: It's the Bywater. Everything--. Yeah.

MB: No, no. But I'm talking about--.

IJB: The Bywater is just flooding--.

AA: I deliberately never call it that.

MB: (inaudible - 00:16:18) Of course the canal's gonna be the "Upper River Community." That's what it's gonna be called.

IJB: Yeah, no, me neither.

MS: Oh (inaudible - 00:16:22)

KF: (inaudible - 00:16:22)

IJB: (inaudible - 00:16:22) I can't call it "Bywater," I always say, "The Ninth Ward."

AA: Like, when people ask me where I live, I'm like, 'Oh--.'

IJB: And people, like, don't know where the Upper Ninth Ward is, like--.

AA: They don't know--.

IJB: (inaudible - 00:16:29) to what? It's just lower to, like, (inaudible - 00:16:30).

MB: They don't know about that crossing at Canal Lane.

IJB: 'Is anything out there?'

MB: They don't know about that crossing at Canal Lane.

KF: (inaudible - 00:16:35). [Laughs]

[Crosstalk ends]

AA: No, when you come over the bridge --'cause I live off of Poland-- when you come over the bridge, there is a sign right there and it says "Bywater" and every time I walk by the sign I'm like, 'I don't know what you're talking about.'

IJB: Yeah.

C: [Laughs] That's so funny.

MB: So, we're gonna move on to the next card. Let me see. Oh, I love this one. *What keeps you in New Orleans? Are you from here? Why did you stay? Okay, so--.*

AA: Hm, that's a good question.

MB: So, *What keeps you in New Orleans?* I wou- I'mma say, *Are you from here?* I am a- I would say probably, like, a sixth or seventh generation New Orleanian. My last name is Bartholomew. Of course, my family go back really far in New Orleans. Um, my dad, his dad, his dad, his dad is all from New Orleans. Um, New Orleans, despite the harshness of the reality that we live, is a place that is special. It is a place that--. New Orleans is not just a place, it's who we are as a people, as a culture: the music, the language. We live life in a different way. Um, it's-it's just so hard to put into words. And I've--. I've seen poets and other people put it- put it better into words, but it's just such a-a beautiful place.

IJB: That was poetry.

[Laughter]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MB: Yeah, yeah, yeah. But why do I stay? Um, you know, after Hurricane Katrina, even to this day, I have withdrawals that I can't go to my mama's house no more. Like, I literally, like, my mama don't stay in New Orleans.

C: I know what you mean.

MB: That freaks me out. I can't--. In between my job, go and get some of my mama food from my mama house. And I was like- I'm like, 'Why do you still stay in Texas?' But also, it grieves me because I was like, guess something--. I mean, I realized that my mama stayed here, my grandmother stayed in (inaudible - 00:18:09) five minutes away, my auntie stayed three minutes away, my--. I didn't know that I was connected to family until after Katrina. I had no idea. And now that family now- is that is all over. It is very foreign. So one of the things especially with New Orleans is New Orleans- New Oreleans was a- it was a center of families. Like, we literally had some families that owned the whole block. My grandma had a house, 'tie-'tie had a house. And you can't find that nowhere else. So it really pains me that ,you know, that, um--. But-but, I stay here because this is home. Um, I'm-I'm looking to buy a home here 'cause I'll be damned if everybody buy a piece of property in New Orleans but me. And, um, I just really wanna give back to the place that developed my family. And I know there's no place like it and I hope that the culture, the food, the music continues.

C: It will, it will. (inaudible - 00:19:03)

AA: That is so funny that you say that--. I mean, I guess I should ans-answer this question. Yes, I'm from here. Uh, *What keeps me here? Why do I stay?* I have not figured my next move yet. I love New Orleans. I intend, one day, to return to New Orleans after spending time elsewhere. But there are certain endeavors of mine that I would like to go out — like, for example for the food project. New Orleans is a very big Food City but we don't have a lot of the, like, higher end of food or, like, higher, like, sort of, like, elevated art style of food. Um, like, we have no Michelin starred restaurants. There's none in the state of Louisiana. There's none in the South at all.

MB: The-the-the Michelin, or--?

AA: Michelin starred. There's no Michelin starred restaurants in the South. I'm trying to remember if Atlanta has one. The closest one is Chicago, New York, obviously all of those things. And just wanting to, like, put myself in other cultures. So, I do intend to leave at some point, but I also intend to come back. Um--.

MB: Make sure you buy your house before you leave, baby.

AA: I probably need to before I can't afford to come back.

KF: I know, right?

C: Yeah, real shit.

AA: But, it's funny that you say that about people whose family owned the whole block and this, like, idea of loss of home because it took me about five years after Katrina for me to realize that — basically, I experienced the same thing. When I was growing up on the lower Ninth Ward, I grew up on Lizardi and Urquhart. Uh, I lived in a shotgun double, two bedroom shotgun double, my mom, my dad, and my, like, six plus siblings. We were clearly broke as fuck. Pardon my language, y'all. Um, and my cousins

lived on the other side of the duplex. And then, I had cousins that lived directly next door to me on the other side. My grandfather lived behind me, like on the next street behind me. And then, like- I, like, rotated. Each of my aunts each lived in that house at one point, and then I had an aunt that lives closer to Shell Med, my uncle on my father's side over there. Like, literally, I couldn't have tripped and fell anywhere in the Ninth Ward without my parents hearing about it, like, three minutes later.

[Laughter]

AA: And so--. And it's also, like, kind of a closing because my grandfather--. I have aunts and uncles that are younger than me. So like, these aunts and uncles are, like, my age. So it was like me, you know, my cousins and my aunts and uncles who I'm older than them. So I'm like, 'You're a cousin.'

