

File Name: BWI_101620_PPL2.wav
Event Date: October 16, 2020
Location: College Park, Maryland, USA
Participants:
LYNN CAZABON
REBEKAH KIRKMAN
DOROTHY PIRTLE
LIZA ALENIKOVA
Length: 00:58:06

Preface

The following conversation was hosted virtually over Google Meet, facilitated by jina valentine, in collaboration with University of Maryland. Consent was given by the participants to have their conversation recorded and transcribed.

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START OF RECORDING

LC: Do that now. And we're supposed to keep our mics and our cameras on and I'm just- I'm just to- here to kind of hit record. So let's all open the link and look at the cards, and then we can decide which prompt or question we wanna start with. So we-we should- you should be linking on the people's table deck, right? Y-you know that, right?

RK: Mm-hmm.

LC: Okay. [Clicking] Why don't we just take a moment to look through those.

[Pause] [Clicking and whooshing]

LC: There's a lot of them. [Laughs]

[Pause] [Clicking and whooshing]

LC: So far for me, two are standing out: one about- the one about real estate, 'cause I- I'm in the process of buying a house so I'm thinking about that; but, the other one is the census one. [Clicking]

RK: I'm interested in the question: *What prevents coalitions from forming between communities and how can they be facilitated?*

LC: Mm.

RK: In particular, I'm interested in, like, coalition and community, and working collaboratively, and how that does or doesn't seem to happen in Baltimore, I guess.

LC: Yeah, that sounds like a good--.

RK: There's a--.

LC: We could maybe--.

RK: Another--.

LC: Start with that one? [Laughs]

RK: (inaudible - 00:01:36)

LC: Wanna start with that one, you guys? Or do you have others--? Dorothy, or--? Do you wanna start with--?

LA: (inaudible - 00:01:41) what nu- what number it is, Rebekah?

RK: Oh, um, it is--.

LC: It's number twenty. Twenty--. Oh, no. Eighteen, I'm sorry, eighteen.

RK: Oh, yeah. Eighteen.

LC: At the very bottom, you see, yeah, the numbers eighteen--?

DP: Well, I'm actually in Los Angeles.

LC: Oh.

RK: Okay. Okay.

DP: (inaudible - 00:02:00) to the UMBC campus is storied. Um, I took a visit there many moons again- ago for a student of color, like, graduate outreach program. And so, I'm familiar with the campus and its history and with the city of Baltimore. But when I looked at the deck, the first question is, like: *How do you support Black owned businesses?* And so, that one stuck out for me.

[Clicking and whooshing]

LC: Okay. Well, we can- we can address all of them in this discussion. I guess, it's just a matter of which one do we want to start with? Are we okay with starting with, um, with Rebekah's? And then, we'll go- see how that goes? So that's number eighteen. Is that okay?

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

[Clicking and whooshing]

LC: So--. [Clears throat]

RK: So, quick question, um, so is this just suppos-supposed to be like a free flowing chat amongst us about these things? Like, just what do we think about these things?

LC: I guess, they- they think of it this is the prompt to start a conversation about this topic. Yeah. So maybe you should start because you're the one who chose this one.

RK: Sure.

LC: I guess, you just said it, but you could get us going.

RK: Yeah. [Pause] Um, [Sighs] oh, well, I-I don't know where to start specifically. But, um, I--.

LC: I actually have an idea because I-I look at things--.

RK: Okay.

LC: I always try to define things, like, how do you de-define coalition? And, how do you define community?

RK: Yeah. Um, so, I think, like, coalition is, to me, like, somewhat like a group- a group of people with maybe broad interests and broad- like, from different backgrounds and experiences, um, who, like, are trying to work together towards a shared goal. Um, and I think community is a little bit more loose and used in a lot of other ways. Um, like, in-in more general kind of ways. And I think I've-I've seen some arguments that, like, community isn't even real and — or that, uh, it's like a farce or-or something, or it's a- it's a word that's used without much meaning, um, behind it. I don't know. Um, but I think in general, I've been thinking a lot lately about just how the- what is the arts? What-what is the role of the arts and artists in the world around us and like, how--. I thought about this a lot in Baltimore over the years, like, how, um, siloed Baltimore's arts scene is just as the city itself is very segregated for various historic reasons. Um, and I think over the last six or seven years, I've noticed changes in the art scene. And I've seen more cross pollination and collaboration. And I've seen more people actually engaging, like, more people- like, more white people engaging with, like, racism and trying to fight that and trying to actually actively make, um, their spaces more inclusive and whatnot. Um, yeah,

just thinking out loud. [Laughs] So, those are some thoughts that are running around. And-and just like, yeah, like, what like- what's- what role do--? I think, like, um, there's, like, this shift going on where, like, maybe I think a lot more people right now are trying harder to contribute to, like, making the world less terrible. And, um, people are just trying to figure out, like, how-how can they do that with what they do? I don't know.

LC: Mm-hmm.

RK: So, maybe, does anyone want to respond to any of that? [Laughs]

LC: Yeah. Well, I think--. I-I-I was interested in what you said about the "siloed." That's something that I'm always saying about UNBC. I teach at UMBC and I'm always saying our departments and programs are too siloed. And even, uh, my department, visual arts, I feel like we're siloed. And so, I-I'm always trying to- I always want to [Laughs] break down boundaries. Um, and I think--. I feel like it comes from — I grew up in a big family and I always felt like there was also silos between us, my siblings, and I was always trying to mediate and, like, break down boundaries. And so, I think I-I relate to what you're saying, in terms of being an artist, wanting to bring people together and see and kind of reveal the commonalities between people, rather than the divisions, because that's what's obviously in our [Sighs] political landscape, on social media: it's all about the divisions. And so, I feel like, as an artist, it's really, um--. That's--. My role is to bring- to bring- bring people together and see the commonalities. And I guess, what you said about communities, I do think that-that the word community, especially in the art world, is kind of bantered around and I think maybe becomes meaningless when people start using community art or 'I'm a community artist.' Um, that might be happening a little bit, but a community could be, yeah, your neighbors or your

neighborhood, it coul- it could be very casual, or it could be something that you seek out. So I guess, coa-coalition and community, I can see, um, overlapping, but maybe a coalition is a, um, a smaller- smaller circle [Laughs] than a community. But I'm- I'm not sure.

