

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY STUDY ON WHITE PEOPLE

The Reminiscences of

Colleen O'Rourke Miner

INCITE

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PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Colleen O'Rourke Miner conducted by Whitney Dow on September 22, 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.

3PM

Session #1 (video)

Interviewee: Colleen O'Rourke Miner

Location: Battle Creek, MI

Interviewer: Whitney Dow

Date: September 22, 2017

Q: First of all, can you tell me who you are, what you do, where you're from, and a little bit about yourself?

Miner: [19:11:54] Okay. I am Colleen O'Rourke Miner. I am not currently working. I am still giving very much full time care to my adult daughter. She's twenty-six years old, but she has autism, and so that disability keeps me constantly giving care for her. Now and then over the years I have worked part time from time to time, but I'm not right now. I'm originally from Omaha, Nebraska. Transplanted to Jackson, Michigan, when I was five, and lived various places after that, mostly college. I went to Grand Valley State College as a freshman, and then after that transferred to Michigan State University, and got my degree through there, but took an overseas study to London, England, for a semester while I was there. So I did spend some time in England. Married and had two kids. Did not work. My husband is a pharmacist—my soon to be ex-husband is a pharmacist, and luckily he made a pretty good living and does still. So I'm in the process of relocating because I'm going to be moving into an apartment, leaving the family home, taking my daughter with me, and that's where life is right now.

Q: Now I know more about you than I did before, but why did you want to participate in this? What was the impetus to call us and participate?

Miner: [19:13:59] Okay. I decided to respond to my interest in this study. I believe it was on Facebook, a friend of mine posted something about this—either a friend of mine through church or a friend of mine through a women’s writing group, who is on city council here, Kate Flores—and I think that it was just the significance that she was putting on it in her discussion of it that made me want to say, okay, I think I can try this. I really actually did not expect to get contacted [laughs] so that was a surprise. So that’s how, that’s why.

Q: And how would you describe yourself, your identity, both racial and otherwise?

Miner: [19:14:52] I’m a middle-aged, White woman. I do have mixed ancestry. I only know a little bit about it. Mostly Northern and Western European, but I believe there is some Haitian blood mixed in there. So that’s me. I was born into an upper middle class family, with my dad a physician. I saw a lot of pretense in that upbringing. Never aspired to marry a physician. That was not my goal. Pretty much a free spirit most of the time. And then had a family, and the impact of disability on a family member, especially a child, has made me spend a lot of my life focused on that. And then a couple years ago within our church organization we started to sort of have—I can’t remember exactly what it’s called—but we started to have groups discussing Whiteness, and the imbalance of power, and empowerment between the White community and the Black community in the whole county and the history of it. And so that started a couple years ago and that kind of also made me interested in this study.

Q: Prior to that, what was the relationship to Whiteness?

Miner: [19:16:34] My relationship to my Whiteness is I barely gave it much thought. I just took for granted that I have—what do I want to say? I just come with that White package deal that gives you certain privileges that I did not think about going through life, and it didn't occur to me consciously that I had any kind of more power than any other race or difference. I experienced desegregation in school when I was in fourth grade, so from there it was natural for me to be around people of other ethnicity. That did not bother me at all. I grew with that. What I began to realize later in life is that once I graduated from the school system that that amount of interracial mixing just slowly dissipates and disappears. I mean, even at Michigan State University it seemed like, when I look back at it, we were beginning—without that kind of forced interracial connectedness, we all began to still go our different ways, and then I wind up, you know, ten years after college realizing I don't have any friends of different races. I just don't even interact, unless it's somebody at the checkout counter, somebody that—it's not a natural in my life. And I don't work out of the home so I'm not really—and didn't much—so I'm not really exposed to a lot of different environments where there would be other ethnicities.

Q: And is that inherently bad?

Miner: [19:18:30] I think it's inherently [sighs] ignorant-making. Unless you're staying connected and intentional about it, I think you're going to lose what other people—what their perspective on life is. And you have to intentionally go out and look for it now. At least I do. I don't see it even in church. You know, there may have been for a while that one Black family that attended our church. For a while there was one Black family in our neighborhood. Now there's some Asian and other things, Indian, and that's cool when that's around. But, you know,

most of the time I'm interacting with other White people. You have to make it happen intentionally, I think.