[Laughter]

AA: Cousin status. Uh, you know, but like, we all just, like, grew up together. And we're just like, here we have all these memories, all these different things. And it wasn't until, yeah, five years later that I--. I ended up taking like a super long walk from, like, Canal Street all the way back through or--. I was coming--. Actually, I was coming up through the Ninth Ward and I was just, like, passing all these places and just like thinking about all these different memories, and I was like, 'Damn.' Like, my--. Like, a lot of my family, some of them have started to move back. My favorite cousin lives in Texas now. She hasn't come back. My grandmother, like, they all live on the West Bank because, like, the rising prices in the world have already displaced them. Like, there's no where that they can afford to live in the city. And so it's, like, Chalmette--. Or not

Chalmette, but like, Boutte, Harvey, like all these, like, really far out West Bank places. My parents live in Westwego and they bought a house there post Katrina, or circa--.

MB: I can't do the West Bank, baby.

AA: Around the time of Katrina. I mean, my parents lived there because I have a huge family. I have like- I have four younger siblings and four older siblings and we didn't all always live in the same house together, but it's always- like, it's always been at least like five, six kids, and then my parents. And then, right now my father's brother and his brother's friend live with my parents as well, and so they needed lots of space, and so that's where they could get lots of space cheaply. But it's like, they all live there. Like, you can't get to any of those places unless you have a car. Like, it's not like we, like, see each other every day. Or like, literally, like--. My cousin might as well have, like, lived in my house when I was a kid because she lived directly next door. Like, we were just always together. And so, we just, like, don't have that anymore and you don't see them. We get together on holidays and we do it real big, but not the same thing.

C: Yeah.

MB: Right.

C: And who-who remembers just, like, going out, like, when we was, like, young and just everybody outside--.

AA: Mm-hmm.

KF: Yeah.

C: Just like--.

KF: Like, the whole neighborhood--.

[Crosstalk]

C: Oh, yeah. And the whole neighborhood--.

KF: (inaudible - 00:22:56)

AA: Oh, yeah.

C: Yeah, (inaudible - 00:22:58)

KF: You got the (inaudible - 00:22:58) [Laughs]

AA: That's the thing about the 'hood.

IJB: Yeah.

MB: Yeah, the (inaudible - 00:23:00)

[Crosstalk ends]

AA: That is the thing about the 'hood, if I go outside on my street at 6pm, 7pm ain't nobody outside. Back living in the 'hood, everybody outside. Park was full, like, the lights were on. Everybody and their mom and grandma, like everybody was just, like, outside chillin'. And you knew everybody. Like, from my corner, which was like Urquhart going up to St. Claude, there wasn't a single person on that street who, like, didn't know who I was.

C: (inaudible - 00:23:23) Uh, shit, um, I love them, but like, to me, like New Orleans is like a mecca for, like, Black people, and art, and for, like, freedom of expression. Um, there's, like, no other place I would rather be. Like, I'm into theatre, and, like, the opportunity to, like, express yourself, like, on an underground level on like, you know--. Uh, I can't explain it. I-I really think, like, New Orleans, is, like, on the brink of, like, an artistic revolution.

AA: I think that it's like--.

IJB: Constantly.

KF: Mm-hmm.

AA: Really--. Like, creative energy flows very freely here. And there's just, like, so many. Like, there's so many people to meet and you do have, like, a lot of opportunities. And I just feel like it's easier to make projects happen here.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm-hmm.

C: And what they kind of realize, too, is like, just yesterday, I realized this, it's like, yeah, I can travel the world and go to one country and learn a different language or I can, like, stay here, you know- you know- you know? Stay here and meet somebody who, like, knows it- you know, a different language. I met, like, so many people, like, just yesterday, who, like, spoke different languages. And like, they want to live here now. So it's just like, that's cool, too. It's definitely- it's definitely like a gumbo in a sense where it's just like--.

MB: [Laughs]

C: Keeps (inaudible - 00:24:43).

KF: Gumbo pot. It's like, 'All right, more people--.'

C: Yeah, yeah, 'cause like, 'Mix that shit up. You-you in the mix now, you know what I'm saying?' [Laughs]

KF: (inaudible - 00:24:46)

C: Right.

[Laughter]

[Crosstalk ends]

C: Yeah, and it's like, keep mixin' that shit up. So, I'm with it.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MB: And it's so funny, I had a conversation with (inaudible - 00:24:54) and we was talking about energy and the energy of New Orleans and a creative energy. Um, and- 'cause it seemed like now everybody is singing, painting, taking pictures, and, you know, creating. And there's a reason why that's happening. And you know, so yeah, so--. Doing theatre, cooking — like, it just, like, yeah, so...

AA: We be cooking.

KF: Mm-hmm.

IJB: I mean, I'm sitting here, like, looking at Chill's, like, Beaucoup bra-bracelet.

C: [Laughs]

AA: (inaudible - 00:25:20)

C: Yeah.

IJB: And I just, like--. There's so many--. I'm- so I'm from New Orleans, um, and you know, there are so many elements of, like, growing up in New Orleans that are just, like, deeply embedded in you that you, like, think are- that you just totally take for granted and you assume everywhere else --like, before you really have a chance to live anywhere else-- and you assume, 'Oh, well, like, yeah, that's-that's just how it is everywhere else.' So, like "beaucoup" is one thing. It's like, oh, we have all these French words, like, interwoven within our vocabulary, but we didn't even think of them as being

French. And like, growing up, I just, like, even though I took French from, like, you know, kinder- like the entire time--.

[Crosstalk]

AA: That is so true.

IJB: That I was in school that I was, like, you know, I would get--.

AA: It wasn't until I moved to Boston, I said "beaucoup," I was like, 'Oh, people don't just--? No, okay.'

IJB: Yeah, so like that--.

AA: (inaudible - 00:25:59)

[Crosstalk ends]

IJB: You--. Exact--. So, yeah, that's what I was gonna say is that, you know, it's like I just always grew up thinking like "beaucoup" was spelled B-U-K-U--.

[Laughter]

IJB: Or maybe B-O-O, like, C-O--. I was like, I don't know what this word is. And then, finally, it took me, like, literally, to leave Ne-New Orleans and go and live somewhere else to be, like--.

C: To even know how to spell it.