RK: Yeah.

LA: Yeah, I also feel like community can be very spread around the world. Like, right now, I'm somewhere really far from the US, for example, but I'm still in a community of artists and in--. I'm connected to some institution and part of it, even though I'm-I'm really far physically. So, I feel like community is more like, uh, a wide term. Is how I feel about it.

LC: Yeah.

[Pause]

LA: I'm very exi- I'm very excited to learn how to, like, (inaudible - 00:08:19) different communities, because, like, here, I have very different, you know, like, races, we s- we still have all the (inaudible - 00:08:26) here but it's very different from (inaudible - 00:08:29) and just in general. (inaudible - 00:08:32 to 00:08:36). So, yeah, I'm excited to (inaudible - 00:08:37 to 00:08:40). You all know, I (inaudible - 00:08:41) America last year, but I feel like I learned a lot. (inaudible - 00:08:50)

LC: Yeah, I think, uh, I guess, in-in your part of Russia would-would it be--? Would it be a lot of Chinese influence or, like--?

LA: Well--.

LC: Mongolian originally?

[LC intermittently agrees]

LA: Originally--. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Mongolian, yeah, it was a long time ago. But yeah, like Tartar people and just like, uh, all the invaders we had, like centuries ago, of course, they have influenced--. And, yeah, like on the- on the east of Russia, the result of Chinese people — and I was born there. So, but, like, I didn't have a chance to explore it well, too, because I moved from there when I was really small, like three years old. But (inaudible - 00:09:38) about that. Uh, it's more connected to- with, uh, economic issues. So I think because, like, now, Russia is trying to be good friends with China and sell imports to them and all natural resources. So, like, that's the kind of issue in this way.

LC: Mm-hmm.

RK: I feel like right now, too, like, coalition building, and community gathering, and all these things are obviously extra difficult to arrange with the pandemic and, uh--. I don't know. That's just, like, another thing, I guess, to answer the question that, like, prevents things from being formed, maybe? Or impacts--?

LC: Mm-hmm.

RK: The--.

LC: Yeah, in some ways, though, the- because here we are with--.

RK: Yeah.

LC: With Liza in Siberia and we're- you know, it's-it's easier--. And-and, um, Margaret, and, um--. I'm sorry, Dorothy, in, um, in, um, Los Angeles, we're connecting, because we're on virtual platform. Connected before, but, um, but we're connecting in a different way, not in a physical way, which, I guess, that's-that's- that's a- you know, that's a huge difference, but it does- it does enable other connections.

RK: Definitely.

LC: It's such a broa--.

RK: (inaudible - 00:10:57)

LC: Uh, I'm sorry, go ahead.

RK: Oh, sorry, go ahead. No, you go ahead.

LC: I was just saying, it's such a broad, um, prompt, I'm kind of- I'm looking at it again, and thinking, you know, there's nothing about, uh, you know, race implied here, just coalition. But I think that's, well, with the context of Black Lunch Table, and they focus on, um--. I think of that, and also, that's so much on many people's minds right now with what's going on in the US.

DP: But, you know, if I could, um--. I should just go ahead and say this: so, I identify as Black. My father is Black. And when I read this question --my mother is Korean American-- and so, racially, I identify as Black because when I'm around Korean people, I don't get any of the benefits of being seen as Korean or Asian. Because phenotypically, this is how I look, and Black people in America, and I suspect around the world, are kind of a catch all identity. And so, when I think about community, the first word that comes up for me is dynamic, right? Because, I think that in the last, what, four months, um, non Black people have had to think, at least in America, and I think folks around the world, are seeing what anti Blackness looks like as a product of, now, a 401 year history starting in 1619 to 2020, what it looks like, from some spaces to be a Black person living in America, paying taxes to a government that actively, since its inception, based on this premise of transAtlantic blackness, anti Blackness, literally hates the body that you are in, and that our entire world functions on gratuitous violence against Black

bodies. I don't think that many other people outside of Black people --unless you study Black folks-- don't think about those things. And so, for me, when it comes to coalition building, I mean, here we are, right, at this event that's being partially sponsored by an institution of higher education. And there's all this information available, right, to folks who are at the university level. And so, someone like me — like I live in South Central Los Angeles, so I don't just live in a metropolis. I live in a racially segregated portion of a city where the richest Black people in this city live next door to the poorest Black people in the city. And we are segregated by race. And I know that Baltimore has some similar, um, I guess, spatial components. And so, for me, when I read the question, I'm like coalition building? How do you form coalitions with other people who don't really even study, understand, or know about your plight? Like, it begs so many questions about who then becomes the-the teacher? It begs a lot of questions about gratuitous violence against Black bodies being a function in the world that we live in — if you study Afro Pessimism, right? This idea that the world we exist in right now doesn't know how to function without this violence against Black people, right? And so, you know, I often ask myself, do I want to do the job of being the teacher, you know what I mean, when I am the subject as well?

LC: Yeah.

RK: Yeah.

LC: [Clears throat] I'm- [Sighs] I'm-I'm in the middle of reading *White Fragility*, so I'm- I can't- I can't say I completely grasp it yet 'cause I'm only like in chapter three, but it's really- even just that much has already recalibrated the way I see the world. And

I was- I was talking earlier about buying a house and that actually is one thing. It's like, I realize Baltimore — although, to me, I-I grew up in Detroit, and so I feel like Detroit--.

DP: Ah.

LC: Is a segregated city. I feel like Bal--.

DP: (inaudible - 00:15:06)

LC: I feel like Baltimore is actually better in-in- I mean, less segreda-gated compared to Detroit, at least when I grew up there. Um, and--. But the real estate is really interesting, that the neighborhoods will be like one block away and the price of the house- prices of houses are much less. And I'm like- I'm just kind of--. I was just sort of, like, puzzled by that. I was like, 'Oh, I get it. These are the-the boundaries of the white neighborhood and this is the more African American neighborhood,' and that made a huge difference in the cost of houses. And so, it's just, like, very complicated. It's not like South Central Baltimore, it's-it's spread out all over the city. It's by neighborhood and by blocks. Um, so I get what you're saying. And I think that the good thing about, I think, the book, *White Fragility*, is that it's kind of showing how, yeah, the work has to be done by white people. We-we have to think differently because we've been- we haven't been conscious of our race. We don't have to, because that's what's normal, being, you know--. That's the dominant ideology of our --in the US-- our-our culture is white, and so we-we don't have to be conscious of it. So, what she's sa- you know, kind of been her book is, you know, kind of, like I said, recalibrating, so that you think you start thinking about your race and as-as privileged place and, um, yeah, just being- allowing you to empathize with other people. So I think it's-it's a good book for everybody to read.

