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Participants:
JACQUES MORIAL
NAOMI DAUGHERTY
REBECCA REYNOLDS
PAUL WRIGHT
NIAH GIBBS
CHLOE SAINT ETIENNE
LENA SENDICK
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Preface

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

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

START OF RECORDING

LS: All of a sudden, I'm like, (inaudible - 00:00:03).

JINA VALENTINE: We are recording--.

ND: I can imagine. I don't even leave the house. [Laughs]

JV: This is the Black Lunch Table New Orleans. Um, everybody at table four is gonna introduce themselves and when you guys are f--. Oh, I'm so sorry. Are free to, uh, look through all the cards; not all of them are blank cards.

NG: Okay.

[Pause]

JACQUES MOREAL: I'm Jacques Moreal.

NAOMI DAUGHERTY: Mm. Naomi Daugherty. Sorry, I, like, just took off
(inaudible - 00:00:30).

REBECCA REYNOLDS: I'm Rebecca Reynolds. I teach art history at the
University of New Orleans.

PAUL WRIGHT: I'm Paul Wright.

NIAH GIBBS: I'm Niah Gibbs.

CHLOE SAINT: I'm Chloe Saint.

LENA SENDICK: I'm Lena Sendick.

CS: So, let's see. The first question is: *How have you contributed to
#BlackLivesMatter?*

ND: Hmm.

CS: I just said the hashtag, but it's--.

PW: [Laughs] Yeah.

CS: A movement.

NG: Mm-hmm.

CS: Um, personally, I've attended, um, meetings, not-not protests, but, uh, just in
my social circle, meetups, um, and talks and organizing, uh, city connect- the city to city
connections. Um, you know, I haven't done anything as far as, um, protesting or, uh,
speaking out, like, about certain issues or cases.

ND: Mm-hmm.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LS: I know you and I talked a minute about, like, Instagram and I don't know how you feel about Twitter and the rest of it. I'm not a huge fan, but I know when- when I was, like, the #BlackLivesMatter, one of the questions that came up was like, 'How have you...' or 'If you have...' on social media. Personally, no. Me, I just- I try to stay away from anything [Laughs] on social media, because I don't want to get into arguments with people, like, via this. It's like- it's not even an argument, but, like, I want to have a discussion or a conversation. I don't want to go back and forth where you don't hear the intonation in my voice, or where the, you know, cadence of the voice or that it's not a "Eh" it's a "Uh." You know? And I think it can get really, really charged when there're passionate issues, but you lose a lot if you're not--.

NG: There.

LS: Having a discussion, so. Just me.

PW: Yeah, I agree. I don't- I don't talk at all about the #BlackLivesMatter or Black Lives Matter on social media, 'cause I feel like a lot of people come from a standpoint where they really don't know and just joined that bandwagon. But I really learned in this residency alone, that my artwork kind of speaks to that unconsciously already, just, like, by talking about it with Heather and everybody. Like, me being from the inner city and growing up and art here in the inner city, I'm always- I'm alw- I'm already a--.

LS: So you're from New Orleans as well?

PW: Yes, I was born and raised here.

LS: Oh, nice. Okay, cool.

PW: So, yeah, um, I'm already sharing that story. I'm already-already connected to that story unconsciously. Um, so a recent thing that I did, I did the New Orleans Jazz

Market Black Lives Matter, uh, thing where I submitted artwork for that. My best friend, she's a jazz vocalist, she sung for that, so it was great. It was a really positive event. And I mean, it's not like protesting on the street, but it's a different --as an artist-- a different way to express myself.

LS: Different medium to express.

PW: Yeah.

LS: Yeah.

PW: So.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ND: Mm-hmm. I went to, um, the University of Missouri, so it was very interesting to like--. When Black Lives Matter rolled out and to be so near Ferguson. Um, so I did a lot of campus organizing, and it was interesting, right? 'Cause like we, at the University of Missouri, I think it was something like 30 percent of the student body is from Saint Louis, right? So you have, like, um, this huge population of people who are from Ferguson, like, on campus, and to see the way that the administrate--. I was graduated in 2015. The administrator-stration responded, um, to people's, like--. I remember when the non-indictment came out, it was Thanksgiving break, and a lot of students did not feel like they were sa- it was safe to go home. And our administration didn't really have any, like, didn't set anything up for them, like, whereas for the international students, like, they'll extend the dorm rooms so that you can stay if, like, you can't go home on Thanksgiving, but there was n- there was nothing in place. And we had been organizing on campus since the day that Michael Brown was killed. Um, so it was interesting to do, like, while I was at Mizzou, and everything that ha--. I don't know if you all s-saw what

happened with Mizzou recently, but, um--. But it was interesting to, like, s- be a part of that kind of organizing and, like, going back and forth to Ferguson, and how, um, that has shifted from me now being in New Orleans, where I'm, like, very much detached from, um, organizing in that form. And, like, what it also means to still be organizing in a way that I feel is more-more healing, because I think about my time at Mizzou how so much of my, like, brain space, and my labor was spilt on raising white consciousness and, like, trying to get white consciousness to, like-like, see all these things and how much- how laborious that was and how, you know, the amount of death threats that were accrued on, like, um, myself and, like, my Palestinian sister and just — it was so much, right? And then to, like, have a shift where, like, now my focus is definitely on, like, celebrating Black consciousness in that I'm a teacher, right? And like--.

LS: Which is a great--.

ND: [Laughs] And organizing in that form and it's just been different. Like, I think I'm--. It's been very different and to see- to be detached and, like, see what's still going on on my campus, and in Mizzou, and being from Chicago, and see what's everything that's happening with, like, B.Y.P. Chicago. It's, like, very interesting to, like, feel a part of that fabric, but in a very different place. And, like, also in New Orleans, which is completely different.

LS: Do you like the transition that you made?

ND: It's so--.

LS: Or is it, like, 'What and what?' or--?

ND: I just think that this is so, like, incredibly healing. Like, I think that the universe knew that I could not have been--. I was so entrenched in the organizing on

Mizzou's campus, and it was so--. It had gotten so personal, especially, like, when the death threats started to roll around that I could not have been there a second longer, right? I think it- like, my mental health was already depreciating. And I think- what I was talking to my roommates about, I think what I love about New Orleans that I don't see in a lot of places is, to me, there's such an intention behind creating healing spaces here, right? So like you can go to Chicago, you will find a million places to organize, will you find a place to heal? It won't be as accessible. And I think that that's what I really enjoyed about being in this space, is, like, being able to go to simple things, like, uh, Black and Brown bodies and Yoga on Sundays. And like that some- that being tangible, and like seeing that. Um, so definitely, I love it. Like, I feel like it's definitely a different, um, different space, a different place to heal. And I think there's also different organizing that comes from it being so healing, uh, centric.

LS: I think it's really awesome to hear you say that, 'cau--. I-I was, um, I spent, like, the first seventeen years of my life in Chicago and Milwaukee, so I--.

ND: Oh, okay. Midwest.

[ND intermittently agrees]

LS: I kinda- I kinda get that. We've been here now for twenty-eight years, and I'm in healthcare and being here for so long, I feel like we really lack healing spaces. So it's really cool to hear you say that you feel like there's--. And there should be here, this is such a unique place, and so many diverse people come here from so many different backgrounds, and I think it is a place that you can come to heal. I think sometimes it's lost, 'cause people get, like, into the newness of New Orleans and the, uh, the cliché of New Orleans, and sometimes can get lost in that. And it's really cool to see people that

are new to the city and embracing the really cool parts of the city, the cool aspects of the city that go beyond just music and drinking and food. So, there's so much more here than that. Sorry, I just had to say that. I appreciate you saying that.

ND: No. Thank you.

RR: Uh, Well, I--. Black Lives Matter. So, I haven't participated in any protests or anything like that. Sometimes it comes up with students, so I've had a student who was very involved in protests. Um, I think it probably comes up more on a personal level, being from Charleston, South Carolina, um, and then just dealing with everything that happened with the massacre at the Emanuel A.M.E. Church, and I was doing a lot of writing about that. S- and about, uh, the question of how art relates to racial politics, and that sort of segwayed into here looking at the debates around the Confederate monuments, and I've been doing some writing about that as well.

ND: Hmm.

LS: I can help with some of these plates.

ND: Doing a plate stack?

RR: Yeah.

LS: I'll-I'll sneak up and grab plates if anybody wants to get rid of them.

RR: [Laughs]

LS: 'Cause this is really important to the roundtable discussion.

RR: [Laughs]

PW: I can help you out.

LS: Okay. [Laughs]

CS: The controversy from both sides about the (inaudible - 00:09:28) monuments.

RR: Yes, yes. So I interviewed people pretty much on both sides, yes. And I also went to the city council hearing, the last one--.

ND: Oh, that. I watched those on T.V.

RR: Where they passed the ordinance to actually remove them.

ND: Hmm.