IJB: 'Oh, that's French.' And, like, I would always say like, 'Oh, beaucoup,' and it's like, 'No, that's the same word.' And I had a conversation with someone the other day about like neu--. So we know that, like, *The Neutral Ground*--. Like, there was a New York Times, like, linguistic study that came out, like, looking at, like, where, like, basically, like, gave you all these, like, you know, like, questions about, like, what you

call different things and it told you where you probably lived. And, like, I was, like, dead center, like, hot red on New Orleans. And there are, like, phrases and words that we use here that no one else uses. So everyone else says “median--.”

MB: Yeah, we say--.

IJB: Only here--. This is the only place in this country that says “neutral ground.” But then, growing up, even hearing, like--. I wouldn't ever say “neutral ground” it was like, “neutral ground.”

[Crosstalk]

C: Neu-neutral--.

MB: '(inaudible - 00:26:54) neutral ground.'

[Laughter]

IJB: And then, you have, like, the nutria--.

AA: It took a really long time--.

IJB: And you would say- and then, you would say “nutri-rat” and then, you would have the Nutri-Grain bar, and so I just, like, literally, my entire, like, up until--.

AA: It took me a really long time--.

IJB: I left New Orleans--.

AA: To realize that the Neutral Ground was “neutral” ground.

C: Neutral Ground. [Laughs]

IJB: (inaudible - 00:27:12)

AA: Like, I was probably, like, upper age of teenager.

IJB: And it's like- I, like, literally thought it was, like, the same for, like, Neutral Ground, Nutri-Grain bar, and nutri-rat.

AA: It's all the same. Definitely.

IJB: Until, like, really recently, and it's funny and it's just like, 'oh,' like, of course, like, at some level I actually knew that wasn't, but I just never questioned it.

AA: Yeah, you just, like, don't think about it.

IJB: And, like--.

AA: I mean, festival culture is another thing as well because, like, festival culture, costuming, like, other people are just, like, not doing that.

MB: Or, you know, Mardi Gras, you know. I--.

AA: Like, Mardi Gras, costuming, festivals, like, people don't have that.

MB: When I was living in Houston, it was Mardi Gras Day and I couldn't make it here. It was right- it was 2007. So, Oh my god, I can't make it (inaudible - 00:27:55), so I was just like, um--. I told my boss, I said, 'I can't come to work. It's Mardi Gras Day, I'm not going to work.'

[Laughter]

MB: 'I cannot do this.' And I, literally, went to, um, Walmart, bought liquor, bought (inaudible - 00:28:10) hot sausage, um, I cooked and- I cooked red beans, (inaudible - 00:28:13) sausage--.

AA: Sounds so good.

MB: (inaudible - 00:28:14) fried chicken, I did that- I did all that and I want everybody I knew from New Orleans, I invi--. I invited them because I knew they was missing home, it's Mardi Gras Day. You don't go to work on Mardi Gras Day.

IJB: No.

AA: No, you go eat all the food.

MB: And I--. Literally. And everybody who left my house left out my house with a plate of red beans and a hot sausage po' boy--.

C: With another plate on top.

MB: And somebody was just like, 'Man,' he was just like, 'Man, I really needed this.' And I was like--. Because, you know--. And that's when I realized, New Orleans is a spirit and we take it with us wherever we go.

IJB: It's true.

MB: And so, it's a spirit. It's more than just a--. It's a spirit.

AA: It's like a playful- it's like a playful and very joyful spirit. Like, I would say--. First of all, when I was living in Boston--.

MB: And it will get real serious quick.

KF: Uh-huh. (inaudible - 00:28:53)

AA: Get real serious, real quick. I'll tell y'all a different sorry about that. But when I was in Boston, like, I just would walk around smiling 'cause, like, that's what I do, you know? And, like--.

MB: Yeah, or say, 'Hello.'

AA: Or say, 'Hello.'

MB: You-you--.

AA: And I'd had multiple people while I was living there comment upon it like, 'Oh, like, you just, like, have this, like, energy or, like, whatever.' And I was like, 'I'm not mad about my life?'

[Crosstalk]

MB: Pass that- p-pass that--.

AA: (inaudible - 00:29:16)

IJB: (inaudible - 00:29:16)

[Crosstalk ends]

MB: Pass that old lady house on the shotgun and I'll tell her (inaudible - 00:29:18), 'Ms. Mary called said you ain't- you ain't say hello to her. You need to go walk back.'

[Laughter]

AA: 'Go back to the end of the block (inaudible - 00:29:27)

MB: 'But she said you (inaudible - 00:29:28) She said you-you ain't even--.'

AA: It's like--.

MB: [Laughs]

C: Oh, yeah. Just thinking about that- stuff like that, yeah.

AA: I'm trying to find the accurate word to describe New Orleans spirit. Like, I wanna say playful but like it was something like very playful and very honest and very, very just like expressive.

C: Yeah and free.

AA: Like, not even just, like, positively expressive, but just, like, express--.

IJB: Well, it's grounded.

MB: Yeah.

IJB: Like, this-this--. Like, this city and like, you know, in terms of, like, why I, like, why I'm here and why I stay here — So I, like, left, like, when Katrina hit. Um, I evacuated for Katrina, and was furious when we evacuated because my friend was having you know, like, a little--. She always had these Luau parties that always coincided with, like, the hurricane. And we would always evacuate and there never be a hurricane. And then, I'm like, for some reason, I remember, like, I was, like, pissed off about missing the party. But there was, like, also this, like, weird — There's like a different energy around. Like, when Katrina came, you know, that wasn't the same as every other, like, hurricane. Like--.

C: Yeah, I know what you- I know what you mean.

IJB: I, like, packed, like, a huge suitcase.

C: Yeah, I was kinda re- I was kinda ready to go.