[Laugh]

RK: Yeah.

DP: Oh, go ahead, Rebekah.

RK: Okay. Um, I was just gonna comment, like- like, I haven't read the book, *White Fragility*, but I ha- I read the essay that she, Robin DiAngelo, wrote about white fragility that eventually turned into the book a while ago, and, um, just thinking about how there's just so many entry points into these discussions. And, like-like you mentioned, homeownership. And I'm also, like, writing about — I'm a writer. I should have mentioned, I work BmoreArt. Um, so I write about art and Baltimore and artists--.

LC: Actually, I--. I for--. I was--. I'm a bad host, 'cause we were actually supposed to do that in the beginning.

RK: Oh. [Laughs]

LC: So, tell us- say your name and say that again. [Laughs]

REBEKAH KIRKMAN: Yeah, yeah. So, I'm Rebecca Kirkland. I'm the managing editor at BmoreArt. Um, I've written about art for the past seven years in Baltimore. Um, I went to art school, also. So I was trained as a painter, but, um--. So there's- I'm writing about a show that is, um, uh, by an artist who is white, who's lived in a bunch of different places and her work focuses on, um, redlining, specifically, and the history of r-redlining and that policy and how, um, that has, like, how that, uh, actively, uh, prevented Black families from building wealth for so many years. And as part of the reason why there's such a wide, uh, wealth gap between, like, Black and white people. Um, and then, in-in that work, she also, um, is analyzing- is looking back into her own family's history and, like, her own, like, white immigrant ancestors, um, being, um, owners of slaves and, like trying to reckon with that history and how it's in her own life, um, and how it has given

her--. So, just thinking about like- there's like- there's this privilege that white people have to come to awareness about that a lot of white people are frankly resistant to understanding and grasping. And then, there's like, also, to contend with, like, the active and ongoing harm. Um, it's not just like white privilege. It's like- it's white supremacy. It's like, uh, you know, there's- there's--. It's not just like--. [Sighs] I don't know if I'm articulating myself well, but i-it's just like, [Pause] there's so many ways to analyze, um, these things. And it's good that, I think, that more --it seems like maybe? I don't know-- more people are getting involved and trying- and more white people are trying to understand these things. But also, I thinking about something you, uh, said, Dorothy, about how, like, coalitions are--. It's hard to f--. Like, how do you form a coalition if we're so, like, spread apart? And that's also, like, when you think about redlining, it's, like- that's, like, by design kind of, o- you know? It's like, we're separate from each other — even in Baltimore. It's like, I live in a neighborhood that is predominantly white, but I live in a predominantly Black city. And there are, like, um, you know, all the- all the, kind of, back when I used to go to things, when there wasn't a pandemic, all the, um, development and and new things happen in what is- what's called The White Bell, which is the center- basically the center of the city. Whereas, like, the more predominantly Black and poor neighborhoods don't receive that benefit of, like, nice things and grocery stores and basic services, trash pickup. Um, and I'm just thinking, if you're not looking- if you're not, as a white person, if you're not --or a person who lives in-in the- in The White Bell-- in Baltimore, if you're not, like--. If you're trying not to see the, um, issues in the city, it's not hard to avoid it. And that's messed up. And it--. Yeah, I don't know. I don't know how articulate any of that was, but yeah. Go. [Laughs]

DP: I mean, it makes sense. If you don't know, right, like-- .If you're so far off from how you have the privilege and how do you even begin to understand it? But, again, like--. You know, when I look at the book, *White Fragility*, I'm like, I get that it's out there, but I'm also, like, reading about racism from the words of Black people, like, you know, Michelle Alexa- Michelle Alexander's, you know, *The New Jim Crow*, you know, *How to Be an Antiracist*, I think our other books that are written by Black scholars that do, I think, a different type of service, um, in that it doesn't center, like, a white person, you know what I mean? As, like, the trainer, like, that sounds so crazy, like, who?

LC: Well--.

DP: You know?

LC: I don't think you need to read--.

DP: I don't know. I haven't read the book.

LC: *White Fragility*. You don't necessarily need to be- read it, but I do, and maybe Rebakah does, but, um--. Dorothy, are you an artist? Or are you--.

DP: So, um, I don't consider myself an artist, but I am a baker in training, a chef, and also an urban planner by practice and by, soon, degree. Um, and so, and we share a common city: we share Detroit. I lived in Detroit for about two and a half years. Um, and I was actually a graduate student at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor, where I was the Rackham Merit Fellow at the (inaudible - 00:22:23) School of Public Policy, but I left my program because I was not very happy with a majority of the students, um, in my program, but that's a story for another day. And so, I am a storied scholar, community advocate, um, and just an all around, you know, nice person, hanging out, attending events like this. So, yeah, that's my introduction. And I'd love to hear a little bit more

about you, um, Lynne, and then, I forget your name, because I don't read the language that your name is--. Russian.

[Laughs]

DP: Russian? Yes. So I'm like, I read Korean, and I read English, but not Russian. So I'm looking forward to hearing more about you as well.

LC: Okay.

LA: Okay, you can see now.

DP: There we go .Thank you, Liza.

LC: Yeah, Li-Liza.

DP: Liza.

LA: It's spell- it's spelled 'Liza.' L- --. I'll put it in the chat.

LC: Yeah.

LA: Just so you know.

[Laughter]

LA: (inaudible - 00:23:19)

LC: Liz-Liza, you want to say some things about yourself?

DP: Yeah, please.