JM: Well, I mean--. I guess I have some different thoughts about this hope and monuments and how they relate to, um, values around race and the economic order, um. I mean, I've always found them offensive, uh, personally. And was involved with, um, two previous efforts to consider removing them over the last twenty-five years. Um, but I think that we missed a chance to have a substantive discussion about the Neo-Confederate values that prevail in the city today and that so much of the city thrives on. Um, and I think, you know, had this- had the issue been more thoughtfully managed, we might've been able to have an equitable discussion about it and people would not have been so entrenched and--.

LS: And charged?

JM: Entrenched and charged about, you know, it's-it's-it's steel and stone, it's metal and stone. It's what they represent. But, I mean, this Neo-Confederate value is really driving the city to this day, um--.

ND: And I think, like, you say that, I think about what happened, um, not just here, but like what's happening at Trump rallies, right?

JM: Mm-hmm.

LS: (inaudible - 00:11:12)

ND: What's happening at Trump rallies.

LS: Oh, yeah.

ND: So I watched a video of the protesters here who were, like, dragging out--.

PW: Oh, yeah.

ND: And I think, like, those people, like, those people who are doing the dragging, like, they live here, like--. You know? And the same thing in Chicago, like, those people live there, like, those people are part of what creates values in the city. So I think that's a-a really interesting point to illustrate.

PW: Yeah, that's a good point.

JM: Well, I've, uh, organized protests last Friday before yesterday, um, at the Trump rally, and, um--.

CS: (inaudible - 00:11:48) like the music- what is, like, the music related protests?

JM: Um, well, they all kind of came together when we tried to do is, like, encourage people to really, organically, if they wanted to protest if they had, um, networks and they had specific issues or means or methods, we encouraged them to protest and, um, we-we met with the police beforehand and warned N.O.P.D. not to arrest any of them, uh, because it would undermine their credibility.

LS: Welcome to New Orleans, 'cause they listen so well. Sorry, my sarcasm there.

JM: Well--.

LS: [Laughs]

ND: Talking about the police?

LS: Yeah.

ND: I had a very interesting run into the- with police, my first very early encounter was--. Basically, bounty hunters came to our home, because my girlfriend had been identified by our neigh-neighbor as fitting the description, which is, hold on to your seats: a black woman with braids.

CS: Right.

PW: [Laughs] That's like most of the population here.

CS: [Laughs] Exactly.

ND: It's fine. But, um, bounty hunters came to our home and, like, it was very-like a near death experience.

PW: Wow.

LS: How bizz--. Like--.

ND: Oh--.

LS: Terribly, surrealistically bizarre.

CS: Yeah, yeah.

ND: It was just so strange. And just like the history of it, and like--. Real quick, like, her family is from Louisiana and, like, her family, like, generations ago lived on Freret and were living on Freret. Like her family was a part of, like, a runaway generation who were--. Like, so it was just like, very like--.

JM: Wow.

ND: Ah. And then the bounty hunters came for her.

JM: Wow.

ND: Um, but then the police showed up and, like, were attacking us and we were like, 'We called you.' After forty-five minutes, I was like, you know, we probably- we're gonna die and you just showed up and they were very, like, argumentative with us when we called them, so. Sorry for that interjection.

LS: No, uh, and I-I--. For twenty-seven years I have had s-so many bizarre experiences.

ND: Mm.

LS: Not that extreme, but--.

ND: [Laughs]

[Speakers intermittently agrees]

LS: But I'm, like, not--. This is a total sidenote, but I witnessed a murder, I don't know, God knows how long, and, um, it was in front of the Calliope housing project. And, like, no one--. It was broad daylight, you know, middle of the day, kids running around everywhere. Everybody scattered. The two people who did the shooting are, like, standing there. I go into a doctor's office, I'm like, 'Hey, someone got shot.' They're like, 'Oh, that happens all the time.' And I kind of just, like, walk back out to my car, got my cell phone, called the police, I'm talking to the woman on the-the 911 operator going like, 'He's running down the street with a gun in his hand, he's wearing this and that.' 'Well, we'll dispatch an officer as soon as he doesn't have the gun.' And I'm like, 'Excuse me? Like, aren't you- this like--? Isn't that why, like--? Where's the SWAT team? Did I--?'

CS: Public service. Exactly.

ND: And then y'all let him shoot people.

CS: Exactly.

LS: Like, I guess I didn't realize--. Anyway, so, like--.

ND: Yeah.

LS: (inaudible - 00:14:37) [Laughs]

ND: Yeah.

LS: But, yeah, the--. It's weird.

ND: Yeah.

JM: Well--.

CS: This might be a good segue--.

JM: Mm-hmm.

CS: Um, card. *Discuss your personal experiences with microaggressive racism or institutional racism.*

ND: Mm.

RR: Microaggressive?

PW: Mm-hmm.

CS: Yeah, microaggressions. Um, I would- I would identify microaggressions, uh--.

NG: They're- they're kind of, like, very subtle and, like, nuanced, um, forms of, like, forms of racism or sexism. Um, but they're usually--.

LS: Like backhanded in many ways, it's kind of--.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

NG: Or they-they--.

CS: They're kind of, like, (inaudible - 00:15:24)

LS: 'I'm not racist, but--.'

NG: 'But--.'

LS: 'I'm gonna tell the racist joke.'

PW: Right, yeah.

CS: Right.

PW: Yeah.

NG: Or something like saying, like, 'You speak very well for...'

LS: [Laughs]

PW: Yeah, 'You're very articulate.'

NG: Yeah, something like that. Exactly. Where it's, like, a compliment.

CS: (inaudible - 00:15:38) white person.

NG: Right.

LS: A backhanded compliment.

ND: Do you all find issue with them being called 'microaggressions'?

JM: I do.

PW: Well, I mean- I guess it's one of those things where, like, I've been in a situation like that, so if you're not in the situation and you're explaining it to someone else you--. You know, it can be either way, 'cause somebody-somebody can be like, 'Oh, I don't see that being the thing,' but your eyes I'm like, 'I'm sure it was a thing,' you know. You know?

[Laughter]

PW: That's why I think it's called--. Yeah.

LS: You know. That's why I feel like intuition, like, you know.

PW: Yeah.

LS: You-you know.

ND: [Laughs]

LS: Don't let anybody else convince you that you missed that one.

CS: Exactly.

ND: Yeah.

LS: Like, no. You know.

PW: Yeah, it's interesting--.

LS: I know an insult when I hear an insult.

PW: You- when bring up race, they make you seem like you're racist, you know?

CS: Exactly. Exactly.

JW: Yeah.

PW: Right? [Laughs]

Unknown: [Snapping]

CS: I wouldn't- I wouldn't describe my experience, uh, living in Chelsea is-is microaggressive, it's very macro.

[Laughter]

CS: Uh, I lived in a building with an older French woman who's also an artist and connected really well. But in the building, like, I clearly stood out and, um, whenever I was in the elevator, there was one man in particular — like every time he saw me, he was like, 'Why are you here? What are you doing here?' And I- I gave--.

NG: He would say that to you?

CS: Yeah. And, um, a couple of times, I'd have a friend with me where, like--. Actually, the first time I met him, uh, she was helping me move some of these boxes into my apartment and he wouldn't address me, he addressed her, my white friend. It's like, 'What are you- what are you doing?' Uh, (inaudible - 00:17:08).

ND: Mm.

PW: Hm.

LS: Does it throw you off when people say that kind of stuff. I don't know if it's just me, but sometimes when I hear things I'm like--. I want to be, like, have this great response or, like, snarky, ironic, like, subtlety somehow or another put back on them.

CS: Right.

ND: Mm-hmm.

LS: But I'm always still like--.

CS: Dumbfounded, yeah.

ND: Mm-hmm.

PW: Yeah, like you can't believe that it's actually happening. Yeah.

CS: (inaudible - 00:17:28)

LS: Like, when that- when that happened--.

CS: I actually--.

LS: When you're kinda like, 'What?'

CS: I actually, uh, because he gave me his full name, and, um, I-I told my-the-the woman I was living with, um, and I also blasted him on Twitter. And, um--.

[Laughter]

CS: 'Just live your life.' Like--. Um, I wish I could pull up the-the actual tweet. Um, but it was just like, 'Live your life. Don't--.' Um, 'Put down a Black person (inaudible - 00:17:56) living should be about the life we have left, dot, dot, dot.'

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

LS: 'Cause if- I would've been, like, ready for something like that. I would've been, 'What are you- what are you doing here?'

CS: Right.

PW: No, it's funny because, like--.

LS: For me--. Yeah, no, I--. It's like--. But, I get it. But it's, like, not--. 'What do you mean--?'

[Speakers intermittently agree]

PW: In certain- in certain situations, I feel like you just have to be bigger than that. Like, you just have to take it for what it is and just move forward to be bigger than that.

LS: Don't let it--.

PW: Because if you react, that's--. I've seen that happen and, you know, usually the person who was in the situation gets in trouble because they acted immor- too

aggressively and you threw the first punch or you cursed or you spit at 'em or anything like that, so I just-just try to move--.

LS: Forward.

PW: Yeah.

LS: Has tha- have any of you all ever read that book *The Four Agreements*? It's one of my favorite books. The-the four agreements are: um, always do your best, don't take things personally, be impeccable with your word, and--. Oh, God. I can always get three out and there's always the fourth one that I can't remember. Always do your best--.