Q: And so what happened to the initiative at your church when they started addressing this? How did they address it? And did they sort of give strategies, or was there follow up and other things they wanted to—was the idea to integrate the church? Was the idea to, like, raise consciousness among the congregation? Can you talk to me a little bit about that initiative?

Miner: [19:19:49] Yes, there was that. And it was actually led by Black people as well. I mean, it wasn't just all of us White people getting together talking about it, we had presenters come in on, you know, sensitivity trainers, people that would talk about what the experience of being Black in America is all about. And we did a little bit of history. Like, we looked at things historically and the fact that, you know, there were supposed to be initiatives in the '50s, '60s, whatever, after the war that sort of gave Black men the opportunity to be on an even stand in the military with White soldiers, but when they came home they were sort of denied the privileges that the White war veterans were getting, such as housing and, like, banking, the ability to get loans, and things like that. And how that impacted and continues to impact for decades the mobility of the Blacks in our culture.

And so that began a couple years ago, and that was talked about, and I just don't think that there's a lot of follow up on that anymore. There was another switch that happened where we focused more on the idea then of the gay community, the LGBTQ community, and opening our doors for them. And so there has more currently been a lot of focus on that. And we began this

second service specifically geared for the LGBTQ community and welcoming them in. You know, not just tolerating it, but embracing it and saying, more than just tolerating, “You’re good. We don’t have any judgments.” So it’s kind of shifted from the Black community, and never really stayed super, super strong in that, although there have been different groups in the church that began, like even ten years ago, began a kind of a weekly interracial breakfast meeting group, where they continue to do that. Another one started after that. But again with my daughter’s need for care and attention it limits what I can do and what I have been able to do.

Q: What denomination are you? What’s the church like?

Miner: [19:22:36] It’s UCC [United Church of Christ]. It’s the First Congregational Church of Battle Creek. It’s a UCC church. I was not raised UCC. I was raised United Methodist and I always thought that that was a pretty fair denomination, but we kind of fell into the UCC church sort of accidentally. When my daughter was very young it became very difficult to attend church, because of her autism, and my husband worked every other Sunday—every other weekend really—so attending church as a single parent of a four-year-old with autism when she’s in that head banging stage—and luckily she outgrew that pretty quick—but she was very hard to handle. And so my husband would listen on the radio to church when he worked and he liked the First Congregational Church. And eventually we decided to try it, and immediately, almost the first day I attended, just by chance I met a woman whose granddaughter has Williams Syndrome. And so there was just, like, an immediate connection there and I realized that this could be a place where we would feel pretty welcome. And so that’s the way it’s been.

Q: How do you square church taking sort of the lead role on working on issues of race or deconstructing White supremacy—?

Miner: Say that again.

Q: Clearly you have a lot of faith, and that church is very important to you, and the community there is important to you. And it's interesting to me that the church taking a lead on this where for many, many centuries the church was sort of a driving force in exploitation—or finding justification for exploitation of people, of White supremacy, and justification for different genocides, various things. How do you square your understanding of the Judeo-Christian values that are taught in your church with this history? And how does that relate to you personally?

Miner: [19:25:08] [grunts] That's, like, a really tough question. How do I square the fact that historically churches have used—[interruption] —okay, so historically, how do I square that? I flat out think that that history is shameful. I mean, it's wrong. I would not want to be involved in any denomination or church right now that really stands for that kind of bigotry and really, really harmful, really harmful practices. I believe in my community the church I belong to is probably the most liberal denomination. I've learned this just from joining the church in the past fifteen, eighteen years, whatever it's been, that historically the UCC denomination was the first to join the, like, slave abolitionist movement. I'm proud of that. I'm proud that I'm in a church that—or denomination that stands for that and stood up for that in the past, in history, and we just need to continue to be on the front of, you know, calling out and calling in when [sighs] real Christian

values are being used [sighs] to harm people. I don't want to be part of any religion that does that.

Q: And how can the scriptures be instructive?

Miner: [19:27:33] A lot of scripture is hard to understand. I think they can be instructive if you have somebody who is able to, like, tease them apart and really say, "Okay, a lot of what's in scripture actually contradicts itself all over the place. What we need is, you know, we need word that speaks to us today. Please don't interpret everything literally." I think we have to look at the society in which most of the scripture was written, the fact that it was written by all men, first of all, if there were any female testimonials they've been pretty much cast aside, and we have to take a look at and tease apart exactly what certain passages may mean. For instance, even about men being with men and that being an atrocity, one of the ways that our pastors kind of explained that is that there are different interpretations and one is that in that bible verse, and in that time in history, men were mostly having relations with boys. In other words, this was not a relationship between consenting adults, so that you could actually really interpret that as a misuse of power. Women in that society did not have power. Children were not given rights. So this was very rich, male-driven society. You know, you have to look at what the specifics are in that society. And I think it takes a really good pastor to help you figure some of that out. You know? Somebody who can admit, "Well, maybe I don't know exactly either, but here's what's on the forefront of thought about it now."