LA: Yeah, sure. Um, I'm from Siberia as I said already and, uh, I'm an artist, and I'm doing animation, basically. But, I also do other digital arts like illustrations, but I'm more focused on animation in general. And mostly, I work in-in After Effects but I started to learn Blender just to put some 3D in my stuff, because I'm interested (inaudible - 00:23:53) mostly. So, I don't know [Laughs] what else I--.

LC: And you're a- you're a MFA student in--.

LA: I was studying--.

LC: You're- you're a- an MFA student--.

LA: Yeah, yeah.

LC: In our graduate program.

LA: Yeah, in a, uh, Intermedia and Digital Arts program. And, uh, I do like it. Before, I was studying in St. Petersburg in Russia. I was studying, uh, liberal arts and science and I spent a semester at Bard College, uh, just as an exchange student. And, uh, and there, I started to make animation, like, video. I mean, I decided that that's what I wanna do. So.

LC: Yeah, so Liza was supposed to be in Baltimore with us, of course, the pandemic and Trump [Laughs] prevented her from-from coming, so. Um, so yeah. So, I'm a visual ar--.

LA: (inaudible - 0:24:52) next semester.

LC: Maybe next semester.

LA: I'm--.

LC: Yeah.

LA: Yeah, I do hope. I'm working on it.

LC: 'Kay.

LA: I just have to go to another country for getting visa--.

LC: Ah.

LA: 'Cause embassy doesn't work here.

LC: Tricky, okay.

LA: Yeah.

LC: Mm. So I'm a visual artist and I teach, um, I'm a professor at UMBC. And I went- my alma mater is the University of Michigan, so F.Y.I. [Laughs] Undergraduate. Um, and, uh, yeah, I grew up in the suburbs of Detroit. Honestly, I was born in Detroit, but I grew up in the suburbs. In a suburb that-- Uh, Grosse Pointe, which- Grosse Pointe Park, which is actually, like, a mile away from the border of Detroit. And the- and the difference between-- And that was always something that I just remember from my childhood, driving from the green suburb to the city, the boundary was very visual. And- and actually, my work has a lot to do with plants. And so, I actually-- The- the foliage and the plants have- was kind of a bi- a big, um, marker of the difference between the city and the suburbs for me. And, uh, now that I'm Director of the Center at UMBC that invited Black tum- Lunch Table-- Actually Dorthy, how did you find out about our event? I'm-- Were you on- are you on our mailing list?

DP: Um, no. So, I actually follow Krystal Mack--.

LC: Ah.

DP: Um, on her social media sites, you know, as a fellow Black, um, culinarian. And so, I saw that there was an opportunity to attend this. And so, over a decade ago, I actually visited, as I was saying earlier, UMBC, and I thought that I would go to policy school there. And I was considering a PhD in economics, um, 'cause I thought I wanted to study, like, textile manufacturing and distribution here in Los Angeles as it ties to the

Pacific Rim, but I decided to take another path, so. And I really liked the campus and the people that I met, so it's nice to be here with you all. So.

LC: Yeah. That's great.

RK: Um, Dorothy, what do you want to do with your, like, on your current path? Did you say urban design or urban planning is your focus?

DP: Um, urban planning. And so, I know that Lynn mentioned earlier that she's from Detroit; I used to live in downtown Detroit. Um, and what I would like to do moving forward is get my Master of Urban Planning. And then, the hope is to come back and to teach here full time at a predominantly, like, minority serving institution, hopefully, and then also continue being an entrepreneur. So, um, I do have, like, a garden farm. So I, with my family, we grow, like, these hybrid persimmons. We've got grapes, grown from seed, um, a bunch of different heirloom fruits and vegetables here. And, so I do lots of different things to keep my time. But I guess a general theme, as we're talking about, kind of, community and how people can find each other and where you meet, um, is living a life where I make choices that I'm proud of, might not always be comfortable.

RK: Yeah.

DP: You know, but [Pause] having a sense of, like, joy and pride in the choices that I make, even when they're not very [Laughs] attractive choices, is probably the best way to sum up everything that I do.

RK: Yeah, that's cool.

LC: Should we g- should we choose another card or should we...?

RK: Sure.

Unknown: Mm-hmm.

LC: Okay. Um, Dorothy, do you want to go to--? Yours was, uh, businesses? Should we talk about that one? Wait, do you know what number that was? Actually, (inaudible - 00:28:40)--.

DP: Wait, Liza, I have a question for you.

[Pause]

LC: She froze. (inaudible - 00:28:45)

RK: (inaudible - 00:28:46)

LC: If she is--? Okay. There we go. Go ahead, Dorothy.

DP: Oh, I was just going to ask, like, um, if each of you could in like three sentences or less talk about what brought you to the Baltimore community? Because we all seem to have such, like, disparate backgrounds and yet, here we are, right?

LC: Mm-hmm.

DP: Connected to Baltimore.

RK: Mm-hmm.

DP: So I've kind of explained how I managed to find my way here. But I'm really curious about the three of you and how you found your way to Baltimore from wherever you are in the world.

RK: Um, I'll go first. Um, I am from Florida, originally; Pinellas County, which is a little peninsula on the Gulf Coast. Um, and I knew I've always wanted to go to art school ever since I- I knew that that was a thing you could do. Um, my dad was an artist, my

grandpa was an artist, and so they were- both have, like, very, like, personal associations with, like, the importance of art and the healing aspects of art. Um, and it was like, just the thing I love to do. Um, so I went to--. I- I only applied to three schools and they were all art schools. And, like, uh, the art school in Baltimore, um, gave me the most, like, financially feasible option with scholarships and stuff. So, I came to visit Baltimore MICA in my senior year of high school and I- I remember just, like, having a really good feeling about being in this city. And like- i-it's like, honestly, like--. I applied to MICA on a whim because I knew it was a good school and I was like, 'I'll feel good about myself if I get into MICA.' Um, but it wasn't necessarily my top choice until I visited. Um, and I actually wanted to stay closer to home and go to Ringling College of Art, which is in Sarasota. Um, but anyway, so once I had visited Baltimore and felt just this kind of almost a spiritual or just-just vibes, like, connection immediately, I was like, 'This is cool and this seems like a good option.' Um, and then I wound up being so grateful to get away from my home and, like, to deal with that challenge of, like, yeah, being on my own in a new place. Um, and then I graduated in 2014. And I stayed in Baltimore, partly because I did not want to go home and I wanted to be more embedded in the city. Um, and I was working for the Baltimore City Paper at the time, which was our local a- weekly, which, um, was shut down in 2017. So I had, you know, connection to the city through, uh, being a journalist. Um, which I also am grateful for, 'cause I think just that role, like taught me so much about the city that I might not have- I'd certainly didn't learn, like, at school. Um, so that was maybe longer than three sentences, but that's my story.