ND: My mentor from college, like, loved this book.

LS: Well, it--. At any rate, it's a great book, but don't take things personally. And, like, one of the big premises of the book is that any time someone's — like, don't believe anything that anybody says. So, if someone's walking down the street like you're--.

NG: Don't believe?

LS: Don't believe, like-like it's all a, you know- you know, 'You're an asshole,' it's them. They're talking about them. Every time someone says to you, you, you, they're talking about them. So, as much as you don't--. You, like--. Someone says you're an asshole, when someone says you're brilliant, don't believe that either. Like, just don't take things personally either way. I--. Me, personally, I think I've taken up a lot of things personally in my life for better and for worse, so that's like a really good point, to me, about just kind of, like, letting some of that stuff, like, roll off, be the bigger person, and realizing it's not you, it's them. Like, they are projecting something onto you.

CS: I found actually a tweet, and it's really good, um, I said: @ (inaudible - 00:19:53), enjoy life. Harassing young women doesn't subvert any of their exist-existing optimism #kindness, #lifeisbiggerthanyou."

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Right.

JM: You go, girl.

LS: Yeah, that's great.

CS: And--.

LS: Kindness and compassion

CS: I'm-I'm just hoping he read it and, like, got a twinge of--.

PW: Yeah.

CS: Self-reflection.

NG: Right.

JM: So, I don't know if you all may have seen this, uh, there was a study done by some researchers, I think, from Stanford, and they found that in terms of, um, social media that Louisiana was the most racially and gender--.

PW: I can believe that.

JM: Prejudiced state in the country.

LS: Shocking.

JM: And New Orleans was the fourth most racist.

PW: Really?

NG: Wow.

ND: I wouldn't be surprised.

PW: Yeah

JM: Uh--.

RR: Fourth most city in the country or?

JM: Yes, in terms of social media. So--.

RR: Oh, okay. Oh, okay.

JM: So, what researchers did is they-they--.

PW: Took all the keywords and--.

JM: Looked at the social media and they-they searched some keywords, and, um, I wasn't surprised at all.

PW: I-I am not either. I'm really not at all.

CS: It's not just racism across ethnic lines, but, like, within races.

JM: Yeah.

ND: And I wouldn't even say it was just racism.

LS: We just talked about that the other night, racism within the racism.

ND: Mm-hmm.

CS: Yeah.

ND: I'm thinking a lot about like — 'cause you said it was racial, and what else?

JM: Gender.

ND: Gender, and I think about how --I identify as queer-- and before I moved here, never, like, was I read this queer always. And, like, the harassment I've gotten from my students, and I've never come out to them, um--.

LS: Sorry, I didn't hear what you said about you identify with--?

ND: I as identify as queer, right?

LS: Okay.

ND: And the harassment I've gotten from my students, um, walking down the street with my partner and being, like, called a man, like--.

PW: Really?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ND: Yeah. And I'm, like, I lived in Missouri, you know, for four years. And Chicago is obviously different. But I think, like, the receptiveness that I've gotten in Louisiana has felt far more colder than anything.

PW: That's weird 'cause I feel like--.

LS: Far more cold?

ND: Colder.

LS: Yeah.

CS: 'Cause there's two different cultures. Like, one's very dominant (inaudible - 00:21:53) like Bounce culture comes from gay culture.

[Crosstalk]

PW: No, that's what I'm saying, like, I'm gay as well.

ND: I also think it's different for the Black women though.

PW: And I've never personally dealt with it.

ND: Mm-hmm.

PW: And I'm from the inner city, me and my fiance have been together for five years, we walk through the inner city holding hands.

ND: Yeah.

PW: I've never dealt anything with that.

ND: I think--.

CS: (inaudible - 00:22:09)

ND: I think it's, yeah, I think it's different from a Black woman--.

LS: It's like a double, triple, quadruple whammy.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

ND: 'Cause I was having this conversation--.

LS: (inaudible - 00:22:16)

ND: Yeah.

LS: My sexuality, identity--.

ND: Yeah. And we're both femme.

PW: That's chilling. I'm sorry you had to go through that.

[Crosstalk ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ND: Yeah. 'Cause I was talking to my coworker who was, like, kind of saying the same thing. He was like, 'I'm a gay male. I've been here for a while.' I was like, 'I think, partially, it's been different 'cause we're two women.' Like, I think that like, one is, like, the-the-the fetish that comes with it. Like, oftentimes, like when we're stared at or charged, it's like, definitely, like, we're being fetishized. And yeah, like, I think, because Bounce culture, the- at least --and this is my, like, analysis of just being here-- I think that Bounce cul-culture, um, as far as sexuality is masculine centered, right? So I think

that... But where is the space for the Black woman in that? And I think of like, even like--. And I-I'm very new to New Orleans, like, I've still have not seen a space, like, for Black queer women. Like, I've found those spaces for Black men, but not for women.

PW: Yeah, definitely. I can- I can see that.

ND: Yeah.

PW: I can definitely see that.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LS: It's-it's interesting that you mentioned about Bounce culture. And I don't know if-if you'll- 'cause we're, like, a little more of the same age or whatever, but I remember sort of when Bounce started, like, before this wave. And, um, I never thought a thing about it, it was so — it was music. That's all, I didn't see sexuality and it's like — none of it. And I just kind of remember what it got, like, a little bit bigger again, being, like, sort of I say, snooty out like, 'All these people getting on the Bounce bandwagon. I mean, Bounce has been around for such a long time.' And it's, like, even evolved since then, you know. And I-I-I'll just say it, like, I'm older, obviously, so, thing- you know, things evolve over time and it's, like, I--. Sometimes, I feel, like, so in the dark that I-I missed so many things, I feel clueless. Not that I — I guess, maybe it's a good thing, 'cause I-I'm not really that judgey, for lack of a better word. I moved here, and you'll correct me if I'm wrong, in '88 that the population of Orleans Parish was, like, 87 percent Black, and like- I'm like--.

ND: Isn't New Orleans still 60 percent Black?

JM: 72 percent.

LS: 72 percent? Okay.

CS: I've been to, um--. I just separated cards--.

LS: Yeah, there are some--.

CS: That are questions and some of these cards are just information. Um, let's see. There's one (inaudible - 00:24:48)

LS: Yeah, there are some--. There's the one about, like, the murder--.

CS: I'm gonna read them all, but *There are 100,000 fewer African Americans living in New Orleans than there were eleven years ago.*

JM: Mm-hmm.

ND: Wow.

LS: Big time.

[Crosstalk]

ND: Wait, what- how many (inaudible - 00:24:57)--?

PW: I can believe that.

LS: (inaudible - 00:24:58)

JM: 100,000 fewer.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: 100,000.

ND: Wow, in eleven years?

PW: Yeah, a lot of people after Katrina just stayed where they were.

ND: That is scary.

LS: When I- When I read that, I--.

JM: A lot of pe- A lot of people wanna come back but can't too.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Right.

JM: It's too- it's too expensive to live here. The cost of living is--.

LS: Shit, it's getting expensive (inaudible - 00:25:12)

ND: Wait--. 100,000?

JM: A hundred- 100,000, yeah.

ND: Wow.

LS: How many do you think since like (inaudible - 00:25:18)

CS: Just to finish the statistic--.

LS: Way more.

[Crosstalk ends]

CS: *The 2005 median income for Black families here was 23k- 23,000. In 2013, it was 25,000. Uh. The 2005 median income for white families was 49,000. And in 2013, it was 60,000.*

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Wow.

ND: That doesn't surprise me.

LS: Damn, am I not meeting any of them anymore.

[Laughter]

CS: *And, uh, unemployment rates for Blacks in 2005 was 18.5 percent, uh, for whites is 4.1. And in 2013, it was for Blacks, it dropped down to 13.6 percent. And in 2015, for whites is 4.6 percent. And, um, in 2011, just for Black men, unemployment was 52 percent. And for white men, it was 21 percent.*

PW: I just read that.

NG: Wow.

CS: Um, *National media attention is centered on solitary confinement, prisoner abuse, death row, Angola prison.* Uh — oh, this was actually a discussion: *Discuss the local (in)justice --in-injustice is in parentheses-- justice system.* Uh, *Blacks in NOLA 59 percent, Blacks in NOLA prisons 90 percent.* So we can- we can discuss that one. I just wanted to read the last statistic. *In 2015, homicides statistic: a hundred and sixty-four shooting related deaths and twenty-eight police involved shootings.*

LS: I just--.

JM: So, most of the--.

ND: Which is more per capita than anywhere.

JM: Most of the information comes from our website called KatrinaTruth.com--.

PW: KatrinaTruth?

JM: KatrinaTruth.com. And, um, it really challenges this narrative that, um, government and the social and civic elite, eh, tried to advance around the 10th anniversary of Katrina that everything is so--.

LS: That they would like for you to believe.

JM: That everything is a wonderful and it's a great recovery and all this other nonsense.

PW: Yeah.