IJB: And my mom was like, you can't bring all if that because we--. It was, like, me and my mom and my grandfather and his wife and, like, their dog and my three birds. And then we were, like, going to meet other family to pick them up. And she was like, 'You can't bring all that.' And like, for some reason, I was like, in this panic state of, like, 'I have to take everything,' you know? And like, never- that, uh, never happened before. But, like, I evacuated and then like, went to this horrible place in Maryland, which, like, is actually really important, I think for me, because I, like, actually saw the rest of, like, America was like.

AA: Yeah, it is so easy to forget.

IJB: Like, yeah. Like, 'cause I didn't know. And even though, like, my dad always lived D.C., so like, I would always travel to D.C. and go back and forth.

MB: But to live is something else.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

IJB: But to live with those people and to go to school with them. And like, you know, I wa- I was at this place in Po- I was in Potomac, Maryland, which is like one of the wealthiest counties like in the country, and like, thankfully, like-like, my two best friends from Franklin, like, went up there with me and we all got scholarships. And we're like, the only people on scholarship at that school were obviously all the people who were there on sports scholarships and those were also the only other Black people at that school. And it was just like such--. I mean, but it's such a rude awakening when you, like, live in this like--. I mean, like, my experience of New Orleans was very deeply integrated. And my experience of New Orleans now is a lot more segregated, I think, than, like, even when I grew up here. And it kind of freaks me out constantly.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AA: I mean, I think to a certain extent, like, with all of the changes that are happening, and what people bringing that s-spirit with them from the places that they're come and when you're talking about like transplant culture, like that's one of the effects of it, because those folks are not socialized to interact with everybody. Like, I--. People say what they want to say about the South, how it's like, 'Oh so racist,' or whatever, I feel like, personally growing up in New Orleans, I will take New Orleans racism over northern racism any day of the week.

KF: Any day.

MB: And also--.

AA: Any day of the week because--.

MB: I-I--.

AA: It's at least honest, you know?

MB: And my father--.

AA: It's, like, honest, sometimes joking, but like not funny--.

MB: I mean, but look at-.

AA: But, like, in the North it's like, 'Oh, I'm not a racist. I'm just actually really racist.'

KF: Bessie Smith made a quote about that. She was like, 'At least in the South, they're honest with it. Up North, they're like--.'

MB: Yeah, but--.

AA: Meanwhile, doing all these terrible things, yeah.

KF: It's so, like, passive aggressive.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

KF: Like, not direct.

AA: Yeah, it's, like, so covert.

MB: Yeah, but look at--.

KF: It's like, 'What?'

MB: But look at New Orleans before the storm. I mean, you literally — let's say you have St. Charles Street and you have maybe two-two blocks of St. Charles, oh,

okay, maybe, you know, middle- upper middle class people or middle class people. But after that two blocks, you have straight up working class Black people.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

MB: These rich white people had to interact with these Black people.

AA: And that is exactly what I was just gonna say.

MB: So-so, and that's New Orleans. And it what--. And it was like that historically. So, for us to more to have these now predominately white areas, that is not a New Orleanian thing.

KF: It's not.

AA: Thing. No it is not.

MB: To have an area that is just just white people.

AA: No, or--. No, it was not that--.

IJB: I could not handle Chewbacchus this year. I went to Chewbacchus and was, like, hanging out with, like, a lot of my white transplant friends. And like, I had no idea 'cause I had never been to Chewbacchus before. So I was just like, I could not deal with it. There- I saw like--. There- like, I was like--. There were literally two Black children there. And I was like, 'What is Mar- a Mardi Gras parade if there are not Black children, like, running around, like--.'

MB: Is that the adult parade?

IJB: You know?

C: That was me at the Bounce (inaudible - 00:33:32)

[Crosstalk]

IJB: No, it's like a walking parade.

KF: (inaudible - 00:33:32)

AA: It's a- it's a Star Wars parade. It's a Star Wars walking parade.

MB: Okay.

IJB: It was literally all white --in the Ninth Ward--.

MB: Wow.

IJB: So, I just like- I could not do it.

MB: Well, you know, they have a- they have a--.

IJB: And there were all this--.

MB: They have a brass band--. There's a Ninth Ward, uh--.

AA: (inaudible - 00:33:40)

MB: Marching band that's like- all like--.

C: J- That's just how I felt when I went to that Bounce show.

AA: I went to that parade this year--.

C: I went to that Bounce show and it was just like--.

[Crosstalk ends]

AA: Because one of my friends who is Black, and I was like, 'Oh, cool. I'm gonna go support Lauren, or whatever. And literally three seconds after she was done I was like, 'Okay,' [Claps] the parade is over in my mind. Like, I don't need to be here.

MB: (inaudible - 00:33:57)

AA: No, but what you were saying--.

C: Does- did anybody wanna--?

KF: Oh, wait. What's the--?

AA: Actually exactly the thing I've been think- was thinking about--.

C: Yeah, yeah.

[Pause]

KF: Okay, what- is Alerion--? I feel like this is other people--. New Orleans will always be my homebase, but I do need to go adventure out and, um, have my worldly experience and then come back and raise all kind of beautiful, glamorous hell in this city. [Laughs] Um--.

C: Fuck shit up! Fuck it up.

[Laughter]

KF: But my family always wanted to come back. I have aunts who live- um, who lives in Alabama. I have family who stay in, like, Perryville, Louisiana. Um, but as far as, like, walking around the neighborhoods and seeing weird faces like that. It makes me really sad to ride through the Ninth Ward, 'cause I'm like, 'Oh, I used to hang out with such and such in this house.' And now it's a musty ass gutter punk who lives here--.

[Laughter]

AA: Oh, my God. That reminds me of something that happened me once--.

KF: With their seven dogs. I'm just like- I can't--. It's just really annoying also to- just to notice the school system in this city. Eh, just the- just the school- the two schools that I grew up with in my neighborhood, which is William Frantz, which is now Akili, and then St. Mary's of the Angels, which is not the high school, it's a elementary school,

which is, like, a few blocks around the corner from Akili. Um, they both--. Well, not the- [Tapping] not St. Mary's, but Akili basically looks like a prison.

IJB: And they behave- and they--.

