

STUDY ON WHITE PEOPLE

The Reminiscences of

Samantha Brown

INCITE

Columbia University

2017

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Samantha Brown conducted by Whitney Dow on December 17th, 2017. This interview is part of the Study on White People.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that they are reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

ATC

Session #1 (video)

Interviewee: Samantha Brown

Location: Richmond, VA

Interviewer: Whitney Dow

Date: December 17th, 2017

Q: So first of all, can you tell me your name, your age, where you're from, and a little about yourself?

Brown: [15:26:04] Okay. My name is Samantha Brown. I am forty-five years old. And originally from Westchester County, New York. I've been in Richmond now for fifteen years, unbelievably. Little bit about myself. Where do we start?

Q: I don't know. Maybe with your job, your family, your athletic pursuits, I don't know, some things that are important to you.

Brown: [15:26:32] Okay, all right. I am an affordable housing developer. I've been doing that for about twelve years. My master's degree is in urban planning. And kind of fell into affordable housing, which was a great place to fall. I do enjoy what I do. And I have been divorced now—well, very recently. But separated for over a year, and divorced. I have a daughter who's seventeen. And her name is Rose [phonetic]. And I forget what else [unclear].

Q: Is she a senior?

Brown: She's a junior.

Q: Is she thinking about colleges?

Brown: She is.

Q: And what is she thinking?

Brown: This is funny. She's a dancer, so she wants to major in dance choreography. And I'm trying to lead her more towards like, physical therapy and dance therapy. So she actually can have a job in ten years. So, she was thinking about—I've steered her away from New York schools.

Q: Why have you steered her away from New York schools?

Brown: Well, I'm trying to steer her towards Virginia schools. Because the trust fund goes a lot further in state than it does out of state.

Q: I get you. But the fun goes a lot further in New York City when you're in college, as someone from Westchester well knows, than it does in Charlottesville.

Brown: You are correct.

Q: Can you tell me your name, your age, where you're from, and a little bit about yourself?

Brown: [15:30:42] My name is Samantha Brown. I'm forty-five years old. I am originally from Westchester County, New York. I've lived in Richmond, Virginia for the past fifteen years. I am an affordable housing developer. I've been doing this work for about fifteen years. No, that's not right. Twelve years. I've been in Richmond for fifteen years. And before that, I was in local government. My master's is in urban planning. Did that for about three years and did not like it at all, and so kind of fell into affordable housing, which I love, and has been a good experience every day for the last twelve years.

Q: What is an affordable housing developer? Is it your own company? You develop it? Or do you work for the state? Or what is an affordable housing developer?

Brown: [15:31:32] I work for a nonprofit. And I don't know if I'm allowed to—should I say the name?

Q: You don't need to say the name.

Brown: [15:31:38] Okay. We're a large nonprofit, though. Regionally based. Our footprint is from Florida to Maryland. And we either build new construction, or we renovate existing apartments. And what I do as an affordable housing—well, as the developer is really soup to nuts. I'll do everything from identifying property to purchase, negotiating the purchase, whether it's an existing structure or it's just vacant land, and then putting together the funds to build or renovate the project. And so, a project can take up to anywhere from two to five years. And

lately it's more like five years. And so we also, me and my team, we manage it through construction. So, can take a long time.

Q: And I'm sorry, I'm just trying to—with a nonprofit affordable housing developer—is that the money made gets put back into the company to make more affordable housing? It's more of an NGO [Non-Governmental Organization] than a—

Brown: [15:32:48] Yes. Yes, we don't have shareholders or anybody that—other than getting a paycheck, nobody gets paid. And the money that we use to develop affordable housing mostly comes from federal, state, local subsidized funding sources.

Q: What compelled you to get involved in this project? To fill out the survey, to agree to the interview, to run over here at a fast clip to talk to me?

Brown: [15:33:20] I guess I must have seen—did you guys put out like an ad on Facebook?

Q: Yes.