LS: I just want to make a quick comment, uh, like this one, when I read this, um, the homicide statistics and it said: *2015, 164 shooting de- related deaths and twenty-eight police involved shootings.* I was like, 'Wow, that's low.' And I think that's a

really crappy thing to say, but I mean, I was here in the 80s and 90s, when like, we had, like, a murder a day. Literally, the other day I witnessed a murder that was- that was the second one, and there were four a day.

JM: In ninety--. Yeah. In '94, there were four hundred and (inaudible - 00:27:38)--.

LS: To me like this (inaudible - 00:27:39) to this and be like, 'Wow, that seems like it's really low.' Like, this is a bad--.

[Crosstalk]

JM: But- but--.

LS: (inaudible - 00:27:44)

ND: I think we should also talk about (inaudible - 00:27:44)

JM: Lena- but Lena, it's not when-when you look at the confirmation.

LS: No, I know.

JM: When you look at the information per capita.

[Crosstalk ends]

LS: No, no, I know. But it's like the gut reaction and I'm looking at that I was like, 'Wow, like this is a bad statistic. I'm like, 'That's actually kind of good. We're like down,' but like you said, actually we're not.

CS: I can remember the-the Superdome before it became the Mercedes Benz Superdome and (inaudible - 00:28:04) on one side and it was, like, target practice.

JM: Mm-hmm.

LS: Yeah, yeah.

CS: (inaudible - 00:28:11)

[Speakers intermittently agree]

ND: I think something that you said that is very interesting, is numbness. And I've been, like, really thinking about numbness a lot lately. I think, like, coming from Chicago, right, and, like [Pause] given the background that I have, right? I had, like, a very t-stereotypical, for lack of a better word, like, tumultuous, like, childhood, and then, going to college, and then, teaching, um, my kids with some makeup, like, some kids, like, families are quote unquote, fit the norm (inaudible - 00:28:42) some are absolutely not. And I think what I've been struggling with is, like, how I've become so numb, right? And I think, I had this realization yesterday --thank God for that day off-- um, like, the problem, like my ineff--. Like, how it makes me an ineffective teacher when I am numb. Um, and I think it's hard, 'cause, like, you know, a lot of the kids when they come to me with their things, and, like, I've been through with my childhood and I've d-dealt with, and I've healed from that and now, like, not--. I think there's a difference between numbness and acceptance. So it's like, instead of accepting it, I've just kind of become numb to it, so they come to me, like, 'Ms. D, this thing happened,' and like, I'm numb to it now. And it-it bridges upon my ability to be my most genuine teacher. And I think, like, trying to force myself, like, out of the numbness into acceptance, um, so that I can--.

[Crosstalk]

LS: It's hard.

ND: Yeah, it's very hard.

LS: It's painful. It's really, really painful

ND: It's really--. Yeah, and it's--.

LS: And I--.

ND: Like acceptance is a hard ass thing.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LS: And numbness comes up a lot for me, obviously, I-I use it, the word frequently. But it's, like, self-protective mechanism that you-you use to function. And when you become- when you get, like, a certain amount of awareness, you--. And this is a personal experience that happened to me four-four years ago, in--. Blunt force trauma in the sense of, like, multiple things, like, hitting you in life all at the same time, I could no longer be numb. There was absolutely--. It couldn't be ignored, it couldn't be avoided, it couldn't have been glossed over. It, like, had to come out and it's about awareness and acceptance, and I'm-I'm not there yet, but, like, I'm four years into it. And it's, like, I finally have some relief. It's, like, 'Okay, cool. 'I can--.' You know, like, you're going through this tunnel of numbness and you, like, realize that you've been numb to a lot of things, because not only did you have to, like, no one gave you a mechanism to not be not numb. No one, like you're saying--.

ND: Which I think goes back to Black Lives Matter, too--.

LS: (inaudible - 00:30:38) being an effective teacher, too, like you're saying. Like, we gotta give youth skills to --now-- so you don't wake up one day when you're thirty-eight going, like, 'Holy shit. What happened? Like, I believed this huge lie my whole life.' Or like, 'Fuck this or fuck that.' And like you're not, like, reality becomes so very different. And, um, healing space in New Orleans, it's like I'm sor--. Yeah, but--.

ND: I think it really goes back to Black Lives Matter, though, right? Because I think, like, you see if you, like, talk about these movements that are happening, like, across the United States and, like, really across the world where, like, people are

organizing, people are having these lunch, like, tables, like in the name of Black Lives Matter. And, like, you know, like, just, like, we hear all the time, like, 'This shit ain't new.' Like, people have been, like — like, you said twenty-eight police shootings this year, 'That's low,' right? But there's this idea of like--. Right? And, like, lately, people have been coming out of that numbness. And that's why you see, like, these revolts and, like, you see these people fighting back and clapping back and talking back because, like, there's something that's happening that's, like, waking people out of, like, remembering that this does not have to be the norm.

LS: Right.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

PW: Yeah, no, that's- I think that's really important. For a Black male growing up from the inner city, um, like, finding that healing ground. I was part of YAYA. I don't know if you guys know about YAYA, but that made me the artist I am today, just because I had that place to go to after school everyday. Keep telling me that, you know, 'You don't have to live a life where you don't feel like,' you know, 'You don't want to go to school, you have to just smoke weed and hang out with you boy (inaudible - 00:32:06),' you know what I mean? So, finding those really healing ground and crossing over from, like, 'I don't have to accept this is the only life for me,' you know, so. You don't have to--.

LS: And it doesn't have to be as hard as some people want to make it.

PW: No, definitely.

LS: Like, you don't have to accept that it's gotta be this big fight and struggle and challenge. Like, you actually have a choice.

PW: Yeah, definitely.

LS: Like, it doesn't have to be hard. It doesn't have to be a challenge. It can be awesome, it can be fun. And it can be beautiful.

ND: Mm-hmm, which is so important.

PW: Yeah, and I feel like people aren't educated, especially where I'm from, aren't educated about those different paths. They just have one path.

ND: What part of New Orleans did you grow up?

PW: I'm from Central City.

ND: Oh, okay.

PW: Yeah.

LS: I love Central City.

PW: Yeah, it's changed so much, though.

LS: Like, so much.

PW: I was just there, like, for the, uh, Black Lives Matter thing, and I didn't even recognize the neighborhood. I'm like--.

ND: Wow.

PW: 'This is crazy.'

LS: That-that actually kinda goes into this one but, like, not necessarily (inaudible - 00:32:54).

PW: [Laughs]

CS: I sorted- I'm try- I try to sort it by like--. This is specific to Mardi Gras culture--.

ND: I'm loving your organizational skills.

NG: Yeah.

CS: Just to- just to keep the flow going. This is about, like, media and politics and this is about access and gentrification--.

NG: Yeah.

ND: Oh.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LS: Gentrification is such a huge thing here right now, especially with more and more people coming in from other places. And, just being here so long, it's so weird when you really think how much things have changed. I had a friend ask me, 'Well, what was Magazine Street like in 1988?' And I was, like, I had to really, like, go back into my memory banks. And I'm, like, 'Wow, it was [Pause] a dump.'

PW: Yeah?

LS: Like, I can't really--. Like, parts of it, like, a dump. Like, I'm not gonna use any other word that — it was a dump. Like, there were abandoned houses. It wasn't necessarily, like, ghetto, or (inaudible - 00:33:48) or anything like that, it was just a dump. Um, there were no coffee shops, there were no restaurants, there were no boutiques. Like, none of that was there. I remember, like, Tyler's is, like, where the pure bar was on Magazine Street. It was a killer, like, club that you just walked in and live music--.

PW: I wanna look that up now.

LS: Uh, but beyond there was, like, it was a dump.

ND: I think [Sighs] like, this question, right? So: *Discuss the recent influence of non-natives to New Orleans as it relates to housing prices and community.* Like something that, like--. I live with two women of color- two other women of color, and it's like, we live on Freret and, like, in the middle of, like, right before you get to that, like, Napoleon area.

LS: The new (inaudible - 00:34:28)

PW: Yeah, yeah. I know what you're talking about.

LS: Louisiana?

ND: But like, we're on the other side, right?

LS: Yeah, okay.

PW: I know exactly what you're talking about.

ND: So we're, like, right before it gets, like, this new space where it's, like--. Where, like, I said, some of my neighbors are, like, 'You can go--.' That part--. N-Napoleon is stretching towards Louisiana, like, my neighbors, like, identified us as people who fit the police description. But I think what we've been talking about so much, it's like, what does it mean that we are all people of color transplants here, right? That we are not from New Orleans, um, that we're in this co- like, we're in this community, we're teaching in this community. Um, and, like, what is our place as, like, a Black transplant, and, like, what does that mean? Like, what does a person of color gentrifier look like? Like, what is--? You know, 'cause there's not really discussion around that--.

LS: Yeah, that's a good point, too.

ND: Like, so, I could say the same people--. So many people go to Chicago, right? And like, I'm sitting up in my hometown having this conversation, probably two

blocks from where I went to school, and, like, you know, and that person could be from New Orleans, and like--. And we're both P.O.- P.O.C. people and like, at some place, we've both been displaced, but at the end of the t- like, at the end of the conversation, we're, like, both still transplants.