C: (inaudible - 00:35:28) yeah.

KF: And my grandmother, who was a-a English teacher in the Lower Ninth Ward, I think- I believe she taught middle school, um, she gets on the teachers actually because they make the kids walk around in single file lines--. And

AA: No, they run that place like a prison.

KF: The kids walk around the neighborhood in single file lines--.

AA: They used to--. I don't know if this person still works there, but apparently the principle that they had there at one point was, like, horribly racist.

KF: Yeah, yeah.

AA: (inaudible - 00:35:53)

KF: My grandmother got on the man 'cause the guy was, like, yelling at one of the kids and, like, called the kid a nasty slur. And then my grandmother --she's always one of those people-- she's like, 'Come here, young man. You don't talk to these kids like that.' [Vocalizes] This, that, and the other.

AA: That's the thing, the person--. Somebody I know used to work there and he told me about it and they were just like, yeah, basically, like, 'I got banned from being there. And like, I, like, got fired from, like, a job I was working because I refused to treat the kids that way.' And I was like, 'As you should. Like, that's like, not should be raised.'

KF: No, that's insanity.

AA: Like, that's just training kids to go to prison.

KF: Pretty much.

C: Oh, yeah. Ch-charter schools (inaudible - 00:36:30)

KF: I was walking in the building, like--.

IJB: Yeah.

AA: Because those schools don't--.

KF: They have metal shutters.

AA: View the students as students, they view them as problems. And usually, it's like, 'How do I get rid of the problem?' not 'How do i fix it?' I work at Clark and we have, like, a pretty strong disciplinary code and so we have something called (inaudible - 00:36:47) which is where you send someone there for, like, a class period. And I personally hate handing out (inaudible - 00:36:54) because it's like, it doesn't benefit you to, like, go sit in a room where I'm not teaching you. Like most of you are not actually teaching you a lesson for, like, this class period. But, like, I once, like, had to go to a teacher's classroom — because, like, I'm a long term substitute teacher. It's, like, kind of a weird thing, I'm not gonna explain it right now. But, anyway, I had to go to this teacher's classroom because she was, like, starting up a lesson or something. And literally, within the first five minutes of class, she sent like half the class out of the room. And so- and I was like, that's crazy. Like- and, like, they weren't really even doing anything that bad. I was just like- like they were talking. They literally just came in from lunch. Like, they're still, like, having their, like, energy, like, hopping up--.

KF: They're kids.

AA: Right?

DA: Yeah, they're children.

AA: And so, that happened, and then, what made it particularly annoying for me is that I had been talking to this teacher in the teacher lounge- the teacher's lounge before I went to the classroom 'cause I was, like, talking about the fact that I had to go there. And she was like, 'Oh, this class period is just, like, so tough, because, like, I have these, like, five or six students who are, like, aren't supposed to be in my class, they're supposed to be in someone else's class and they, like, they just, like, haven't moved them yet, but they're like rouble students,'or like, whatever, whatever. And so I go to this class, and then she pretty much puts them all out. And I'm like, 'You decided and you, like, had it in your mind in your, like, ideas already that you did not want these kids in this classroom. So they did a (inaudible - 00:38:15) and just blinked and you're gonna send them out. And like, that's kind of ridiculous because, like, how, like--.

Regardless of the fact that they're going to another class, if you're teaching a skill in this classroom, then they wouldn't benefit from learning and (inaudible - 00:38:28) the expectation that you're teaching them and they're learning this. Like, What are you talking about right now? And it's just like, a lot of stuff is just, like, my kids are also reckless and do do really bad things sometimes and so day really bad things, and, like, yeah, like, they definitely need to be punished for it, but it's just, like, at some point, the culture becomes just, like, [Snaps] punishment, punishment, punishment, punishment, punishment--.

C: And also--.

AA: And it's, like, never, like--. It doesn't actually do anything.

C: And also, like, knowing that, like, people care, like, helps, too.

AA: Yeah, and that's the other thing. And, like, if you treat the kids this way--.

KF: They're so rare.

C: Yeah, that rarely happens.

KF: The people who care are so rare. And then your jobs are in jeopardy when you're like, 'No, I'm not gonna yell at a frickin kindergarten for not walking in a straight line.' Like--.

AA: Well, the thing about--.

DA: Just to answer this question quickly as a foreigner--.

[Laughter]

KF: Sorry.

C: Sorry. So sorry.

KF: Sorry (inaudible - 00:39:20)

DA: [Laughs] As a non native-native New Orleanian, um, it was funny 'cause when I first moved here in 2008, um, I worked at a Julian Leadership Academy, which I don't know what it was before, but that wasn't the original name. And--. I have a problem with that thing like, why do y'all- why do they change the names of schools? Can you keep it the same name--?

IJB: Columbus.

DA: But anyway, um, and it was the, like, lunch lady and she just was like, 'Why do you live here?' And I'm just like, 'Because New Orleans is great.' [Laughs] What? Like--. It's like people trying to escape, but I-I came here to live and it's just like, New Orleans is a awesome place. And I used to live here when I was little for like three

years. And it's warm and I like-like the warmth. And, um, why do I stay? I just- I feel like [Pause] like when I first moved here and worked at that school, I felt like I-I experienced more of New Orleans, and that's what I like. Like, I was trying to figure out how do I find the regular Black people? Like, the welcome--? Like, y'all. Like, the people like y'all. Like-like I want- like, to go get a grandma or something because I feel like that's real New Orleans. And I feel like, what I experienced — because I work in Baton Rouge and I'm always around white people and it makes me question whether--. Like, being around white people makes me question whether southern hospitality actually exists because white people don't extend southern hospitality to Black people.

C: That's a good ass point. That's a good ass point.

DA: Like, 'Does it actually exist?' But when I first came down here, it did exist because I was freaked out by having to say 'Hi' to everybody. It was weird. I mean, it's- I got used to it but in Detroit we don't say 'Hi' to everybody. But I was- I, like, had to psych myself up like, 'Okay, this person gon' say 'Hi' to me. I'mma say 'Hi' back. It's gon' be normal.'