Brown: [15:33:27] Yes. So, this is what I did. While I'm at work when I need to look away, I look at Facebook and this came up. And I would say I'm particularly interested in issues of race. And obviously now is a pretty active time. It's been sort of in the forefront. And I guess that makes me realize why you chose Richmond. But between Richmond and Charlottesville, and everything that had been going on with the monuments and the rallies in Charlottesville. It's

something that I was very, very interested in, issues of race, sort of race is the elephant in the room. Why white and black people and people of all different races can't sit and have an open conversation with each other. I would say I was very interested in that many, many years ago and then sort of got into the complacency of life and marriage and raising a child. And so, when all these issues started coming back up it sort of reminded me of what I cared about. So, this was interesting to me.

Q: So tell me a little bit about how you grew up, the town you grew up in. Your family makeup. Your community. Was it diverse, homogenized? So, how was race processed in your community and your family growing up?

Brown: [15:35:04] So I grew up in Westchester County, New York, which I think back in the '80s they called it the gold coast. So, I would say that I come from privilege for sure. I grew up in a Jewish household. And I would say that it was very homogenous. There was probably more Jews than what you would see in other parts of the country. But certainly, all white. I think we maybe had two Asian kids and a handful of black kids. And that was it. So, I would say that I grew up not really thinking about race. And growing up in a New York Jewish household, I grew up I think hearing a lot of the prejudices, stereotypes that you might hear from New York Jews.

Q: Can you give me an example of what those are?

Brown: [15:36:09] Well, some words that I can't even say. Just the way that my grandparents or even my father would refer to black people. There was not a real high regard for black people in

my household. And I will say that I think that as my father has gotten older he certainly has expressed more of a respect for black people than it seemed to me when we were growing up. And I think that maybe that's because that language, that talk, is so learned. We don't even know that we're doing it or saying it or being offensive when we do it. And so now when I hear my father talk as an adult—and these fellows outside that are always interrupting.

Q: Just once a day now.

Brown: Just once a day.

Q: So yes. So, you were saying learned and—

Brown: [15:37:33] And for my father I think it was learned. And so, I'm giving him the benefit of the doubt now I guess that—so those stereotypes that I heard growing up is not the way that he really thinks. And so, I mean I never heard—there was never anything really overtly negative or offensive. Not in my home or outside my home. But just sort of it was a nonissue growing up in Westchester County, New York.

Q: So, if there were no people of color in your environment where do you think these negative feelings about black people came from?

Brown: [15:38:20] Well, you mean for my father or for—?

Q: Your father and grandparents, yes.

Brown: [15:38:23] Well, so I mean my father grew up in Mount Vernon, which was probably, I don't know, I guess at some point it was mostly white. And then over the years, over the sixty years that my grandparents lived there it transitioned to mostly black. And affluent black, but still for them I think what they saw, having—I don't know where their prejudices came from. It's cultural, environmental, I don't know where that it came from. But then seeing their entire neighborhood turn over to African American. I guess that's where some of those negative stereotypes came from.

Q: And how did this conversation in your family and your experience from this place affect your own view of yourself as a white woman?

Brown: [15:39:26] Well, that's interesting. I don't think I ever reflected on it until I—on my own view as a white woman until I lived in areas that were mostly black. And I would recognize certain things. And so, the first time I think I lived in an area that was mostly black or African American was when I lived in College Park, Maryland. And that was for graduate school. And I think there I noticed also—I would sort of stop myself. I'd be in the mall and I'd sort of stop myself and look around and be like, "Oh. I'm the only white person here." And what I was noticing was that I didn't notice it. And then this sort of transition. When we moved to Richmond, our neighborhood school was John B. Cary [Elementary School], which was ninety-five percent black. And there was a real movement in our neighborhood for all the white folks to bring their kids and go to our neighborhood schools. So, it's our neighborhood school.