LS: Right.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

ND: I don't know. It's so--.

PW: I never thought about that. That's a- that's a good one.

CS: What do you- what do you guys seek out in the city and (inaudible - 00:35:45) adapted to the community (inaudible - 00:35:50) shopping, or--?

ND: Oh (inaudible - 00:35:53) We don't shop too much. I think like, we're very important on, like, supporting Black owned businesses, and, like, people of color businesses and, like, spaces like this, I think, like, we all struggle. So Liana's from- she's Puerto Rican from New Jersey. Um, Lizzie is Black from Oakland, and I'm Black from Chicago. So I think we're all from, like, very big cities and like, understanding, like, what does it first mean to, like, live in the South, um, which is different from, like, all of us. Like, I remember, Lizzie came down here and she's from Oakland, so she's used to like Planned Parenthood on every block. And she's, like, 'I can't find a Planned Parenthood.' And like, I just got out of Missouri, so I'm like, 'Let me tell you about the South.'

PW: [Laughs]

LS: Yeah, (inaudible - 00:36:35)

ND: Things are diff--.

LS: (inaudible - 00:36:36)

NG: Yeah.

ND: Yes, things are definitely different here, but I think that we're very, like, trying to be mindful of understanding what harm we're doing from being here. You know what I mean? So I don't know if there's like a conversation to be had, but, like, what is the harm in us being here? And, like, us being on Freret with us like not- this not being our home city?

JM: Yeah, as a native, I mean, I don't know that you--. I don't think of newcomers--.

ND: Mm-hmm.

JM: As doing harm by simply being here.

PW: No.

LS: (inaudible - 00:37:07)

JM: But I- but I do think that, um, the-the sort of, uh, spatial nature of community here in New Orleans, and the importance of neighborhoods to, uh, culture and identity and importance of, um, public spaces to that- to cultural traditions that a lot of that is at risk now, because, um--.

PW: So many new people.

JM: Because it's just-just too expensive. The cost of living is-is- is just--.

LS: I couldn't buy a house in New Orleans--.

PW: Yeah.

LS: Now. If I had fourteen years ago. And if I sold my house, I could--.

JM: Where would you live?

LS: I'd move to Central City, 'cause it's the only place I can probably afford to do and that's still high.

ND: My question for you- my question for you then is like, I'm from Chicago. So we want to talk about the price of living (inaudible - 00:37:52) stay in a house that's \$1,100; I can't go home, you know?

PW: [Laughs]

LS: Right, right, right. I totally feel you on that one.

PW: No, yeah. I mean--.

ND: That's, why I'm c- like asking, like, what does it mean for a P.O.C. transplant here--.

LS: Right.

ND: Like, trying to find new community.

LS: Do you know, like, (inaudible - 00:38:05), like, rent went up in '88 \$250?

JM: Yeah, I'm surprised you don't have a card on that, because, uh, yeah, the-the co--. The average rent has, uh, gone up 250 percent in the last ten years.

LS: And you--.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Wow.

LS: 250 for--.

ND: In ten years?

LS: And if you found rent for \$450--.

JM: 250 percent.

LS: Like you're--.

CS: (inaudible - 00:38:20)

LS: I don't know where you are. Yeah.

CS: *How has gentrification affected the Black community?*

JM: Here in New Orleans?

LS: Well, yeah, like, I don't know if this is--. Like, there's no projects anymore.

PW: Yeah, that's a good and a bad thing.

[Crosstalk]

RR: But doesn't this all go back to Katrina?

NG: (inaudible - 00:38:36)

LS: (inaudible - 00:38:37)

JM: Hm?

RR: I mean, doesn't this all go back to Katrina?

JM: Yes.

RR: And the lack of dealing with Katrina?

LS: You're talking about mixed income housing where the project used to be?

Yeah, yeah. yeah.

JM: Primarily, yes. I would say 75 percent of it.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

[Crosstalk ends]

LS: But, that's what I'm saying, there's no projects anymore, but--.

PW: That's a good and a bad thing, I think.

LW: They're- are, sort of. It's, like, we just kinda, like, renamed everything and gave it a new look.

[Crosstalk]

PW: Like, just being from the third ward--.

ND: Aren't those--?

JM: No, no--.

ND: Like, isn't that housing complex on Freret housing projects, though? Like--.

JM: A- no--.

[LS and ND's separate conversation at: 00:39:00 - 00:39:23]

LS: Which one?

ND: The right- right if you're on Louisiana, like, right to the left and it's, like, looks like separate houses--.

LS: Oh. Oh, no. I'm like, 'Right?' Naomi, that's mixed income housing now.

ND: Oh.

LS: That's what I'm saying. It's a new face, new name. Not everybody there is on Section 8; some people own, some people rent.

ND: Really? That's interesting.

[LS and ND's separate conversation ends]

[PW intermittently agrees]

JM: Actually, nah, because the number of public housing units for-for poor people is only 10 percent of what it was before Katrina. And that was a big fight. I was actually

involved in the litigation. I do public policymaking organization. So, I was involved in a lawsuit to prevent them from tearing down the--. Because you're supposed to replace it one for one, right? Um, you know, it's scattered across the city, and they only replaced 10 percent. Um, so, you know, a lot of people who did live in public housing, who were working poor, who absolutely cannot afford to live in a city now.

LS: Not at all.

JM: They may be living in the West Bank.

LS: Or go--. Yeah, to the Section 8 in We- on West Bank.

ND: Or the East.

PW: Yeah.

JM: So they live in the West Bank, so they have, like, an hour and a half to two hours more commuting time each day. And at the end of the week, that takes actually a complete shift of overtime from 'em or two hours a day to spend with their kids or with their family or caring for an elder--.

LS: Not sleeping.

JM: So it's really, you know, a double barrel diabolical outcome.

ND: Mm.

PW: I guess there is pros and cons to that.

NG: Do you know about--? I-I heard something about it but I didn't read into it, there was something with Big Freedia and Section 8 housing?

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Yeah.

PW: I saw that, too.

ND: What happened?

JM: Well, apparently, uh, she agreed to plead guilty because she was receiving Section 8 housing assistance and, apparently, she- like, she admitted that she plausibly misstated her income.

PW: Yeah.

LS: But, I think it--. I mean, like, honestly--.

JM: I think they went after her for--.

LS: For me, not that it matters, I think they tried to make an example of her.

JM: Yes.

LS: It's like, c'mon. You know what, like, I'm dirt poor, I'm living on Section 8, I got a place to live. Suddenly, one day, you're like, made it.

ND: [Laughs]

LS: And you're, like, got money.

ND: Yeah.

LS: It's like, 'I-I'm-I'm sorry if I forgot to like--.'

ND: Change it.

LS: 'Tell you that, like, Jesus, you know what? A, I don't need your money; B, I don't--.' Like-like--.

ND: Yeah.

JM: Well, not only that--

LS: Your- it's still your life.

JM: Well, not only that, Lena. Well, I- I'm rolling right now. But tomorrow, I can be broke again.

PW: Yeah.

LS: Exactly

PW: Yeah, no, definitely.

LS: Like, you know. And it's, like, I gave her, like, kudos of respect for handling it the way that she did and being the bigger person.

PW: Yeah.

ND: Mm.

LS: You know--.

JM: And--.

LS: But it's like, come on people, really?

JM: And-and in a lot of other cases, they settle out as a civil matter and just make you pay it back. They don't try--.

PW: No, that's what I thought. I was like, I feel like they're gonna end up making her pay it back.

JM: Well, she's got to pay it back, but she's also got to take--.

LS: They gave her a \$100,000 fine or something.

JM: A fine and a felony conviction.

ND: Do--?

PW: Oh, really?

LS: Yeah.

JM: Yeah.

PW: Wow. Oh, man.

ND: Do you all know if there's any efforts for, like, reverse gentrification here?

JM: Um, not really. I mean, you have--.

LS: (inaudible - 00:41:40) referring to you.

JM: There's enough- there's enough affordable housing initiative that is in its early stages, but, um, on the public policy side, you know, there are state laws that prevent things like, um, rent stabilization and rent control.

ND: 'Cause there are no- there are no, um, renters rights here, right?

JM: No. It's a proper no. And-and we've tried every year to, you know, pass some Baton Rouge state-state laws and give renters some rights. And this is just- it's a southern state, you know, it's a property owner's state, so.

LS: [Laugh]

ND: Hmm.

CS: Do you guys want to *Discuss privatization of public education--?*

[Laughter]

JM: Oh.

LS: Yeah.

CS: (inaudible - 00:42:23) *Literacy rates and access to college education.*

ND: That's funny.

LS: 'Kay, Isn't that just an oxymoron the way (inaudible - 00:42:30)?

NG: Right.

LS: "The privatization of public education--."

ND: And prisons.

LS: Right.

ND: 'Cause, like, can-can you detach the two?