MB: [Laughs]

DA: Something like that. But, I f- like, I always try to--. I-I need to try to find where the, like, New Orleans Black people are 'cause I feel like I will enjoy my time better if I found that. 'Cause that's what I liked about New Orleans. [Laughs]

C: Yeah, there's always a--. There's, yeah, there's always a difference between southern hospitality and not going out your way to make white peop- white people feel comfortable. 'Cause, like, sometimes that, you know what I'm saying, the like, 'Oh, like, let me show you that I'm not harmful.' Like, or, you know, like, you know what I mean?

AA: Yeah.

KF: [Laughs]

AA: When people say things like that, it makes me truly thankful that I was blessed with the gift when I was born of truly just not giving a fuck. I went in on this white man at the bar the other day because he was trying to tell me about African and Black history, and I was like--.

MB: Oh, hell to the naw.

[Laughter]

AA: I was like, 'Please, don't--.'

MB: I don't even care if you (inaudible - 00:42:03)

AA: I was like--.

[Laughter]

AA: I won't- I kid you not, the words, 'Hold up, I'm about to read the fuck out of you' actually came out of my mouth. I was like, 'Who are you talking to?' I was like, 'You're not from here. You're white as hell and you're tryna tell me what, sir?' I was like, 'Okay, thank you.' And he was, like, not even a part of the original conversation, like, he like rolled up (inaudible - 00:42:27) I was just like, 'Are you lost?'

C: [Laughs] 'Do you need guidance?'

AA: 'Can I point you in the direction of someone who actually cares (inaudible - 00:42:34) conversation?'

MB: So, the non-natives...

MS: Well, my godparents are from, um, Lafayette, Louisiana. And I never--. Like, thing about this area that's very interesting is that it's very focused on tradition and, um, my story is the exact opposite of that. I never lived in a place for more than like four years. Um, my- I was born in Central America, but actually met my godparents there who are from Lafayette. And, um, it's always been, like, a very magical experience for me living in New Orleans. I think what keeps me here was the support that I get from my friends and relationships that I have here, and just building really intentional friendships. Um, and that's the same everywhere I go, but New Orleans is very, very specific. And, um, I stay because, like you were saying earlier, this creative artistic energy that is here really, um, helps me. I've been a violinist for seventeen years and I didn't really feel like an artist until, like, maybe three years ago. Um, I felt like more like an interpreter because I had to, like, play these pieces the way they told me to; my opinion didn't really matter. And we also had to, um, blackout [Laughs] Black history in relation to music and schools. Um, so they make it seem like we don't have anything to do with it. So, um, I feel like New Orleans is definitely — or not just living in New Orleans, but these past three years have been, um, moreso this creative journey for me.

MB: So, I'm going to--.

KF: Next card?

MB: (inaudible - 00:44:20) Oh.

KF: I'm curious now.

MB: Uh, this is for the, um, our artists. Do we have any at the table? *Does a sense of civic responsibility affect formal decisions made in your studio?* Um, is anyone a graphic artist, or--?

C: (inaudible - 00:44:40)

AA: I mean, I think all art forms count.

C: Yeah, true, true.

AA: Uh, what is today? The eleventh?

MB: The twelfth.

DA: Twelfth?

MB: The twelfth.

IJB: Yeah, I mean, I--.

MB: Well, I know you.

IJB: Yeah.

MB: [Laughs]

IJB: [Laughs] I don't have a studio, so--. Um, I don't know. I, like, I struggle with, like, even calling myself an artist. Like, it depends on the day; it depends on who I'm with; it depends on, like, how I'm feeling. Um, I, like, I, um, have always been a visual artist and, um, like, minored in visual art in school. And then, right after I graduated, Occupy Wall Street happened. I was in school in New York. And, um, like, in Occupy, there was a group called Arts and Culture- like, The Arts and Culture Working Group. 'Cause, like, Occupy had, like, all of these different working groups that dealt with different issues, like, different, like, areas that were being impacted by capitalism. So, like, there would be, like, an environmental justice working group, like, a POC working group, LGBT, like, arts and culture, all these different things. And, um, we, like, I really--. In this group, this collective called Occupy Museums came out of it, and we got really

involved in talking about, like, how problematic, um, art becomes and culture becomes under capitalism, because it's constantly, like, extracted from and it's turned into a commodity, um, where all of the values and all the social use get drained out of it. And it's just something that, like, is like any other, like, financial ins-instrument that is, you know, um, flipped on this, like, luxury market, you know, as like a tool for, like, for financial speculation, at least specifically in New York. In the New York art world, it's like, really intense like that.

MB: Probably it's also San Francisco, LA--.

IJB: Exactly.

C: Markets like — Miami even now, too.

IJB: Right, Miami now. And it's like, this whole culture that's being perpetuated by, or, like, you know, like--. When I say "culture" I mean, culture of capitalism, because capitali-capitalism is a form of culture, and maybe the negation of all culture. Um, but anyway, so, like, by doing that, I, like, I was just so involved in, like, challenging museums, and, like, doing actions at museums and then starting to do projects and, like, just, like, forcing conversations that people didn't want to hear. And, um, my work kind of took on this, like, performative and, like, activist element, and I s- and I stopped feeling like, not even comfortable making objects, but just, like, I-I lost, like, the inspiration to create physical objects to, like, put in the world. Um, and it's funny because, like, I, like, now, like, I've been involved in, like, that group for, like, you know, since 2011. And now I am one of the cofounders of this group called Blights Out, which is trying to bring together, like, citizens, artists, of all stripes, activists, you know, architects together to, like, tackle the, like, housing crisis in New Orleans. And I, like,

finally feel, like, now that I'm, like, doing that, like, pretty much full time, like, I finally feel, like, the urge to start creating again, like, to use my, like, hands to create. Um, but now I don't know how to get back into it. And I feel like what could I possibly make that would feel, like, right to me, you know, that would feel like I was- I--. Like, I need to do something where I'm, like, really intentionally, like, transferring energy, like, from myself into these objects and using objects that are gonna, like, transform the energy of, like, the space that they're in. Like, I can't ever look at, like, an object, or like art for art's sake, kind of, again, you know?