And we did for a couple years. It's interesting. I have so many stories from this. But I certainly went in there. I mean, my kid was in pre-K and kindergarten there. I wanted to be involved. And so, I wanted to be on the PTA. I wanted to plan the carnival. I wanted to do all these things. And so I went in there, and again, I think that's my white arrogance is that I didn't see any difference. I just wanted to go in there and do what I wanted to do. And I got some okay feedback from that, and I got some negative feedback from that.

One person said, "You see yourself as the great white hope swooping in to try and save the school." And I'm thinking, What? And I don't even want to call it reverse racism or anything. It just is. We all have our negative stereotypes. And unfortunately, a lot of people, most people, judge someone by the color of their skin. Or make assumptions about someone because of the color of their skin. So, we were only there for a couple years. And it just got to the point where there was friction. At some point I just decided okay, this is not my fight. But I think more importantly the reason that we chose to move Rose out of that school and into the mostly white somewhat mixed school down the block was because Rose was coming home with negative stereotypes, which I didn't even realize was going to happen.

She was going to a school that was ninety-five percent black. So, every negative thing that she saw happening, she saw happening by a black person. And she made that association as a six-year-old. And one day she came home. We were sitting over dinner and she said, "Mommy, why are all black people mean?" And I went, "[gasps] Holy crap, what am I doing to this kid?" Unintended consequences here. Here I thought I was trying to promote diversity and show her

what the world is like. Well, that's not what the world is like. And so, I was starting to build negative stereotypes in her by putting her in the situation. And I don't know what the right answer is. But I know that this kid was coming home with the wrong message.

Q: It's very, very, very complicated. And it's hard to know. Do you say, "Well, I'm going to sacrifice my kid for an idea? What's my responsibility in situations? How can I make my community better?" That's a very complicated situation. Tell me a little bit about your own sense of, how would you describe yourself? What is the hierarchy of your identity in how you think of yourself? What's the most important aspect of you? Your race? Your gender? Your job? You're a mother. You're an athlete. You're a Northerner. You're a carpetbagger. I don't know.

Brown: [15:44:13] Okay. So, you asked me what is the—

Q: What's the most important thing? The thing about you, your identity, that you feel has impacted your life most. And then go down the line a little bit.

Brown: [15:44:27] Okay. So, things that have impacted my identity the most. Or things about my identity that have impacted my life the most. I think certainly being a woman has impacted my identity and my life and my career. I work in an industry that's mostly men. And again, I do this the same way that I'm in the school that's ninety-five percent black and I don't even realize, I don't even notice. It's the same thing at work, where I have these moments where all of a sudden, I realize I'm the only woman at the table. And those are the moments for doubt. Those are the moments where it's like oh, crap, everything's going great, now I just realize that. And I

guess I see being the only woman at the table, or being the woman, as negative. That I have to have a moment of recognition. And say, “Okay, yes, you’re the only woman at the table. But keep going, they seem to be listening to you, don’t let anybody know, don’t let on that you know you’re a woman.”

Gosh. What else about my identity that has defined my life? It’s such a good question and so hard to answer right here. So, yes. Being white has given me privilege. Coming from affluence has given me privilege. And maybe even being a woman has given me privilege. All those things have allowed me certain opportunities to end up where I am. All those things have probably allowed me certain disadvantages too.

Q: Do you feel like your gender has had a bigger impact on your life or your race?

Brown: [15:46:37] I’d probably say gender has had a bigger impact on my life than my race. Why? Well, because I think being white hasn’t limited me in any way.

Q: So maybe the question is, has being white advantaged you more than being a woman has disadvantaged you.

Brown: [15:47:10] Yes, probably. Probably being white has advantaged me more than being a woman has disadvantaged me.

Q: And you know what's interesting about that, is that—but when you talk about your identity you focus on the woman first. Right? The woman thing is the thing. Even though take away positive or negative, you're saying that whiteness has had a bigger impact on you.

Brown: [15:47:37] Right. Whiteness has had such a big impact on me that I don't have to think about it.

Q: Right. You're Jewish. Were you raised Jewish? Did you go temple? All that stuff?