RR: Well, this is interesting, coming right after Wednesday's closure of a legislative session that did not solve the budget crisis, and that threatens to close all of our public universities. It means that year after year, I have no idea if I'm going to have a job the next year. Um, And then there's the whole charter school movement.

ND: Mm-hmm.

RR: I mean, it's a mess. [Laughs]

JM: Well, and what's happened to U.N.O. over the last ten years is, it's a crime against justice, and it's really been eviscerated.

LS: I don't know how we get away with it, like, not just here, but like, it's happening everywhere. Like, I feel like it's--.

ND: That's the scary part.

LS: Right. And like, how do we even get away with this as-as humans? Like, what are we, like, doing to ourselves?

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JM: I mean, I guess--.

ND: 'Cause--.

ND: You know, in New Or- in New Orleans and Louisiana in a lot of ways 'cause of recent experience is so much more profound. It's happening everywhere, but it's so

much more profound here. But it--. You know, the privatization of public education, um, the evisceration of higher ed, public universities, um. Over in--.

ND: I think--.

JM: Over incarceration. Criminal justice is worse here than almost anywhere.

LS: It's like it can't be ignored--.

JM: So, may--.

LS: You can't push it under the rug.

JM: Maybe we're the canary in a coal mine. And, you know, the revolution might begin here.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Hmm.

JM: Maybe. [Pause] Um--.

ND: I think what's, like, interesting, um, is that I think, like, what you said is absolutely true. It is far- disproportionately worse here. And, like, from an outsider, I, like, I feel like a lot of it has to do with Katrina. It's like I'm watching Chicago, Rahm Emanuel closed a hundred schools, right?

LS: Did you go to public school?

ND: Yeah.

JM: I used to live in Chicago, too.

ND: Okay, Rahm Emanuel closed a hundred schools down --a hundred-- um, and [Laughs] basically what's, like, he's trying to make it so that it has the same charter school model as New Orleans, right? So, um, basically, like taking the- taking it away from the--. [Sighs] Sorry. It's makes me very frustrated and it's hard for me to get my

words out. But, he's basically, like, privatizing the entire system around education and in New Orleans- I mean, in Chicago, in ways that like, give principals rights to say that, like, you have to earn your chairs, right. There are charter schools in Chicago where kids don't have seats until they are behaviorally appropriate and can, like, earn the right to sit down. Um, and it's interesting, right? 'Cause, like, if you--. If I talk to my friends who are in education there, but like, what we're doing is what places like New Orleans is doing, right? So I think it's interesting to, like, be--. And I worked for K.I.P.P., which is like--. K.I.P.P. is technically national. Yes, ki- Kids In Prison Program. And I think about so many things, like, when (inaudible - 00:45:23) like, about privatization, and, like my role as a teacher. Like, for one, I think the days that I feel like I have oppressed my kids the most are days in which I have felt most oppressed by my administrators. Like, um, recently, my principal got up and told our entire staff that we are not allowed to take our days off, that when we take our days off, because we're sick, we're failing- we are failing kids. Um, and like, a- r- a fifteen minute speech at which he basically shamed people for, like, taking a day off when we have one of the longest working days, like, in the nation, you know?

LS: But how's that productive to anyone?

ND: And how is it productive, and like--.

LS: But how is it productive to work in fear?

ND: Mm-hmm. And I think it's just like what things have been, like, seen, like, as legalized, right? And like, what abuse have been legalized? Like, when we move people away from being able to create a union. So, like, the reason there's, like, a fight back in Chicago still is, like, because you still have the ability to unionize and, like, being in New

Orleans where I feel cut off at the ankles. Like, who-who can I talk to about K.I.P.P.
when K.I.P.P. is so much bigger than me, you know?

LS: It's, like, the corporatization--.

ND: Mm-hmm.

LS: Like, it's beyond privatization.

ND: Mm-hmm.

LS: Like, I've spent years in the same environment and became so super
miserable, like I'm--.

ND: I think that's important.

LS: I'm not doing good anymore. Like, I am not useful to myself or anyone else,
because all you guys are doing is trying to beat me down everyday 'cause I'm not doing
enough or I can't take time off, or--. Like, put you, on the one hand, like, I get four weeks
vacation and I have to use them because, you know, I-legally, you have to give me the
days, but I can only--. If I don't use them, I lose them. And then the next breath, you're
like, 'You can't leave now, we need you.' It's like--.

ND: And not your family.

LS: 'Wait, I have to, but I can't?' And I--. Right. But I'm feeling what am I doing
wrong? I'm failing- like I'm not--. Like, I'm not providing--.

ND: Now you're numb.

LS: You know it's like, [Vocalizes] I can't handle it and then (inaudible - 00:47:22).

ND: Mm-hmm.

[ND intermittently agrees]

JM: Can we go back to, um, the privatization of public education for a minute? I really think, um, everybody who is informed in New Orleans, it's our responsibility to inform people who aren't from here, because there's this false narrative about this- about how successful this experiment is and if we can't measure the results of this experiment yet. You know, you measure--.

ND: And there hasn't been growth in three years.

JM: You measure public-public education and education over time. And, um, you know, I think this false narrative in a- where you have other communities saying, 'We want to do it just like New Orleans.' We need to say, like, 'Wait a minute, wait a minute. We don't know if this shit is working.'

ND: But when is corporate--.

JM: Yeah, it's money.

ND: Like, to your point, when is corporate, it's not even us who are spreading the false narrative. When Banana Republic, who's back and renewed, can go and tell their sister organization in Chicago that it's working, they all are coming from the same dome, like--.

LS: Yeah, that's something I hear all the time.

JM: Working for--.

LS: I don't have kids in school here, but I hear it all the time: 'Oh, this is, like, so awesome and everything's great.' I'm going like, [Pause] 'Wha-what kool aid am I supposed to drink on this one?'

PW: [Laughs]

Unknown: [Snaps]

LS: Like, where am I (inaudible - 00:48:34) information--.

ND: And God forbid you don't drink the kool aid.

LS: Right. Like, you know, where am I supposed to stand on this? 'Cause I don't have kids, and there's, like, people like me who don't have kids who are like, 'Oh, it doesn't matter.' And I'm going like, 'What do you mean, 'it doesn't matter?'" Like, I'm forty-five. Like, I'm not gonna be president, nor do I want to. Like, I'm gonna be sixty when these people are like, these young- youth are out here like, 'Wait a minute, I--. It does matter. Sorry.'

JM: I--. Yeah. Let me give you a data point. Um, in 2011 or '12, one of- there were more than 47,000 out of school suspensions in the public and charter school system in New Orleans Parish.

ND: How many?

JM: 47,000.

PW: I can believe that.

JM: There were not even 47,000 students. So it's an-an average of more than one out of school suspension per student. And, you know, whenever you hear about, you know, some--.

LS: How is that productive?

JM: Violent crime? Just notice the age of the victim and the suspect and subtract ten and a half and think to yourself, 'What has this child or young adult experienced since Katrina?'

PW: Right.

JM: And--.

LS: But no one's addressing--.

JM: That-that we never, we never--.

LS: Trauma.

JM: We- we never- we never addressed it. And think about, you know, these young people in their most formative years, um, if they were displaced, and returned, and they came back, and everybody was telling them that all of the social network and institutions that they relied on --their school was terrible, their teachers were incompetent-- um, and they came back and all of the social networks that supported their families, their churches, um, their neighbors, all of that is just completely disintegrated. And that's- that--. And then, their parents have to navigate this crazy market system of public education. And just so--. I mean, just--. I think that we really--.

LS: It makes me so sad.

JM: We really don't understand, you know, what's at risk with this experiment that's going on. And it's important for people who pay attention here to let people know, you know, when people ask you about it from other cities, or if you got friends or people in your networks, to know I- we're still struggling with this thing. It's not--. And a part of the problem with it- this experiment is we never had a consensus at the beginning about how to measure it, how to measure the outcomes of the experiment. They just said, 'No, we don't want a school system that is accountable to the public, to the citizens, or voters. We're going to take it over, we know how to do this.' And to this day, mo-most of the schools are not accountable in any way. I mean, they're either R.S.D., charter, or--.

LS: 'Cause they know how to do something they've never done before.

ND: Like, I'm thinking about how there's a school, uh, I think, it's Green--.

LS: That was sarcastic.

ND: Green--.

JM: Green. Samuel Green.

ND: Yeah, where they arrest you. If you have a fight, you're arrested. And it's a middle school.

PW: Yeah.

JM: Yeah.

PW: I've seen some scary things in public schools. I went to many public schools here, and, um, it's either suspended, or arrested. Um, I guess, to- it's--. With the parents and stuff like that, uh, they will call parents and come talk to their child, they beat the child in front of the whole class, (inaudible - 00:51:54)

ND: I mean, (inaudible - 00:51:55) just got for down for beatin' kids.

PW: Yeah. So it's-it's--.

ND: Just recently.

PW: I don't know, I--. Like I said, it's a good and a bad thing. I just feel like the community doesn't have the knowledge to work with their own kids and work with the teacher because they're working nonstop. They don't even have time to go sit-in in a class with their kids or really teach their kid discipline. The kids are being raised--.