LC: [Laughs]

RK: I been here ten years now. Yeah.

LC: That, actually, is funny: connections. I came to Baltimore for the job. But actually, at the time, I was at- I--. Before, I was- had a position in central Pennsylvania at-at Bucknell University, which is a small, private college. And I was--. I kept feeling like, 'I don't want to die here.' Like, it's a small town and it was very conservative, and I just felt like I--. You know, you get tenure, and then you're sort of stuck at a place. So I decided--. I applied to other jobs. And at that time, I had an offer from University of Florida in Gainesville and UMBC. And I decided I didn't want to move to Florida.

[Laughs]

RK: That's understandable.

LC: No offense. I did (inaudible - 00:32:43) be north and- farther north. And-and Baltimore, actually, it does actually remind me of Detroit in a lot of ways. Um, certainly, it's a majority of African American city. It's kind of rough around the edges. It's gritty.

[Laughs] It's kind of, um, modest in a way, you know, that I appreciate. I like- I like cities that are not--. I- I wou--. In some ways, I would love to live in a city like San Francisco someday, like a polished--. What, to me, seems like a very polished city that people like to go to, or want to move to. Uh, I-I'm-I'm gravitating towards cities that are, like, lesser, um, maybe seem-seem less desirable because they have a more authentic kind of quality to them, so. And, um, Liza. [Laughs]

LA: (inaudible - 00:33:35)

LC: I know you're not here, but why did you choose UMBC? And Baltimore, I guess?

LA: Yeah. Um, like, when I was in my senior year, like, last year, my school, I was like, I definitely want to study art, but--. And I knew that I wanna focus on animation, but, uh, I don't have, like, a lot of drawing skills.

LC: Mm.

LA: Basically. I mean, I-I don't know much about drawing. And also, I wasn't sure if I want to do only animation, like, because I do like experimental stuff, mostly. And it's not, like, just, uh, always, like, twelve principles of animation that they use; I just do some random stuff that comes to my mind. So, when I- when I was, like, looking for schools, it took so long, like I think a couple of months, I was just, like, constantly searching. And then I found UBMC. I can't even remember how, but I was like, perfect school. And also, uh, financial aid was great because I can't afford to pay for school at all. So, and also it was exciting to be- because I'm gonna go into a TA position and it's exciting because I had in my previous school; I worked for a semester, like, helping my professor out in animation studio. So, I was like, that just seems to be very amazing. But then, I found that Baltimore is, like, very (inaudible - 00:34:53) city and it made me even more excited, I feel like.

[Laughter]

LA: I was like--. Because St. Petersburg is-is very, like--. In 90s, it was most criminal city; and now, like, still be- almost like every month we found dead bodies in rivers or, like, you know--.

LC: Mm.

LA: (inaudible - 00:35:11) parts in some different parts of the city. It's really terrible what's going on there. So, and I was like, 'Okay.' I got used to (inaudible -

00:35:17) of really crazy people in St. Petersburg now, but I can- I can make it in Baltimore, [Laughs] I feel like. So, it's just like--. And Baltimore's near, uh, the water, so same as St. Petersburg. And I was like, that's just--.

LC: Yeah, kind of. [Laughs]

LA: Yeah. Which- what--? As far as I know. [Laughs]

LC: Yeah.

LA: So yeah. And, uh, just in general, this approach, interdisciplinary, uh, studying, which is very--. I mean, I'm familiar with that because my Bachelor was connected to that. So basically, I was choosing school, and then they found that the city itself interesting to me to-to explore. It is very meant to be for artist people. So, yeah, I don't know. I'll-I'll tell- I'll tell you more. I think when I'll be there. [Laughs]

LC: [Laughs] Yeah. I feel like for-for Jina and Heather, we should come back to one of the cards, uh--. [Laughs]

LA: Yeah, yeah.

LC: Do- Should we talk about the one that you chose, Dorothy? Black owned business?

DP: Um, you know, why don't we--? I'd like to pick another one--.

LC: Sure.

DP: (inaudible - 00:36:24) said earlier, and I'm not sure who did.

LC: Was--?

DP: And some of the questions are repeated in the deck. Did anybody notice that?

RK: Yeah.

LC: Oh, they are? I, like, go to--.

DP: Yeah.

LC: Number--.

DP: (inaudible - 00:36:38)

LC: It was, like, the real estate one or the census one were the two that popped up for me. [Clicking]

DP: Why don't we talk about the census? I think that would be timely seeing as the Census count--.

LC: Yeah.

DP: Abruptly ended.

LC: Yeah. Did you guys do your Census? Or I see--. Rebekah?

RK: Yeah.

LC: Yeah. Liza, no, it doesn't apply to you, but do you even know what-what this--?

LA: I'm sorry (inaudible - 00:37:00)

LC: It's number fourteen.

LA: I'm--.

LC: Number fourteen?

LA: Ah, okay, okay. Yeah, I'm sorry. I'm just missing the topic. I'll look it up.

[Laughs]

LC: Yeah. So, Census is the- the, uh, accounting of all, um, people living in the US. So it's not citizens, necessarily, but people --this is some of the controversies that's-- illegal immigrants can be counted in the census. And actually, legally, the census is supposed to be an accounting of- of everybody who's in- in the US. So, yes, it would count people who are here legally or illegally. Uh, it should, because it determines the political, um, like the number of senators we have, the representation we have in our government is determined by the census. So it's very important. And it's become very politicized, of course, by Trump, um, eh, wanting to squash it, because usually, it's gonna show that there's, [Laughs] you know, there's there's going to be more, um, representation in-in- of people that he-he wants to s- you know, suppress, so.