Q: Let's circle back to your own experiences in the world. You talked a lot about power, you talked about gender, do you think that your life has been impacted more by being White or by being a woman?

Miner: I think by being a woman.

Q: Can you put my question into the answer?

Miner: [19:30:19] Oh, yes, I just realized. I think my life is more impacted by the fact that I'm a woman versus being White.

Q: And could you expound on that a little bit? Why you think that, in what ways?

Miner: [19:30:34] Okay. I feel like that because I have felt discrimination in terms of gender. I have felt certainly the impact of the media in my life, what it means to be a woman. All my years growing up were impacted by the images in media of what beauty is, what achievement is. Even my mother's influence of the fact that she—I think she tried so hard to talk the talk about what it means to be a feminist, but I think it was super hard for her to walk the walk, even to this day, I mean, even given her accomplishments. She went to the University of Michigan, got a master's degree in social work, but when push came to shove she did not wind up having a lot of power in some situations, like mainly divorce, and so that definitely impacts me right now in my life too.

The experience of sexual abuse and rape has impacted me. Yes, that's, like, a big one that I don't know if I can delve into very deeply right now, but that's huge. Probably that impacts me more than race, because I know that women across all races have experienced those things, so that puts me in the same league with people of other ethnicities. So in that respect, that puts me on an even keel with a lot more people than just if I'm looking at my Whiteness. And certainly the ability to make the same amount of money as a man. I don't know if I really feel like I had that kind of opportunity. So I don't know if that answers those questions very well, but, yeah.

Q: No, it absolutely does. You know, one of the things that we're interested in is the hierarchy of identity and how people sort of see themselves in the world. I think that religion plays into, gender, sexual orientation, all kinds of things play into it. And I think that the things that are sort of the most defining for individuals are very, very different in how they experience the world. So you've seen the drawbacks of being a woman and it's impacted you negatively. Have you ever been impacted negatively because you're White?

Miner: [19:33:44] I really can't think of one. I honestly can't. I can remember feeling negatively impact by the fact that I wasn't Catholic. A lot of times I remember that feeling. And it was when I got older, in high school, that I really felt the impact of my dad's medical practice—he was an OBGYN, and he was one of the few in town that believed in a woman's right to choose. And that really, when I hit high school, that's when I realized that some of my Catholic friends — that was a problem for them. And I wasn't prepared for that to be a problem with friends. You know, I was raised in a household where that wasn't a problem. Abortion was not an ethical problem. It was sometimes medically necessary and it was better than back alley abortions. So

that was a feeling of empowerment, and then to be discriminated because of that, that felt odd, [laughs] that felt strange, but not because I was—I can't think of one time I felt discriminated against, because I was White.

Q: Do you feel that you accrued any benefits or had experiences where you felt that you were treated preferentially because you're White? Any benefits for being White?

Miner: [19:35:15] Probably. Probably every day. Feeling benefits of being White? Probably every day that I don't have to change the way I talk, because I'm too ethnically influenced by the culture that I was raised in. I don't think about it, and because I don't think about it, that's a benefit right there, that I don't even have to consciously wonder am I going to be discriminated just because I'm White. It was interesting, though, being in Europe. I was discriminated against because I was American. [laughs] You know, I mean, we all grow up in America thinking that we're just the greatest, and America the great, and blah, blah, blah. And then you go across the ocean and you realize that there's a whole group of other people who kind of think that we've got rocks in our brains, you know, and that we're a bunch of egotistical [laughing] crazies. And then you spend enough time there—and it was only three months that I lived there—but I spent enough time that when I came back it was, like, yeah, that there may be something to what they're saying.

Q: So you definitely see that there have been advantages. Have you ever consciously used the fact that you're White to gain a benefit?