MS: So, I'm just learning and growing in photography. I know there's different types of things of art. Um, I don't--. As I grow--. I mean, I do take pictures of certain events, but I don't plan on taking pictures of weddings or anything, I want to do more artistic, pretty much focused photography. Um, but even right now, I love to expose and show people the city and the people that I see and the culture that I see. Um, two examples: um, Mardi Gras Day, I was on my bike, I was going (inaudible - 00:48:25) Orleans to experience Zulu. And I was by Claiborne and I saw something and I had to stop my bike and pull out my camera and take a picture. It was a picture of this older Black man in a burgundy mink--.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yes.

[Laughter]

MB: I was just like--. [Laughs]

C: Swag him out.

IJB: I want that so bad.

MB: It was just so beautiful. It was so powerful.

IJB: Sorry.

MB: But it was so beautiful, it was so powerful.

HH: I'm gonna give you guys a ten minute warning.

MB: Yeah, yeah. It was beautiful and so powerful that I just had to capture the image. And it was just- he was just chilling in his doorway in this burgundy mink, in the hood.

[Laughter]

MB: So-so, it-it-- So, it's- so, it's images like that that I- I just- I live for, um, seeing a artist... Not seeing, but connect with the music and the people and be able to ta- capture that, 'cause that's a moment that, you know, that- when they're in that zone — I'm not just saying when they're in that zone. Um, so there's just so many-- So, I do think- but also like Exhibit B. I always tell people Exhibit B was a very, um, life altering experience for me, especially the closing day 'cause there were so many people, so people from so many different walks of life: white, Black, whatever. But it shows, like you said, the not- how when art is not commodified and it was pushing us to think on a higher level, not just about ourselves and our past 'cause (inaudible - 00:49:57) do a lot of history work, but how we can transform our surroundings wi-wi-with just with what we have and not wait on anybody else to, you know, curate for us when we can curate. And we curate-- I mean, who would have thought an abandoned apartment complex could be a complete gallery. So it was just such a beautiful experience and it pushed me to think even higher and stronger. And, you know, I ju- I just think that art is important. Um, I recommend to young people not to listen necessarily to all of the commercial music. That is 'cause I think music today is a attack on young Black minds, and I think they use

music to- to program our children by lyrics --Nicki Minaj and all that-- and materialistic and what they should be focusing on and that's not what they shouldn't focus on all. And, um, and sex and all this. So, you know, I just think we --you right-- we do have to--. And I think is going on right now with Kendrick Lamar, with, uh-. With just seeing so many young Black violinists. I've met so many vi- Black violinists. Like, I don't know where they-. I'm like, 'Yes.' Like, (inaudible - 00:51:03)

DA: (inaudible - 00:51:03) Regina Carter.

MB: Yeah, Regina Carter, T-Ray. I mean, every time I look around, I see a Black violinist. I--. So--.

C: I'm a, uh--. No, I'm s-sorry, I ha-hate to interrupt (inaudible - 00:51:12) move on. But, um, when I think of, like, civic responsibility, like, for me, like, I enjoyed The Plight of Black People so much. Like-like, my dream is to, like, just- to, you know, to kind of get back to where, like, everybody, like, is doing their own thing or like--. You know, us as grown ups, ha--. Like, everyone's good, you know? So I think of, like, my civic responsibility and how that affects, like, my art and my art space, uh, it's definitely super--. Like, I o- I only put Black people in my plays. Like, I only do that. Like, I only want--. I'm sorry, I'm just super, like, you know, like, it's--.

KF: There's nothing wrong with being inclusive.

MB: Yeah (inaudible - 00:51:53) yeah.

[C intermittently agrees]

KF: There's not- i--. I mean, exclusive. There's nothing wrong with that. I feel like they have their thing. I feel like we get the-that heat from other Black people and outside voices that are like, 'Oh, well, that's racist,' because you like,' I want this to be a POC

event,' or , 'I want this to be a POC.' And, like, that's not--. They have their clubs, they have they country clubs that yo' Black ass gotta come through the back door in still to this day. You can't walk up in the country club out in- up in Metairie. You can't just bust up in there.

IJB: Right, right.

C: Yeah.

KF: No.

IJB: But why would you want to?

KF: I know--.

[Laughter]

KF: But I'm just saying, like--.

MB: I mean- I mean- I mean--.

KF: Like, any of that--.

MB: I mean, look at Rex.

IJB: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

KF: Rex? You can't--.

MB: You know, I tell people, you know, I lived my life- my whole life--. I've (inaudible - 00:52:30) Rex parade in, like, seven, eight years because I like waking up late and going to Orleans and just seeing Zulu. But I was just like, the Rex parade (inaudible - 00:52:37) look like the same guy over here.

AA: So, look. Tell me- tell me what- what is up with the, like-like, 'Tit Rex? That, like- the, like- the little- the little walking parade that's called 'Tit Rex?

IJB: T-Rex?

AA: It's like Petit Rex.

IJB: I've heard about but I've- I didn't see it.

MB: It may be something new?

AA: It's something- it's new. And it's like, well, why are they trying to emulate Rex of all of the parades? Is, like, my question. Like, who--.

C: I--.

AA: Like, who started that? Where did that even come from?

MB: I'd have to look into that.

AA: And what is their, like- what is their agenda?

KF: Exactly.

AA: You know?

KF: You know they're--.

AA: It's another one of those, like, it's one of those--.

KF: You know they're being racist, right?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

AA: Like, Ninth Ward walking parades that's all white. It comes before Chewbacchus, it's new, but it's like Rex is one of the parades- was one of the, like, (inaudible - 00:53:15) that was like so segregated that they almost didn't--. They were one of the ones that almost didn't desegregate in the 90s. Like when, like, Momus and Comus decided to fold and go underground. Like, Rex was like, 'Fine,' you know,

because they wanted to, like, stay out there. So it's like why would you then make a little, like, Rex parade? Like, of all the, like--?