Brown: [15:47:50] I was raised Jewish. Very Reform Jewish. Very much Hanukkah bush Jewish. Christmas tree that was called a Hanukkah bush.

Q: Did you have a bat—bas [sic] mitzvah?

Brown: I did not, no.

Q: Because sometimes when I talk to Jewish people I'll ask the question are Jews white.

Brown: [15:48:12] Well, you even had a question on the original survey that asked about ethnicity. And I forget what the question was, but I hesitated. Because I was like, "Oh. Well, Jewish is ethnicity." And then I decided, no, I'm not going to [laughs]—not going to bother to answer it that way. So, go back to your question.

Q: My question is, are Jews white. And I ask this question because whenever I talk to Jewish people they have radically different responses to the question are Jews white.

Brown: [15:48:46] Are Jews white. I think Jews can be all colors. I've seen all colors of Jew.

Q: United colors of Jew?

Brown: Yes.

Q: Did you ever feel discrimination because you were Jewish?

Brown: [15:49:03] A couple times I felt discrimination from being Jewish. One time in college. People look at me and they see blond hair, blue eyes, and they don't think Jewish. Most of the time. So, if you're in a room of mixed company and nobody knows that you're Jewish, sometimes some of the negative stereotypes come out and people say things that they wouldn't if they knew that you were Jewish. So, somebody said something about Jews in Florida and something to the negative. But that's interesting too. And I don't know why I do this, but I go back to my daughter who really was raised nothing because my ex-husband grew up very mildly Episcopalian, really nothing. I didn't grow up with a ton of religion. And I think both of us consider ourselves agnostic on the cliff of atheist. And so, we raised our daughter to believe that God is the earth and that kind of thing. But in the last couple years she's become very interested in Judaism. And I don't know if it's Judaism as a status symbol.

There's a level of pride associated with Judaism when you come from a people that's been persecuted and overcome with such a deep and rich history. I think that there's a level of pride that goes along with being Jewish. During college I spent six months on kibbutz. And that was sort of how I really came into my own as a cultural Jew. And really just identifying Jew as identity rather than religion, or something else. But so my daughter, she's become interested. And in the last year we've joined a temple. She likes going to service. She's talked about getting a bat mitzvah.

Q: At seventeen can you still do a bat mitzvah?

Brown: [15:51:14] You can. So when we sat down with the rabbi, we found out that if you are a Jewish girl or Jewish boy at twelve and a half you're automatically bat mitzvah or bar mitzvah. It's just a thing. It happens. It's done. And so, having the party and getting up and saying prayers from the Torah is just an added benefit. So, she can do that if she chooses she wants to do it at any point. My stepmother got bat mitzvahed at sixty-five years old.

Q: So it's like puberty, it just happens.

Brown: It just happens.

Q: And are you happy that you're white?

Brown: [15:52:04] Am I happy that I'm white? Am I happy that I'm white? You know, being white is like your US passport, I think. It's not something that you should want to give up. Would I be sad if I was a different color? I don't think I would be sad if I was a different color. But we've already said white brings privilege. And if not privilege, white is the path of least resistance. So, I don't know how to answer that. Am I happy that I'm white? I don't go around celebrating the fact that I'm white. I wouldn't go around celebrating the fact that I'm white. But I don't think being white is something you give up.

Q: Have you ever used your race consciously to get something you wanted or change a situation or navigate a situation a particular way?

Brown: [15:53:23] I don't think I've ever used my race to navigate or change a situation. I would say I've used my gender to do that. I can't think of an instance where being white would help me manipulate a situation. Again, it's the path of least resistance. So being white, I never ran into an obstacle that I would have to get around and be like, "Yo, but I'm white. [laughs] Let me show you how white I am, and we'll work this out." But as a woman, you can use the more subtle bits of being a woman to manipulate a situation.

Q: Maybe it's even just assuming that there's going to be no resistance in the situation. You get pulled over for the traffic ticket. And you can assume that they assume you're not a threat or whatever it is like that.