DP: Yes. And the census has three functions. Um, and then, you thoughtfully mentioned, um, one, which is representation. And so the way that our government is built, um, the three functions of the census; there's one post 1965, but it's for taxation, representation, and then, does anybody know the third one? Okay, so I gave a clue, you're really close 'cause I can see everyone's eyes. I know, you are near this. It's going to be civil rights compliance.

LC: Ah.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DP: And so the reason why, [Clears throat] like, I choose Black as my identity, and that's why I wanted to speak about the census question is because let's say that I mark off that I am Black and Korean, right, on the Census. [Clears throat] And let's say there's only five of us here, and then other people are like, 'We're Black and Indian,' or 'We are Black--.' Or, 'We see ourselves as African American and white,' or 'We are,' you

know, specifically like, 'Eastern Russian,' right, 'and Black.' You know what winds up happening? How do you create policy for all of those communities of people? You don't, because then there are too many people. So that's the catch. That's the gag, at least for me in terms of the way that I identify racially. And so I- I understand, and I think that we'd probably all agree that race is a false construct, right? But, the other thing is that in America, it's tied to specific funding, and then the possibility of policy being created, right? To be able to undo a lot of the harm, right, that is done not only to Black people, but to other people, right, in this nation. And so, um, for me, the census is such an important--. And for me, this is where I've used some of what I do in terms of my personal identity project as art, because for me to say that I'm Black people look at me and they're like, I'm so light, look at my hair, right? I couldn't possibly be Black. But I'm like, I am Black. My lineage is Black. I understand redlining, I understand all different types of discrimination because of, you know, who I am and who my family is. And so, in order to see policy that addresses, like, police violence, there have to be Black people. And if we willingly self select out of that group, it doesn't help.

LC: Yeah.

DP: Anybody.

LC: Yeah.

DP: So, I get what other folks are saying about identity. And I'm like, Sure, culturally--. And people use --and maybe this is something that, um, everyone might have something to say about-- but I'm like, race, culture, ethnicity, they're not interchangeable, and people use them interchangeably in America. But for Black people, there's a different kind of experience, and that's where I think that understanding

how those things are different and also the same at once gives you a better understanding of, spatially, where we are, and then maybe what you can do. So I put my light skinned privilege on the line all the time. I listen to conversations that people don't know that I'm actively listening in on, right? I can say things that brown skinned people--. I- I mean, look at what's happened — you know, Sandra Bland, I think about Emmett Till, you know, all these people who were murdered for even thinking that they were human. And sorry, that's the helicopter in the background. Compliments of Bill Clinton circa 1990.

RK: Baltimore--.

LC: Is it- is it surveying, uh, for police? 'Cause we have that in Baltimore. We have--.

RK: Yeah.

LC: Police helicopter.

DP: So noisy, right? I'm like, 'What the fuck are y'all looking--?' You're not looking for anything. There's nothing--? I don't hear any sirens. How about that.

RK: In Baltimore, we also have a spy plane. I don't know if you know about that, um, Dorothy? But--.

DP: No, tell me. Sure.

RK: It's like a private, um--. Okay, so first o- first of all, the spy plane was secretly surveilling the city, there was no one not- apparently not even the mayor --allegedly-- not even the mayor at the time knew about the spy plane. Um, it was, like, funded by some, like, Texas based philanthropist or something, um, a- as a way to, you know,

combat crime in Baltimore. And, um, then they brought it--. I-it got--. I don't remember how-how the public became aware of the spy plane, since--.

LC: Journalists. Journalists.

DP: I think so. yeah. But I'm not sure who-who the leak was or how it leaked, 'cause it was super secret. Anyway, so, that caused a big stir. Everyone was like, y-you can't just surveil people especially, like, in the city and especially not tell them that that's what you're doing, whatever. And then they brought the spy plane back, I wanna say like a year ago? For the same, like- with the same goal, like, to, um, try and catch murderers. 'Cause, like, a huge plane is a great way to catch someone in the act of murdering someone? I don't know. So, and like I'm-I'm friends with, um, a couple of journalists who I used to work with at the City Paper who, um, have written more intelligently and have looked at the documents more closely than I have. But, um, but like, from what I understand, it's like, proven that the spy plane doesn't do anything good. It doesn't help anyone. It doesn't help the police department. The police department also here does not solve, uh, crimes. Um--. That's not--.

DP: You don't say, Rebekah.

RK: Yeah. Right.

[Laughter]

RK: It's surprising isn't it. Oh.

LC: Yeah.

LA: Why are they doing that then? I think we might spend a lot of money on that as well.

RK: Yeah, yeah. It is--.

Unknown: That's expensive.

RK: Very expensive and it's, like- and it's not effective. And I feel like, maybe, part of the reason why it exists is because there are still some people who believe that it can help and--. And in Baltimore City, the crime rates are pretty- it's pretty extreme, um, compared to other places, and, uh--.

LC: I-it's also money in somebody's pocket, I'm sure.

RK: Yeah.

[RK intermittently agrees]

LC: Uh, it's a way of sa- pointing, 'Okay, I'm doing something for crime.' I-I didn't- I didn't know that the spy plane was brought back, but I do know about the helicopters. We have these helicopters that circle the city and they're very loud and, like, military grade helicopters that are--. You know, they're sometimes- you even hear them- loudspeaker, you know, they're looking for somebody. I mean, it's- it's scary because you feel like you're outside and what if they mistake you for [Pause] a criminal. Like, you know, it's-it's a kind of war zone, uh, that's created in the city.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DP: Do you know what it makes me think of? Are you all familiar with, um, the panopticon? The prison? Where there's, like, a guard tower in the center that prisoners are on the outside? And so--.

LC: It's a (inaudible - 00:44:59)

DP: One of the things that I've written kind of loosely about, just for myself, is this idea of, like, constant surveillance, and then how you then act if you believe that you're

constantly being surveilled, and there's no way for you to--. I mean, who do you talk to to get rid of the spy plane? They didn't even admit that it was there before.

RK: Yeah.

DP: And who knows what they're doing with the logarithmic data, that I'm assuming they're collecting, because I'm not putting a fancy expensive, you know, surveillance plane out there without some data collection, right? I mean, ten years ago, people were laughing at all this stuff like, 'No--.' Remember when *Minority Report* came out or, like, all these different, like--.