MB: And- (inaudible - 00:53:32)

AA: Yeah, why not 'Tit Zulu? Like, what is that?

KF: They're letting you know. They're letting you know. They put it in your fa--.
They be like--.

MB: They won't--.

KF: Subliminal but not subliminal.

[Laughter]

KF: They always do that. I'm just like...

MB: So we're gonna get through one more card. She said ten minutes.

KF: Oh, I pulled this one.

C: We (inaudible - 00:53:48)

AA: Wait, ask--. I wanna hear- I wanna hear Michael ask the- answer--.

DA: She pulled this one. Or no, this is the (inaudible - 00:53:53)

AA: No, answer that one. [Laughs] I wanna hear your thoughts.

MS: Um.

[Pause]

MB: (inaudible - 00:54:04)

C: This was- oh, yeah, yeah. (inaudible - 00:54:05) I think we kind of touched that one already. The first one?

KF: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

C: Okay.

KF: That's why I was like, 'Nah.'

MS: I don't know if I can answer this.

MB: (inaudible - 00:54:14)

AA: You don't want to answer this?

MS: I don't think I can.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

MB: So, this is: *How his cultural memory passed down to younger generations. Discuss legacy, intergenerational advocacy, and mentorship.* Okay. Um, first of all, a lot of things, um, that New Oroleanians do was cultural memory. I'm eating red beans and rice every Monday. That came when the Black women only cooked- washed--. They had to wash not only they family clothes, but the white people clothes because the Black women were the (inaudible - 00:54:44) back in the day. And on Sunday and Saturday, everybody wore their good clothes. So, they had to wash clothes on Monday. Well, you can't cook and wash clothes at the same time, so what- they put on beans and let them soak all day. And that's how we eat red beans everyday, stuff like that. Fried fish on Friday. So, what--. Uh, Second Line is a cultural memory. A-a-a shotgun house is a cultural memory. However, I'm--. Right now I'm developing my own, um, walking tour guide company. Um, and one thing is --'cause I love history, I love explaining history in ways where people can understand and grasp it-- but understanding- knowing the importance of your ancestral connection, knowing that grandma passed on--. That's important you have to pass on, you got to teach your kids about grandma who died or uncle--. 'Cause the-those are our ancestors and we need to always remember them.

But also knowing what is each of our ancestral assignment. Our ancestors have given us an assignment for this day, and they're working with us, and they want you to fulfill it. So not only do you have ancestral connection, but you have an ancestral assignment. And I think people need to really understand and that's something that we have not been taught. So mentorship — and then people- 'Do you know who your great grandmother is? I think they need to find out.' Like, even to this day, I'm gonna tell y'all, I was cleaning out my parents'. They live in the same apartment since Hurricane Katrina. Last year, they bought a five bedroom house in Texas. Uh, we was cleaning out the apartment and I was like --my dad was in the hospital at the time, but we were still moving them-- and I came across my grandfather wallet. He- and this was--. And this was in my grandfather wallet. And I've carried this with me since we moved them to Texas. And he had this, like, a picture. It was, like, NAACP card. But I literally feel--.

[Laughter]

MB: I literally felt closer to my grandfather. He got his-his cousin number, I guess, in case something happened.

[Laughter]

MB: But, I literally felt closer to my grandfather since I started carrying this around. And sometimes I'm like, 'Okay, Grandfather, I need you to look out for me on this. I'm 'bout to do this. I need you to guide me,' and stuff. And there's nothing wrong with that. And I think we need to embrace who we uniquely are in o- in that--. And 'cause they- they were- they've been second line, they've been second line all the way back to Congo Square. And we need to embrace that as well. Now what I don't like is

people from the outside — and I-I understand our culture and energy and this charm is connected--.

KF: And you want to be a part of it.

MB: But don't come in and dec--. 'Cause to me, Congo Square is special. 'Cause I may have had an ancestor who went out on a Sunday after a long week of slaving and went and (inaudible - 00:57:09) at Congo Square. So don't come and just think it's a game that you just come in and doing and-and thinking that's cute. It's not. And you need to respect those spirits, because those spirits still walk among us today. And they tellin' us that we--. And that's what it is, they tellin' us, 'Look. Y'all can fight. Y'all got this. Y'all- y'all got.' And I just think we need to remember those memories and pass it down to young people. And that's why I feel so sorry for the charter schools and--. 'Cause them kids — like, we have people, um, teachers back in out (inaudible - 00:57:40) school, like, who knew my mother, my father, who knew me, who knew my older brothers and sisters. Like, 'Yeah, I taught yo' older sister, I taught--.' And those teachers cared and they took care of us. And they should not be blamed or folded because people --at the time-- was stealing money from the school system.

AA: Exactly.

DA: There was something else I was saying earlier about how, like, as an outsider, when people say, like, the name Lusher or McDonogh 35, there's, like, this history that comes along when you start that conversation.

MB: Or (inaudible - 00:58:08) Kennedy or (inaudible - 00:58:11)

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DA: And I'm just, like, lost 'cause I'm just like, 'Okay, what is this whole background history that comes with just saying that name?' And then, they're changing the names of a lot of schools so they don't have that history associated with it anymore.

KF: They're taking it away.

MB: Ancestral memory, yeah.

KF: They're trying to take it away. Same thing with willi- at Akili. They only kept the front part of the building in brick, which is the s- the s- the famous steps that Ruby Bridges walked up on. Um, but then they also--. So, so far they kept- but the big sign says "Akili." And the bigger part of the school, it looks like a prison. Literally, like, 'We're just gonna keep this little brick part.'

MB: I've never been in there.

KF: Same thing they did with the projects, 'We're gonna keep this one little part and remind you of what it used to be, and then we're gonna build something that can be blown down by the big bad wolf.'

END OF RECORDING

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