Brown: [15:54:19] Yes. Yes. So, yes. And so those are things that I don't even spend time thinking about because I'm already white. And if I get pulled over those are just the things that I don't even know how to phrase it but yes, I don't ever assume that a police officer is going to see me as a threat. That brings up another story.

Q: I love stories.

Brown: [15:54:51] So I was living in Gaithersburg, Maryland in the Kentlands, which is a very affluent area in Maryland. This was just a couple years ago. Was up there for a year. And I was walking around. And it was probably early in the morning. There weren't that many people on the street. It was near a little downtown area. And I was walking down the street and there was an African American man in front of me, and my first instinct was to cross the street. At that moment I had the realization. Hey, dummy, you're in Kentlands. Everybody here is fricking wealthy. Don't fricking cross the street. Like so my immediate and ugly response was, there's a black man on the corner, cross the street and get away from him. And I had to remind myself where I was. And there was still some discomfort, but I didn't cross the street. I don't know what that had to do with your last question.

Q: Had everything to do with it. How did that make you feel that you had that? What did it make you think about yourself that you would have that response?

Brown: [15:56:11] So having that response, I don't think that—it just made me think to myself, Hey, stupid, don't judge someone by their color. Instead judge them by their economic class.

[laughs] Is what I did. I think I was raised with the stereotypes. They live in my brain. And so, when they come up I'm able to at least recognize them. And try and act against them. I don't get upset with myself. I just—I think I sort of see it as a victory. Like ah, I recognized what I was doing, and I was able to divert from that unconscious thought.

Q: What is it that makes you white?

Brown: [15:57:18] The only thing that makes me white is the color of my skin.

Q: So that means, that what makes you white is that people perceive you as white?

Brown: [15:57:31] Yes, I think that what makes me white is how other people perceive me, sure. That's only what they see.

Q: And how does that interact with how you perceive yourself? Do you perceive yourself as white?

Brown: [15:57:51] I perceive myself as white but only in those instances where, all of a sudden, I recognize that everyone around me is different and oh, wait, I'm white. I recognize that I'm able to walk around with a certain amount of privilege because I'm white. It's certainly privilege in the greater world. But in my everyday life, I sort of unconsciously walk around—and I have said this before here. I perceive it almost as arrogance that I'm walking around. And I just think I belong. I don't ever question whether I belong, or that it's okay for me to be here. And when I

was at a school where it was ninety-five percent black parents, I guess what I'm perceiving and what I'm thinking that they're thinking is isn't she arrogant, just to walk around here like she belongs.

Q: You said, "Oh, I notice I'm white when I'm in a place where [unclear] oh, I'm the only white person." Do you ever, when you're with all white people, look around and say, "Oh, I'm white too, I'm part of this?"

Brown: [15:59:19] No. Sometimes when I'm in a large group and it's all white I think, Huh. Wow, this is a lot of white people. There is nobody of color here. We need to work on that.

Q: And do you feel any connection to whiteness, to white people, like a kinship to white people? You come in and meet me and this crew, we're all white. Is this something that you feel a connection to?

Brown: [15:59:43] Okay, so if I think back to walking in here, and did I feel a kinship or a connection with you guys when I walked in because you were all white, I would say yes. Because if I walked in and the whole crew was black I think that I would be thinking, Hmm, do I have anything in common? How am I going to relate to these people? How am I going to feel this out? A little bit more. And yes, I think that you only start feeling that when it becomes really obvious. When you're the only one of something in the room. And I don't know if you've heard this before from interviews or different research that you've done. But Jews look for Jews wherever they go. [laughs] And I haven't really done that because I haven't been like a real, real

Jew for a long time. But I have friends who are. And it's like they look for Jews in the workplace. They look for Jews when they go out, when they're at parties. They look for the tribe. Because they feel real connection. Those are the people that they want to connect with.

Q: So, even though you spent a summer on a kibbutz you're not a real Jew?

Brown: [16:01:06] I'm a real Jew, but I don't think that I have treated Jew as a large component of my identity for a long time.