[Crosstalk]

LC: It's true.

DP: Kinda--.

LC: The science fiction--.

DP: (inaudible - 00:45:40)

LC: Yeah.

DP: Right.

LC: It's all come true.

DP: (inaudible - 00:45:42)

[Crosstalk ends]

DP: And I was like, 'Are we at *Lord of the Flies*?' Or, where are we, right, like, in terms of our senses of people. But I always think whenever I see the helicopters flying around like these — I know, you were like, 'What is it for?' I think it's, sometimes, just maybe to intimidate too.

LA: Yeah.

RK: I think so, too.

LC: It's effective, honestly. Because it does, like I said, make it feel like a I- like a warzone. And that you're--.

RK: Yeah.

LC: That you should be--.

LA: Or even just like to make people feel that they're under control, but they're not actually.

RK and LC: Yes.

RK: It's the same--. I think it's the same thinking with a I--. We also have a lot of, um, cameras throughout the city. And they're clustered around, like, the more predominantly Black areas, too. And I, yeah, I think it does--. I-it's sort of like enforces, or reinforces, like, a sense of control. And I- I haven't really thought, um--. I would like to, like, think more and read more about, like, the effects that-that surveillance has on, like, people psychologically and-and, yeah, and impacts their actions and stuff. It's-it's meant as, like, I guess, it's like surveillance is meant as a deterrent, a crime deterrent, but it's--. I don't think it functions that way. Um, but yeah, I don't know.

[RK intermittently agrees]

DP: It reminds me of, like, the male gaze, right? Like, that's how the male gaze functions. And so why would the military gaze--? You know what I mean? Or the surveillance gaze, whatever the gaze is, why would any of them function any differently? I haven't read anything positive, just FYI, like across disciplines about surveillance.

RK: Yeah.

[Crosstalk]

DP: I've never read any--.

LC: I think I (inaudible - 00:47:22)

[Crosstalk ends]

LC: You know, the internalization of it, I think it's really key is that we internalize like the male gaze or surveillance. That's-that's the insidious aspect of it, is that we start feeling, you know, that we are being watched or that we need to look a certain way for this visible male gaze. It's when we internalize it, that's when i-it's really harmful. And, yeah.

RK: Yeah.

DP: Well, for you and-and Liza, I have a question then. Um, and maybe you can relate to this--.

LC: She's interviewing us. Dorothy's in-interviewing us.

[Laughter]

DP: (inaudible - 00:47:54) Welcome, welcome. Um, as artists then--. Because, like, I-I don't know if any of you have come across, like, Ayn Rand's work and objectivism, but this idea that you can like literally, like, do the work free of any other constraints, right? That you're literally just producing creativity from wherever you are. But how does, then, surveillance--? Or does it impact the art that you create?

[Pause]

[inaudible - 00:48:20]

LA: I think so. I mean, just like even--. Okay, like, uh--. Like, I'm- in one of my animation, I-I use weed like the (inaudible - 00:48:32) and I feel like in Russia, like if I wanted to show it somewhere, I would- I--. Like, I would think a lot where I could do that. Just in sense that, you know, it's like completely illegalized here. And I would just, like, draw some attention to myself, which I, uh, don't want to do. [Laughs] You know? So--.

DP: Weed, yes.

LA: Like, in this way, I have to filter the content I produce. And, uh, and that's also, like, is why I-I wanna study--. Not here, because it's just like, you have to think about that stuff. So.

DP: Wow.

LA: And it's like, y-you-you self control--. You-you-you-you're in a mode of self control all the time. Like, and I mean, you still can do that. Probably no one's gonna catch you, but I'm like, 'Do I really wanna?'

LC: Yeah, take the risk to take the risk.

LA: Yeah.

LC: Yeah, I don't know. I feel like your question is--. I-I feel like, I don't know, being a classic introvert, I have to, like, think about this for like a day before I can answer. [Laughs] But I- I'm not--. I'm sure it has, um, influenced me, but I- I can't--. I'm not sure I'm ready to articulate it. I mean, there's only--. What-what's popping up, there's one project I did that was with women who were in prison. And, um, I chose not--. This was something that I decided I-I wanted to do portraits of them, but not by photographing them directly. I did these gardens with them, and so they- each woman chose a plant to represent themselves. And those photographs of those plants became

their portrait along with their audio statement they made. And so, something about the surveillance of them as-as my artwork was bothering me. Like, to-to actually--. You know, 'cause people wanna see, 'Oh, what do they look like?' or something like. So, that was--.

DP: Yeah.

LC: Wrong. And I- so I- I didn't, you know, reveal them visually; I deliberately sort of censored out that- replace the plant with a woman, and just let their voice come-come out. So, that's just one project--.

DP: I love that project of yours. I'm looking at it now, um, Portrait Garden?

LC: Yes.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

DP: And I think my favorite, like, piece that's shared is, like--. Whenever I fly into Baltimore, I'm usually trying to get to D.C. And I always take the light rail, or, like, there's some kind of train system that gets me to DC, so seeing your artwork that doesn't, like, show the faces of the women, but does share about their experience, I think is really thoughtful in a way that- in a way that makes me feel like, 'Okay, this is good work, Lynn.' Not that you need to hear it from me, you know what I mean? But so often it's like the-the subject, like, especially for Black women and being incarcerated, there's so many layers there. So, yeah, I'm looking at it now. I really appreciate that and seeing it on the Baltimore light rails. I'm like, 'Yes.' I wonder if I've seen it, then, in person. As observation--.

LC: Well, it was- it was- it was there for like two months on the- on the train, so.

DP: Maybe, 'cause I do pop between here and, like, other cities often, so.

LC: 2015--.

DP: Cool.

LC: I think that was, that I did the- in the light rail. But there's also that part of the project was, like, giving- giving them flowers. It was kind of corny, but I wanted to give them flowers, you know? It's like getting somebody this gift. Um, and they- literally, those-those gardens were there, uh, in-in prison. So, they did have the flowers.