Miner: [19:36:46] To my knowledge I have never consciously used my Whiteness to gain a benefit. I can't even think of a time when I did that. I mean, most of the time I try to approach each and every person on a very personal level, regardless of their background, unless I feel at a disadvantage because I simply don't know much about their background. And then I feel self-conscious about being White and being ignorant of another person's customs or whatever. That's a disadvantage to feel that way. As a consequence of the work I've done to become more aware of my Whiteness, I approach people as individuals while remaining aware of the cultural and social differences we may have experienced due to race, gender, sexual orientation, whatever.

Q: Tell me a little bit more about the community that you live in. Is it a mixed community? Is it a homogeneous community? And so first tell me about the community and then tell me how it's representational or not of Battle Creek.

Miner: [19:37:49] The community I live in, Battle Creek, I'm losing that—

Q: Well, I was going to say your neighborhood, and because I know there's a lot of different types of neighborhoods in Battle Creek, so what's the neighborhood or the area that you live in like, and how is it representational or not as a whole?

Miner: Okay. So when you said community at first I thought you meant all of Battle Creek.

Q: It was a bad question.

Miner: [19:38:11] [laughs] Not really. Okay, so I'm telling you a little bit about the representational aspect of my community, which means my neighborhood. Mostly White, suburban, middle class. It's not, like, upper middle class or anything like that. Fairly decent schools. Kind of on the east side of town, so closer to Marshall, Michigan—I don't know if you're familiar with Marshall — very historic. Very upscale-y village kind of place. Very close to the casino now, since the casino was built. No, the community is very few Black people.

My kids went to Harper Creek schools, well, at least my son did most of the time. My daughter did go to inner city schools for a while, because the only AI [Autism Impaired] classrooms at the time were housed in the inner city schools. She had much more interaction with multiple ethnicities. My son had very few kids of Black or other races that I could identify visually in his schooling, way less than I had. I went to Jackson, Michigan public schools. My favorite teacher was Cleomae Dungy, Tony Dungy's mother. My other favorite teacher was a Black woman. My high school principal was a Black man. I had a lot of exposure. My kids did not necessarily, and so that community is mostly White. The neighborhood is beginning to have more of a diverse look to it. And so I think that it is not a really good representation of Battle Creek. I think there's probably a bigger population of Blacks, like, throughout the rest of the greater community than are in the neighborhood that I've been residing in.

Q: How are race relations in Battle Creek? What are they like?

Miner: [19:40:47] Race relations in Battle Creek, from what I have seen, are what I would call fairly peaceful. I mean, I have not seen huge demonstrations, or outbursts, or major conflicts

between the races. There have been a couple times, especially like in the Trayvon Martin case, where I myself and others in the church got out and picketed for peace, and stood on the major corners of downtown Battle Creek with hoodies on and saying, you know, “We stand with you.” And I think that there’s some of that that continues to go on for other things that come up. But now, I mean, it just seems so common in other cities that there has been a lot of injustice toward the Black community that it’s almost like an every day thing now. I’m not as active in demonstrating for stuff probably right now because I’m pretty absorbed in my own personal business. So I can’t speak as much for what may or may not be going on, on a bigger scale.

Q: You know, you’re clearly someone who’s thought pretty extensively about this stuff, precipitated, it sounds like, by your church. But how has that manifest itself—that sort of desire for change, the desire for living a more just life as you described it—manifest itself in your personal life? What are your personal relationships like, and do you have personal relationships with people who aren’t White, and regular contact with people who aren’t?

Miner: [19:43:01] A few. I have a few contacts with persons who aren’t White, again, mainly through church, although I have been taking an art class for about a year and that’s exposing me to other ethnicities as well. I still see White people with what I would say a little bigoted, outdated, you know, frame of mind, but I’m more likely to call it out. I do that now with my sister even, and she converted to Catholicism when she got married, and I’m more likely to speak out or speak my mind. I spoke my mind with my mom about gay rights. So with the people that I do come into contact with, which again is not way many, because I don’t work outside the home, I find myself speaking out more. And certainly having a daughter with a disability, I mean, that

just was, like, a huge, mind-blowing change in my life and continues to be something that when you advocate for a loved one who is also of a population that is either discriminated against or simply marginalized, it makes one more aware.

Q: Forgive me if I asked this question already, because I've done a lot of interviews today I have a hard time keeping track—can you describe a situation that you had where you became immediately aware of your own race?

Miner: Describing a situation where I became acutely aware of my own race? Or say that again?

Q: Even maybe not acutely, but you became aware.

Miner: Became aware of my own race?