Q: It's funny. I noticed when you talked about your identity you didn't mention Judaism as being something that's central to your identity. And yet [unclear] the temple with your daughter. [laughs] [unclear] bat mitzvah. The atheist mother taking her daughter. I like the way you said, "I'm on the cliff of atheism." As if when you go off. I'm almost at the pinnacle of atheism. I'm agnostic, I want to be like—I'm on the cliff.

Brown: [16:01:48] I don't think that I'll know if I'm atheist or not until I'm dead. [laughs]

Q: Then you might not know. If you do know, you're not atheist.

Brown: Exactly. Who am I to say?

Q: If you know after you're dead you're definitely not atheist. Take a look at my questions here. Got a little off track. Is there a white culture?

Brown: [16:02:40] When you say white culture, I think of like the folks in Charlottesville, whatever that group was.

Q: No, I don't mean those. I mean like people like us. Is there a white culture? You said, "Oh yes, I feel commonality there." You talk about black culture. You talk about Latino culture. The Asian culture. Conversely then, is there white culture?

Brown: [16:03:00] I don't know if there's white culture. I think that when I walked in here I sized all of you up. And I felt comfortable because being white was one of the components. But by the way that you're dressed, the fact that you're educated. All these different things. The way that you were able to talk to me when I came in. So, I felt comfortable with you for a host of reasons, not just because you were white. Even if they were elitist reasons.

Q: I wonder sometimes if those are like signifiers we send to each other. The way I talk, the way I look at you, the way I stand, how close I stand to you or far away I stand to you. The jokes I make. Anything I feel like there's an assumption on my part that I size you up as well. I see you're wearing your Patagonia jacket, and your running shoes, and you're an attractive woman in the—you're of a certain age. I'm making all these different things [unclear] say, "Oh, this is—and I probably." But at the same time, having done this for so long, I sit there, and I think like I have no idea if you're going to be a right-wing Republican, if you're going to be a yoga mom. Yogi. Are you a yogi?

Brown: I'm a yogi.

Q: You're a yogi. Whether you're going to be left-wing. Whatever. Vegan. I never know what I'm going to—what someone is going to be. I've learned very quickly that despite the—but there is a commonality when white people walk in. And I talk to them. And everywhere from NRA members to radical left-wing people there's still this connection that I can create with them, but I can't create, but I don't have that same connection, it's a different connection maybe that I [unclear] with people who aren't white.

Brown: [16:05:04] Yes, I agree with everything that you just said. That yes, I felt connection with you guys when I came in, but I had the same thoughts. I don't know, you could be extremely religious, you could—there's all sorts of—then it becomes about our ideas or perceptions of the world and are we really part of the same community? Because if we have really different views on things we're not part of the same community. And just because we're white we're probably not going to hang out. [laughs]

Q: And what about history? Do you feel any connection to the history of being American, being a white American, this particular narrative arc to it? Do you feel connection to that narrative arc?

Brown: [16:05:50] I do not feel a connection to the narrative arc of US history. My peoples came from Eastern Europe. So, all my ancestors came over probably in the twentieth century from Eastern Europe and I do not feel connected to white US history.

Q: Despite the fact that you get—

Brown: [16:06:23] All the benefits. I get all the benefits of US history, yes, white history.

Q: And obviously the monuments thing is a big discussion. What's your thought? What's your connection to that discussion or your ideas when you drive with your newly religious child down the streets of Richmond and you see these monuments? Have you talked to her about them? What are the conversations?

Brown: [16:06:52] Yes, I've talked to my daughter a little bit about the monuments. You know, kids, teenagers, these days. They're extremely open. I mean everything. If I say something that she perceives as racist or some sort of off-color joke or antigay or anything, she's the first one to jump down my throat. Everything is gender-fluid. And she embraces everyone. I don't think that kid would ever make a negative—I don't even—she had the negative thoughts when she was six years old. So, they live in there somewhere. But she certainly does not express those kind of thoughts now. And the whole monument issue, I think that—so having been in housing for the last twelve years, do a lot of historic preservation as well. So when the monument issue first came up for me it was, well, it's history. And those were my first thoughts about it. And then talking with some friends it was like yes, but whose history? And then doing a little bit of research into how the monuments ended up here. And that they were really a Southern reaction in the early part of the century to the end of slavery, and all this different stuff.