LS: 'Cause they live on the West Bank, and are spending two hours commuting to work.

[Crosstalk]

PW: Yeah, it's a- it's a- it's a cycle.

LS: It's all connected.

ND: It- I think it--.

[Crosstalk ends]

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JM: You know I think part of the problem with this experiment, too, is we don't have neighborhood schools anymore. And the- and the role of a school in a neighborhood, you know, and how a neighborhood really took equity and tried--. They wanted their school to do well, even if you didn't have kids in the school. I mean--.

ND: You went to that school football game.

[Crosstalk]

LS: It was, like, a center of (inaudible - 00:52:41)

JM: You went to that football game. And when that- when your neighborhood school band was marching in the Mardi Gras parade, you would cheer.

PW: Yeah, no, definitely.

LS: It was, like, pride. There was pride. Like, the sense of community, I think, has changed so much around schools, and just in general, like, cell phones, headsets, like, there's not as much common ground anymore, because we've all sort of shut ourselves off a little bit. Numbness and kind of staying in our own little world. I mean, when I grew up, everybody- we knew everybody.

PW: Yeah, you had to converse--.

LS: If I picked a tomato from my neighbor's yard and came home with it, and my mom's like, 'Where'd you get that tomato?' It was like, 'You're going over there. I'm going with you and you're going to apologize to her and give the tomato back.' It's, like, I--. Years ago, there was a little girl who lived next door to me, and she spray painted my house and it's like, you know, like wrote "oreo" on it and kind of chucked, 'cause it's kind of funny, but at the same time, I'm like, 'Why did you do this?' Like, 'I didn't do it.' And it's like, 'M'kay, like, what it- what do you mean? Like, what--?' Obviously looking for attention, like, how can I help you or whatever, like, and she can't even communicate. So, I knock on the door, like, 'Okay, just lettin' you know,' like, 'My daughter didn't do that. Da-da-da-da-da.' Like, immune to, like, her own child. Like, was so caught up in her own life. It's like- so the community, like, is supposed to support (inaudible - 00:54:03) I don't have kids, but that's my neighbor. You know, and that's important to me.

PW: Yeah.

ND: And I think that brings, like, back to your point, which I think is like--. I felt--. Because I think about a lot--. So I asked my--. W-we did this activity with my kids, and we were talking about, like, um, gender differences across institutions, and we did slavery, prison, and school. What I found so interesting is, like, how vocally my kids were admitting to how they do not respect their female teachers. Like, they just have lesser respect and it was like--. And (inaudible - 00:54:35) I'm 4'11", you know, I'm a little bitty thing, and, like, I teach freshmen. And, you know, freshmen are, like, savage Chihuahuas and they're just- they're there, and I was like, you know, 'What is it? What is

it that you call respect?' And it's like, 'Well, Ms. D, you gotta cuss at us more, you gotta yell at us more, like, you got to get loud with us. Like, you can't--.'

PW: Because that's how their parents talk to them.

ND: Yeah.

LS: Right.

ND: 'You can't- you can't be Mr. Brian and bang on the wall. But if you bang on the walls, we ain't gonna take it seriously.' So I think, like, I'm up against this wall--.

LS: God, I was way more intimidated by my female teachers. Like, anybody divinely feminine, I was like--.

ND: But it's not like, you know, I think--.

LS: No, it's not the same.

ND: And I think I'm up against this wall with, like — I absolutely hate when I have to yell at these children, you know? And I was, like, telling them, like, 'When you- when I have to yell at you to get your attention, it makes me feel dehumanized. Now I feel like a monster, right? Now I feel like a direct product of the system, and I'm just, like, being oppressed and oppressing you and none of us are getting our liberation.' But it's like, but then, that's the only thing y'all respond to — Or-or unless, I'm a white male from the east, then I get all your respect. If I'm, like, from, like- he's from Manchester, like, whoever, you know?

LS: Is it really respect, though? Or is it something else? Like, that's what they define--.

ND: I think--.

LS: Respect is what you're saying?

ND: I think it's how they defin--. I think--. I don't know, I think (inaudible - 00:55:50) would call it respect. I don't know if they know it's not respectful but like, your ability to, like, not--. Like, the violence that I get and against, like, the violence that these Black ma-males get--. Like, my glass doors have been broken, and, like, you know, I've been, like, hit by students, but, like, you wouldn't do that to Mr. Brian--.

LS: Right.

ND: Because, physically, you fear him.

JM: Mm.

ND: So, it's, like, weird, like, how do we, like--.

LS: You nailed it: physically fear him.

ND: Mm-hmm. And then we talked about--.

LS: Is that really respect, though?

ND: Yeah.

LS: I mean, it's the wrong kind, in my opinion.

ND: Well, it's oppression, too, right?

LS: Yeah. Totally.

JM: Mm-hmm.

ND: Because we're talking about, like, these-these Black males' bodies being, like, oppressed by this image of, like, you're angry and scary, but then, privileged in their oppression, like, over these-these female teachers. And back to your point, like, we're

having--. Where--? What does it look like to have community systems in place? That, you know, are somewhat aligning with discipline--.

LS: And supportive.

ND: To reverse this. Yeah.

LS: Yeah.

PW: I mean, they've been doing- trying to do that since I was in middle school.

ND: Mm.

PW: Teacher parent meetings, and it doesn't really- it's not really effective 'cause parents are busy. They--.

LS: They don't show up.

PW: They--. And if--. It's, like, if we even brought my parents to school, even for something remotely bad, it's bad on me.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm.

PW: I'm getting my butt whipped; my dad doesn't want to hear that.

LS: The phone call is bad enough, right?

ND: Mm-hmm.

PW: Yeah, you know, he doesn't want to hear that. So, now I'm getting whipped at home because of you, now I'm taking my anger out on my teacher, because you're me getting me in trouble at home, and I don't want to see you every day, I'm going to just act out just because you got me in trouble.

JM: Mm-hmm.

LS: Right, right, right.

PW: It's like a cycle.

ND: And with the way the school day is, you spend more time with me, and at school, than you do at home now.

PW: Right.

NG: Yeah.

PW: Right.

JM: Yeah, and es-especially when a teacher is trying--.

LS: There's no reward, it's always punishment.

JM: To intervene for- in the best interest of the student.

PW: Right.

ND: Mm-hmm.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JM: Um, and I guess--. Well, I come from a f- a family of teachers. My mother was a teacher, my grandmother was a teacher, aunts and uncles were teachers. But I think the relationship between, um, teachers and students twenty or thirty years ago was completely different. Um, and I think that teachers probably had more license to intervene at school, um, and not necessarily involve the parents. Um, and I think that's ma-maybe why it's so difficult in addition to the two generations of parents who didn't--.

ND: Do you think it's a product of-of privatized pris- --uh, I almost said prison system-- school system? Freudian slip.

JM: The privatized school to prison pipeline you mean?

ND: Yes, basically.

[Laughter]

ND: All the things.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

JM: I think- I think that's part of it. But I also think that, um, there're a second generation of parents in a lot of cases who never learned parenting from their-their parents. They never learned parenting skills from their parents. And I think, unfortunately, it traces back to, like, the crack epi-epidemic in the mid 80s. So the children and grandchildren of those people who were caught up in that, and who were victims of the crack epi-epidemic and became addicted, the-the sort of parenting traditions and standards and values that are passed on through families, in a lot of ways was interrupted and never resumed. So, um, even though the parents of a seventh grader today might not be on crack, but they- they never learned the parenting--.

PW: They never learned how to address their kids, talk to their kids and--.

JM: They never learned the parenting skills from their parents and grandparents.

PW: Yeah, definitely.

ND: I mean, that makes sense. I was telling a parent how I had this student who's sixteen and a freshman. I sat her at my desk because she was, like, being disruptive in class, and she ate my lunch out my lunch bag at my desk.

PW: Wow.

ND: I called her mother and told her what happened, and her mother's first thing that came out of her mouth was, 'Well, was she hungry?' And I said, 'I'm-I'm sorry. Um--.'

PW: Oh, my god.

ND: 'I'm sorry. What?' But, like, she was in all out seriousness, you know what I mean? And like-like, the response was, like, not that, like, her child had stolen something from their teacher, it was, like-like, 'Well, was she hungry?' and like, 'What are you doing? Like, 'Well- how- what- was school lunch good today?' and like, 'That's your problem.'

LS: Yeah, there--. That's, like, so many levels--.

NG: Yeah.

LS: On their, like--.

ND: And I--.

LS: Just, like--.

ND: Mm-hmm.

ND: And, and when you talk about, like--. I think--. I've been thinking a lot about, like, the privatization of it and, like, who the blame is getting taught. Like, I think so often when I, like, see discussions, it's like, 'The teacher. The teacher is the terrorist.' But I'm like, 'The teacher is going on accordance with a system.'

LS: It's like blame--.

ND: Right.

LS: And responsibility.

ND: Mm-hmm.

LS: It's like, 'wait, wait, wait, wait, wait.'