Q: And how it maybe impacted the situation.

Miner: And how what now?

Q: You know, how it's impacted the situation, either positively, or negatively, or someplace where you felt—and outside of the church.

Miner: Gosh. I'm really racking my brain for that one. [pauses] I mean, you said outside the church so I can't—now I'm really [laughs] racking my brain. Gosh, I honestly can't think of one. I can't think of anything right this minute. Maybe we need to come back to that question.

Q: Okay. You talked about the past history of the United States, especially of church, that there have been inequities in the past. There has been structural racism, slavery. Do we as White people living today in 2017, our lives, do we owe something, do we have obligation, should we feel guilt about that?

Miner: [19:46:21] As White people living in America now, I believe we do have an obligation. I don't know if guilt does anybody any good except in the moment, when you're simply feeling it and realizing, okay, this is a trigger of something that needs to be addressed. Yes, I think we do have an obligation to, first of all, educate ourselves about the institutional racism and the impacts of it, that it's something long-term that—the Civil Rights Act was a great start. And then, you know, things kind of petered out after that, I think. I mean, there needs to always be more intentional thoughtfulness about that. I don't understand people who say, “Well, you know, [Barack] Obama was president, so now they can relax and take a deep breath. You had your guy.” And it's like, no! That didn't address anything. If anything it highlighted his treatment by, I think, other powerful people in Congress—White people—of just how sort of railroaded he was into not being able to effect some of the things that he wanted to do. So, yes, I think we still have a long way to go. We just need to be sensitive about it. The mere fact that we can shrug our shoulders and act like there is nothing left to be done just speaks to ignorance I think.

Q: You mention Obama. Is President Obama Black or White?

Miner: [19:47:54] Well, he's both. But I think he identifies as Black. And that's up to him how he identifies.

Q: So Barack Obama identifies as Black. Could he identify as White?

Miner: [19:48:08] If he wanted to, because he had a White mother. He could identify I guess any way he wanted to. I think he can claim both. He doesn't really have to say that he's Black or White, he could just simply say, "I have an ancestry of all kinds of racial makeup."

Q: So you think that if Barack Obama says, "I'm White," that he would be accepted as—

Miner: [19:48:33] Oh no. Because I happen to know that [laughs] he has some White ancestry too, but, no, people are going to look at him mainly visually and they're going to say, "No, you're a Black man." But I have met and seen many people of mixed race who could pass as White, and either choose to or choose not to. I think it's up to each person to say who they are. You know, just like it's up to each person to claim their sexual orientation and say what that is, or anything else about themselves, any other social thing they want to claim. That's up to them.

Q: I think there's we've covered a lot of stuff. Is there anything that we didn't talk about that you were thinking when you were coming here that you would like to say or you think is important to be on the record in a Battle Creek project about Whiteness?

Miner: [19:50:04] The only thing I would go on the record any further to say about Battle Creek and Whiteness is that, you know, we have a long way to go. White people really need to educate themselves, and you do that by interacting, and intentional interacting, with other races, other ethnicities, to find out what life is like for them. You know, and that means shutting up for a while, and putting your own agenda on the backburner, and listening. You know, really, deeply listening. And I don't know if culturally we're good at that across the board in America. So that needs to be an ongoing thing, no matter where you are, but here in Battle Creek too. I mean, we have such a history. We have the Sojourner Truth Memorial here and she was buried from the church that I now attend. She was buried out of that congregation. So we have a history of interaction and we need to keep that going. That would be cool to just continue to do that.

Q: The question that you couldn't answer that you wanted to come back to was, I think, you know, can you describe an experience where you became aware of your race outside of the church and discussions about race. Why do you think it is that you couldn't identify a moment or why do you think it is that you're not aware of your race, that there hasn't been moments that have sort of made you think about it?

Miner: I don't think I can identify a moment, because I don't think if there was a moment—I'm trying to [laughter]—okay, a moment where I felt—

Q: Where you became aware of your race?

Miner: [19:51:57] Aware of my race? I guess because when you ask the question I'm thinking in terms of, you know, a bad experience of—and I can't even think of a time when it was a bad experience. Even if I became aware of my race, I mainly remember a time in England where I became aware—very deeply aware—and discomfort for being American. Like, I remember that moment. It was so pivotal. That had to do with my nationality, and I don't, like, comparing it to any memory of a moment where I became distinctly aware of my race, I can't think of one that has that same impact, that has that same heaviness about it. Yes. I just can't think of that.