And thinking about it more and having conversation with—one of the people on my staff is a black man. And he says, “I have to drive down Monument Avenue every day and see that this is how my city feels about me.” And so really then, giving it a lot more thought. I think the monuments should come down. I think there is a place for them in history. But they belong in a museum somewhere. Where you can actually have context. And that’s also being an urban planner. And Monument Avenue being probably one of the most beautiful streets in the country. So, it’s hard in a lot of ways. But those monuments are a middle finger to seventy percent of the people that live in the city. And they need to come down. And the city kind of came together initially. And the mayor and everybody and the governor, everybody wanted the statues to come down. And then everybody sort of backpedaled off of that.

Q: What’s your relationship to the people that you put in the housing? I’m guessing the affordable housing is primarily—there’s a lot—I shouldn’t say primarily. I don’t know. But there’s a lot of people, minorities, who aren’t white in affordable housing.

Brown: [16:10:09] Yes, well, it depends on where you are in the state or the country or the region whether you’re going to have predominantly white people in the affordable housing, or it’s going to be a mix, or it’s going to be mostly black.

Q: What percentage of the housing is white?

Brown: [16:10:29] Depends. It depends.

Q: No, your whole portfolio.

Brown: [16:10:32] In our whole portfolio I'm sort of just guessing. I actually could get that number for you, but I don't know it off the top of my head. I would say the percentage of people that are white in our entire portfolio is probably thirty to forty percent.

Q: And so, do you think differently about the housing if it's for white people or if it's for different minorities?

Brown: [16:10:59] I do not think differently about the housing whether it's for white or black people. That's not ever anything I've even thought about. I used to think that—naively probably—that racism doesn't really exist anymore, it's more about classism. And so, I'm dealing with people who are—they can be from the slightly poor to the poorest of the poor. And so that's a whole 'nother interesting area to look at. Is there culture, is there identity around poverty regardless of what color you are?

Q: In the context of this conversation, is there anything that you really wanted to talk about, think it was important that we talk about?

Brown: I think I've told you a lot of my stories.

Q: Do you have any other stories? You have really good stories.

Brown: Thanks.

Q: You told me a story like that. About a race feeling you had that you were like, that you felt weird about. With a guy, crossing the street. And the story about the school is great too. They're both good stories. That's what we're all about here.

Brown: [16:12:33] Yes, stories. Yes, I don't think I have any more stories. Probably if we talked for another two hours I could come up with some more.

Q: Do you talk about race with your friends and family?

Brown: [16:12:45] Yes, I do a little bit. I talk about race with friends and family. More so now that—like we've been talking about the monument issues in Charlottesville. And I'm actually going to, in January, I'm going to a multicultural training up in DC where really, it's about going deep on all those negative thoughts that live inside your brain. And facing them, addressing them, why you think them.

Q: What organization?

Brown: [16:13:18] It's through the ManKind Project.

Q: I really appreciate you coming in and speaking with us. We're just about out of time. Not everybody who comes in here, I never know if they're going to be—come to talk and be honest

and forthright. And I know it's a very odd situation to be in to talk to somebody reflected in a mirror.

Brown: This is actually probably easier than staring into your real face.

Q: Really? Why is that?

Brown: Because I'm looking at a screen rather than you.

Q: [unclear] That's interesting. If I were here.

Brown: Yes, it's way more personal.

Q: That's interesting. But at the same time, it's easy. For us it's great because it puts you looking right into the camera so that it looks like you're talking to the person who's watching it, which is really nice. We're going to take some stills of you. Thank you very, very, very much.

Brown: Thank you. That was kind of fun actually.

Q: Was it? Were you nervous?

[END OF INTERVIEW]