ND: Meanwhile, my administrators are running free in freeland, you know what I mean? Like, a pa-parent will get K.I.-K.I.P.P. to come and curse my ass out, but, like, you will never see my principal, or you will never see the C.E.O. of K.I.P.P., but it's my fault. And then, what does that mean for me, who is, like, Black, tryna teach Black children? Now, I'm pushed out of this space, because I've been a victim of so much violence, and now you're going to come straight out of Upper East College in New York and take my space, and you're going to be given this "respect." You know, like, what does that--? What does that mean?

LS: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. That's like so many layers in there, too.

PW: A challenge.

ND: Mm-hmm.

JM: Mm.

PW: There's so many different, I think, problems going on that there's really no way to address it, too, like.

ND: Yeah.

LS: They're-they're so layered, and they're so, like, it happens simultaneously, it's like--.

ND: Yeah.

LS: Like, where-where do you start peeling the onion away, and there's like, you know, like, to get to the root, for example, but there's so many roots, you know?

CA: Yeah.

ND: Mm.

PW: Community- it starts in a community. Like, where I'm from, school is optional. Like, if you got school, like, you're a nerd. Like, 'Oh, you-you book smart, huh?' Like--.

LS: Like when you say school, you mean school--?

PW: I mean, high school--.

LS: Right. Exactly.

PW: I'm mean, not college — high school.

ND: Yeah.

LS: I'm clarifying for those that are listening

PW: 'Oh, you go to school everyday? Oh, you must be smart,' and I'm like, 'No, I go to school because my mom will kick my butt if I didn't, like--.'

ND: Hmm.

LS: Yeah.

PW: You know, it's--.

LS: Like, you just go.

PW: It's an--. Like, there it's like an option. Like, 'Oh, you don't want to come hang out with us?' 'No, I don't.'

JM: Where did you go to high school?

PW: I went to McMane.

JM: Mm-hmm.

PW: But, um, I grew up in the third ward, so, like, around, uh, the Magnolia and the Melphanine projects.

JM: Mm.

LS: Yeah.

PW: So, school was optional, like.

LS: That's nuts

ND: Hm.

PW: It's crazy.

LS: I, uh--.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

CS: (inaudible - 01:01:55 to 01:02:05)

PW: When I went to (inaudible - 01:02:06) I felt so much more prideful in my education. It made me feel important.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm.

CS: Yeah, the personal relationship with my teachers still, 'cause they had such an impact (inaudible - 1:02:15)

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Mm.

LS: See, that's the thing, like, I feel like you're put in a situation and you're forced to, like, negatively reinforce--.

ND: Oh, absolutely.

LS: All the crap that goes on in school. Whereas in that environment, you're put in a position where you can positively reinforce children.

CS: Yeah.

ND: Mm-hmm.

LS: Which is what anybody needs. I don't--.

ND: And then, those teachers are given more resources.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LS: Break me down, fine, but if you're going to break me down then show me how to pick it back up together, or, like, focus something on, 'You know what, Lena? This was really good. Now, what you could do better is this,' or 'You know what, like, you really messed on this part,' or however you want to — I don't even care if you give me the positive or the negative first, but if you cut me down in any way, or you give me some constructive criticism, or you just straight up criticize and judge me, at least throw me a bone. At least throw me a bone, like, don't leave me hanging there going like--. Again, don't take things personally, but come on, like, you don't know that when you're younger. You kind of take everything personally. Or you don't and you're totally numb because you don't know anything at all — ignorance. Ignorance is bliss. Boy, oh, boy. There is so much truth in that.

ND: I'm also curious about, like, the correlation of s- um, school to prison here, right? With like, both the-the- Louisiana b-being ranked 49th in the country in education, and, then having the largest, like, prison population. Like, what is that? What is it? What is the root? What is the meaning?

JV: Just gonna let you know, we have about five minutes left before you can turn the session over.

MULTIPLE SPEAKERS: Okay.

JV: S,o if there are any cards you are dying to or if you wanna try to get to the rest of the deck.

ND: Yeah.

CS: Um, I can pass around--. There is one that I want to discuss this, this, and this. You guys can hold them. These are my priorities (inaudible - 01:04:20).

NG: These two?

CS: And here's some other ones.

NG: *How's Black life--*.

LS: I-I like the Charity one.

JM: [Laughs]

LS: Just 'cause I'm in healthcare, so I have to--. Like, I think that affects everything here, too. And we're like, on-in dire straits and healthcare on the city, which--.

CS: Do you--.

PW: I like that one

CS: Do you know much about Charity Hospital?

PW: Not significantly, no.

LS: But you do. Like, you were here, like--.

JM: You do.

[Crosstalk]

PW: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I mean, I'm here to--.

JM: Were-were you born at Charity?

PW: Yeah, I was born at Charity.

LS: There you go, right?

JM: You a Charity Hospital baby, come on.

PW: [Laughs]

[Crosstalk ends]

ND: So was it closed?

LS: Were you?

JW: Well--.

CS: I wasn't. I wasn't born in Charity hospital, but, um, I have family members who were, um, doctors and they worked in the hospitals during Katrina, not Charity, (inaudible - 01:05:01 to 01:05:04) and it was just really confusing--.

JM: But, you--.

CS: That it was, like, so (inaudible - 01:05:10).

JM: Right. So, I organized the lawsuit, that lawsuit, too, to force them to reopen Charity Hospital because it was not damaged. And this is another thing, just like public education, that they wanted to move to a privatized model. And it was a big--.

LS: Which, by the way, isn't working.

JM: Which, by the way, yeah. I mean, it's--.

CS: Charity Hospital, uh, I think, is the oldest, uh, teaching hospital--

JM: Second oldest.

CS: Second oldest teaching hospital, like--.

LS: One of the--. Is it it was at one point, the largest hospital with the largest number of beds, even though they weren't utilized in the country. I don't know if that--. They got bigger hospitals now, but architecturally unique--.

ND: Where was it?

JM: It's still standing. It's on Canal- on Tulane.

CS: It's a- it's a ghost...

LS: It's that big building that looks like a funeral home.

PW: Big building that they say they see ghosts all the time.

JM: So, the state actually claimed to FEMA that the buildings destroyed 51 percent. And it absolutely was not. I mean--.

PW: You can still see, like, the equipment still in there, like, on the beds and stuff.

JM: And they, actually, they could have reopened it five weeks after Katrina.

General (inaudible - 01:06:14), the General that came down here actually called up the governor and said, 'I cleaned up the hospital. It's clean. It's ready to reopen. It--.'

ND: Was (inaudible - 01:06:20) here before Katrina?

JM: Hm?

PW: (inaudible - 01:06:22).

ND: (inaudible - 01:06:23)?

JM: (inaudible - 01:06:23), yeah.

ND: Okay.

JM: And Governor Blanco said--.

PW: [Laughs]

JM: 'Thank you, but we're not gonna reopen that hospital.'

PW: Yeah. Wow, I didn't know that.

JM: And then, a year and a half later, we sue them.

CS: (inaudible - 01:06:34)

PW: Yeah, 'cause everyone went there.

LS: It was such a--.

JM: Well, yeah, it was to discour--.

LS: (inaudible - 01:06:38)

JM: It was actually to discourage working poor people from returning. I mean, that was clearly what they intended to do.

ND: Hm.

[Speakers intermittently agree]

LS: There were so many culturally cool things about New Orleans, too. Like, I remember, I worked at Charity for a year in mental health services, and I'd never worked in a hospital before, period. We used to get, like, a little ticket every day so you could have lunch. And I always thought hospital cafeterias like, I think, gross, right? Oh, my God. Still, to this day, the best gumbo I've ever had in my life came from Charity Hospital cafeteria. Some of the best food ever. And it's like, like, he said, just, you know, like, no more people to work. Like, that whole--. I-I mean, like, there is an entire population of people that no longer had jobs and good jobs, you know, at that time.

[ND intermittently agrees]

JM: And, you know, it's also like the privatization of public education. The objective was not to provide better healthcare, or, you know, higher quality of healthcare. I mean, it was, you know, an economic sort of venture because they wanted to privatize it, you know. The objective with the privatization of public education wasn't

necessarily to provide, you know, better education. I mean, it was all m-money driving it all.

ND: Hmm.

CS: (inaudible - 01:07:58 to 01:08:02) [Pause] I'm always like--. I'm-I'm talking about this in my residency project.

PW: *Discuss historical legacies, defining race and class unique to New Orleans.*

Hmm.

CS: Like, just the--?

LS: Sure.

PW: That's one thing I can never really explain about, like, what makes us so unique? I don't know. It's (inaudible - 01:08:25)

CS: I had to explain the-the paper bag test to my friend from Australia--.

PW: Uh-huh.

CS: I think (inaudible - 01:08:31)

PW: Yeah.

CS: (inaudible - 01:08:32)--.

[Laughs]

LS: I didn't know anything about any of that when I moved to-to the South, obviously. Like, I grew up in an environment where there was no black and white, like, color water straight up. And I got more questions when I moved here. That question like, 'What are you?' And then, I'm like, 'What do you mean? What-what am I?'

[AUDIO ENDS]

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