[pauses] I've never been in a position where being White was uncomfortable [pauses] that I'm aware of.

Except now I am remembering something. Now I am. When I was maybe seventeen, my family took a trip down to Kiawah Island, South Carolina. And we drove down, and my dad had to stop for gas or something in some remote place in South Carolina. And not being from the south, and being young, and ignorant, I really didn't think about the impact of what being White is in America. But I remember he stopped to pay for gas and went in to pay for it—you know, it was back before they had the debit cards or whatever you can use—and he came out and said—it was run by some Black people—and he came out and said that the woman on the counter waited on anybody and everybody else in the store except him, even though he was sort of, like, next in line in front of maybe three other people. And he came out and kind of mentioned it. And my dad never really was afraid of anything like that that I can recall, but I remember, being maybe seventeen, the impact of that on me was sort of, like, that would have probably scared me if that had been me. Like, I didn't quite understand what being in the south in America meant, because I'd only ever really lived in the north.

And I always felt, in Jackson, Michigan especially, it was a very large Black population, pretty close to Detroit, always felt in that era of the '70s and '80s that it was okay for us to mingle. Never got into any kind of real problems with people of other ethnicity, including Blacks. Never did. I know my sister did once and that scared me—in high school—but I myself never did. So those were moments, though, like when my sister in high school—I happened to be with her when she got sort of into something with some Black girls, and I felt scared. So my feeling of being White was, like, I don't quite understand it, but I know that there's discomfort between the races here. And the same thing with that trip to the south.

Q: Are you happy that you're White?

Miner: [19:56:05] Yes, I guess. I don't have any self-hatred or self-loathing. I don't beat myself up about the history of White in America, mainly because I'm pretty conscious of the fact that even as a kid I felt a lot of empathy for everybody, regardless of their race and ethnicity. And I've tried to do some work around Whiteness and privilege, and try to be aware of that, and I still really feel like each person—instead of looking at people as just simply a race or an ethnicity, I approach each person as a mystery and who are they? And if you do that it's a real grassroots way of staying open to whomever you come across, anybody, any time, wherever.

Q: But saying that you don't feel guilty, saying that you don't have any self-hatred, is very different from saying you're happy about something.

Miner: Yes, I suppose.

Q: Right? So I guess—

Miner: [19:57:24] So am I happy about being White? I mean, no. I don't think that my happiness is derived from skin color. No. Like, I don't see that as any aspect of happiness. I mean, it makes life convenient for me at this point in our history, because I enjoy some privileges that are harder for other people of other races to maybe enjoy. But being White is not a source of happiness for me. Like, I don't wake up and rejoice that I'm White [laughing] every day. I don't think that at all. I don't think that at all. I honestly don't. [laughs] In fact, I mean, I love to see—I worked in a daycare for a while part-time—I love to see differences in a room: Black, Hispanic, Asian. You know, I worked in the nursery, babies of all colors and whatever. That doesn't bother me and it doesn't bother me—I'm not happy because I'm White. I'm happy if I feel like I'm standing for the little bit of justice that I can stand for on a daily basis.

Q: But would you, if someone said, “We're going to arbitrarily make you Black or White,” you wouldn't say, well, like, hope that you'd stay White? Would you, if someone could change you, would that matter to you or not?

Miner: [19:59:06] I'm sure it would matter. Yes, it would matter, because it would change life tremendously. It would, totally. So I guess from that perspective, looking at it from a negative, like, being White is easier for me if I look at it in that perspective, and I don't know if this is a fair analogy, but when my daughter was diagnosed with a disability, I struggled with that. I

really struggled with that. And then I reached a point—after a lot of counseling [laughs] and other things—that I embraced her difference and I embrace who she is. And if I were to become disabled tomorrow, I'm okay with that. Like, yes, guess what? That would be a pain in the ass. That is not what anybody would want. But I love my daughter for who she is. I can't take the autism out of her. That isn't going to happen. So I embrace who she is, autism and all. It makes up who she is.

So that's just a hard question to grasp. Like, if I were to wake up Black tomorrow life would be one hell of a lot different. I don't even know what that would mean. But if it did happen, I'd have to run with it. Like, I'd have to do it, and I'd find a way to do it, just like I found a way to deal with autism.

Q: Well, good. I think you covered a lot of things here.

END OF INTERVIEW