[Laughs]

DP: You know, we have a saying and my family. We're always like--. Well, not always. But, when my father passed away, people were like, 'Well, you know, what kind of flowers do you want to buy?' Because for a time, my mom and I, we both worked as neighborhood florists. And we were like, 'Not very many.' Because instead of giving him flowers when he was dead, right? We'd given them to him while we were all alive. So dead people don't need flowers; they're for living.

LC: It's true.

DP: So, even that project in itself is really thoughtful, and--. So.

LC: Thank you.

DP: So cool.

LC: So, we're actually--. I think they--. I'm not sure. I haven't gotten a message from Jina, but I know they want us to go back a little bit early.

DP: Past ten?

LC: It's about two- 1:24. Um--.

DP: Do we end at 10:30, Lynn?

LC: Um, it's--. Yeah, it's the whole thing is supposed to go till 10:30 or--.

DP: Oh, I'm sorry.

LC: Pacific standard time. It's okay. [Laughs] And, um, so but we, uh, you know, it might- it might go over a little bit, but--. They- she said she was gonna send me a message, um, to come back to the main room, but I don't see that yet. Um, I just checked the chat to see if, um--.

DP: Is anyone (inaudible - 00:53:22)

LA: Can I make a suggestion for--?

DP: Oh, yeah, sorry, Liza. Go ahead.

[Pause]

LC: Li-Liza do y--. Oh, she's go- I think she's breaking up.

LA: Sorry, I feel like I froze.

LC: Yeah.

LA: Can you see me?

LC: You fro- you froze but you're back.

LA: Okay. Yeah, um, so I was trying to say something but I feel like I wa- I wasn't here.

LC: You were frozen.

[Laughter]

[Pause]

LC: Oh, no. She's frozen again.

LA: (inaudible - 00:53:49)

LC: Okay. [Laughs]

LA: Ah--.

LC: And there's also a- there's a chat, but I guess it's only for us--.

LA: Am I--?

LC: Chat--. There's a chat window if you wanted to type if you can't- if you're frozen.

LA: Ah, am I frozen again?

LC: No, I-I hear you now. I hear you now.

DP: Yes, you're back.

LA: Oh, okay. I w- I was just about to suggest the card, uh, about, uh, Confederate- Confederate mon--.

LC: What number- what number is it?

[Clicking]

LA: Uh, it is--.

DP: Oh.

LA: Twenty- twenty-six.

DP: Twenty-six.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LA: Because it's been a lot of talks about it here. International like, uh--. They have been talking (inaudible - 00:54:29) like what--. I've been talking about with my boyfriend who is American, white American to be more precise, and we just like had this discussion. He was like that might be right decision because like all these people did all

those terrible things to indigenous-indigenous people. Am I pronouncing it in the right way? I'm not sure.

LC: Yeah.

LA: Oh. And I was just, like, thinking (inaudible - 00:54:58 to 00:55:02) I mean, to me, I feel like it makes more sense to save them, these monuments, but to transform them. To put this, uh, um, signs of violence, to add it to these monuments. Because like, it--. I mean, if you just destroy it and doesn't- it do--. You don't see that, it doesn't change the situation, it doesn't change the history. But if you transform it into some other- like you add some other meaning to that, and it can make more sense. And, uh, it's just what I see from my position, but I'm wondering what you think about it. This like... (inaudible - 00:55:40) people.

LC: Yeah, I think--. I-I-I was just thinking--. 'Cause I don't see how I think we maybe- we maybe should go back to the main room because I don't--. I don't know how she would communicate with me because I see the chat is just for us. So--.

DP: Oh, that's right.

LC: So maybe we should just go--. I'm sorry, Liza. But I think we-we need to go back--.

LA: Ah, okay.

LC: To the main room and-and see, uh--.

LA: It's okay.

LC: So, let's ju--. At the bottom right, you'll see "Leave Room." And I think we should go back.

LA: Uh, I don't--.

LC: It'll take us back to the main room. The bottom right of the window, if hover over--.

LA: Ah, is it blue?

LC: Okay.

RK: Yes.

LA: Ah, okay.

LA: Okay. Oh, wait--.

DP: Liza, I liked your suggestion, by the way, of transforming them. That I haven't even heard of as an idea, but I like it.

LA: Ah, thank you. [Laughs]

RK: (inaudible - 00:56:28)

LA: Thank you. Yeah.

LC: All right. I'll see you guys in the other room.

LA: Okay.

DP: Okay.

LA: Okay. --See?

[New room]

Speaker 1: Well, 'cause I think I left here being needed.

Unknown: Oh.

LC: Hi, we-we came back 'cause we if we should--.

Speaker 2: We did the same.

LC: Okay, here we are. [Laughs]

JV: Sure.

Unknown: (inaudible - 00:56:45)

LC: Uh, yes.

[Pause]

Speaker 2: And, so.

Sylvan: Okay, I have to go. Bye.

JV: Bye.

Speaker 2: Bye, Sylvan. Nice meeting you.

JV: [Laughs]

Speaker 3: I'm out of here.

[Laughter]

JV: School is done.

Speaker 1: How many questions were you guys able to get through in your groups?

LC: We got through, um, one [Laughs]. I think--. We had- we had--. We started--. We didn't actually talk about, uh--. Yeah, w-we started talking about another one, but then we-we (inaudible - 00:57:16) We talked about a lot of other stuff. How about you? How many?

Speaker 1: We got a lot of questions. [Laughs]

LC: (inaudible - 00:57:24)

Speaker 1: Not got through, we were just havin' a good amount of conversation and then going to the next, but--. How many did we do? Like, five or seven?

Speaker 3: Yeah, at least that. Yeah.

Speaker 1: At least five.

Speaker 3: There were also a couple that we decided, 'Oh, we do- we really don't want to address that one.'

Unknown: Mm-hmm.

LC: Were you going through them one one after another? So like, number one; number two? Oh, wow. We were--.

Speaker 3: Yeah.

LC: More random. You know, Jina, I realized I didn't- I didn't stop recording before I came back. Is that bad?

JV: Oh. Oh, um, it's probably okay. Do you want to hop in and hit stop recording?

LC: Okay, I'll go back and see you too. Yeah.

JV: Okay. Yeah, if anybody--.

END OF RECORDING

Transcribed by Miwa Lee 8/12/2022

To be copyedited.