

STUDY ON WHITE PEOPLE

The Reminiscences of

Benjamin Rowland

INCITE

Columbia University

2018

## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Benjamin Rowland conducted by Sam Lutzker on May 8, 2018. 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

Interviewee: Benjamin Rowland

Location: Cheyenne, WY

Interviewer: Sam Lutzker

Date: May 8, 2018

Rowland: [00:00:00]—grant period and still haven't spent a lot of money, so we're trying to hold onto that.

Q: All right. Cool.

Rowland: [00:00:09] So exciting stuff.

Q: Nice. I am going to also set my phone up as a backup recorder—

Rowland: [00:00:15] Okay.

Q: —because these recorders have been an absolute mess.

Rowland: [00:00:20] Is it, like, a tape—an actual tape recorder, like a MIDI [Musical Instrument Digital Interface] thing, or—

Q: Oh, no, it does WAV [Waveform Audio File] files, but—

Rowland: [00:00:26] Oh, okay.

Q: —I think—I didn't check the SD [Secure Digital] card before we got it, and I realized in the middle of another interview that it's an SD card that has, like, two hours of free time on it—

Rowland: [00:00:38] Yes.

Q: —which is stupidly small.

Rowland: [00:00:40] Yes.

Q: So I think it's, like, sixteen megabytes. I think it's just stupidly small.

Rowland: [00:00:44] God.

Q: Maybe it's only—it probably is only one—not sixteen megabytes. It's probably only one gigabyte. I think is probably the issue, so that's about two hours.

Rowland: [00:00:53] Okay. One gig would seem a little bit more reasonable, I guess, but—

Q: Yes, but—

Rowland: [00:00:57]—still not a whole lot of space, I mean, for audio files. Yes.

Q: Yes. I mean, these are WAV files, too, yes, so they're high—they take up a lot of room, so I've just been recording it on here, and these are honestly fine.

Rowland: [00:01:06] Okay.

Q: Yes. All right. Cool. So these are both working now. That's good.

Rowland: [00:01:18] Are we already recording?

Q: Yes, I'm already recording on this one.

Rowland: [00:01:20] [unclear].

Q: And then we've got this one recording, too, just in case. Check, make sure that's good.

[phonetic]

Rowland: [00:01:25] Sounds good.

Q: All right. Yes, I'll just put that there too. Cool.

Rowland: [00:01:31] And if you do need to plug it in or whatever—

Q: Oh, great. Awesome.

Rowland: [00:01:34]—battery, by the way, [unclear].

Q: Yes, they've got a good amount on there. Yes, so I'll just start out by giving a quick intro of where we are and who you are and who I am and the time and date and stuff, and—

Rowland: [00:01:44] Sure.

Q: —you don't have to worry about that [phonetic]. Okay, cool. So this is Sam Lutzker recording for Columbia University in Cheyenne, Wyoming, at the Municipal Building in the Risk Management Department. Correct?

Rowland: [00:01:57] Correct. I'm actually in the Cheyenne City Attorney's Office, but—

Q: Oh, okay. Well—

Rowland: [00:02:01]—you had to walk through the Risk Management Office to get here. Yes.

Q: Well, I really thought I had it there. Okay. [Laughter] Well, in the Attorney's Office, though not the attorney himself—

Rowland: [00:02:11] I am the attorney.

Q: You're the attorney.

Rowland: [00:02:13] I am an assistant city attorney. Yes.

Q: Okay. Okay, an assistant city—wow, I just botched this whole thing. [Laughter]

Rowland: [00:02:21] It's confusing. You got [phonetic] the risk management.

Q: This is the issue of all these titles. You know, you've got me going to the wrong places with the offices and stuff. Yes, so Ben Rowland, I'm here with Ben Rowland, and it is Tuesday, May 8. And, yes, thanks so much for having me here, Ben.

Rowland: [00:02:40] Sure.

Q: We're recording for the Columbia University Study on White People, otherwise known as Facing Whiteness.

Rowland: [00:02:47] Sounds good.

Q: Great.

Rowland: [00:02:48] I'm definitely one of those.

Q: Great. So, yes—no, I mean, never judge a book by their cover, but—yes. Irish?

Rowland: [00:02:55] [unclear] ginger. Yes. [Laughter] Yes, yes, yes, a definite ginger, some Scotch-Irish heritage, I suppose.

Q: Cool. Well, you know, these interviews I usually like to start kind of at the beginning of your life and just kind of go from there. So if you want to tell me a little bit about where you were born, where you grew up, who your parents were—you could even go into your ancestry at some point—talk as long as you like, and I won't stop you really, so—

Rowland: [00:03:25] Okay.

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [00:03:27] So I'm from Camden, South Carolina. It's a small town in the Midlands, sort of the central part of South Carolina. Camden is about forty-five minutes northeast of Columbia [South Carolina], which is the capital of South Carolina. I was born at home, so kind of out in the country. We didn't live in Camden proper but maybe twenty minutes or so outside of there, but, yes, born at home. We lived in a—it was, like, an old farmhouse. It was an antebellum farmhouse, you know, built in—I don't know—the 1850s or something like that, but, yes, I was born there with a midwife. I only learned later that I didn't actually have a birth certificate until, I think, I went to kindergarten in 1988, so I was four, four-ish when I got a birth

certificate for the first time, same with my brother, born at home to a midwife. What else am I supposed to talk about here, where I'm from?

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [00:04:40] Yes, I mean, I don't know. It's a very, very rural area. I spent a lot of time out in the country growing up. As far as, you know, heritage goes, I haven't spent a whole lot of time dwelling on it. My parents looked very much like me, not gingers, [laughs] but sort of—Dad is, you know, blond-haired, blue-eyed. I think his side of the family is where the Scottish and/or Irish history comes from. I think there were maybe some sort of Germanic origins there, too, on his maternal—I don't know. It's his maternal grandmother or something like that. Her last name is Reichel [phonetic], quite German. And then, on my mother's side of the family, they are quite English. I've done a little bit of research there. I mean, they immigrated to the United States in the—I think not long after the revolution, entering Philadelphia [Pennsylvania] and then sailing to Charleston [South Carolina]. And her family has been there in the Charleston area, Charleston, South Carolina, for, you know—since, I don't know, maybe the 1780s or something like that. And, you know, futzing around on Ancestry.com, you sort of find—you can find their family lineage back to—I don't know—maybe the mid-sixteenth or early-sixteenth century in England.

Q: Wow.

Rowland: [00:06:19] So—which is kind of fun, all very English, the Limehouse family.

Q: What were their names?

Rowland: [00:06:27] Limehouse.

Q: Lamhouse [phonetic].

Rowland: [00:06:29] Limehouse.

Q: Limehouse.

Rowland: [00:06:30] L-I-M-E-house.

Q: Oh, interesting.

Rowland: [00:06:32] Yes. Yes. So that's sort of fun. There's apparently a Limehouse Church or—I guess it's a church, not a cathedral, they call it, but somewhere outside of London [England]. But, yes, in any case that's sort of history, and, yes, I grew up in just a very country, rural part of South Carolina. I think my folks were—I hesitate to call them sort of off-the-grid types but, I think, definitely had an inclination towards, you know, a more independent sort of lifestyle outside of more urban life.

Q: What does that mean, a more independent lifestyle?

Rowland: [00:07:28] I suppose I think about, like, the way that my parents lived, especially when they were in their twenties and early thirties. I guess they were sort of prototypical, you know, children of the '60s and spent a lot of time hitchhiking across the country. I think there was a strong sort of rejection of authority and desire to—I don't know—live outside of the mainstream. And I think where we ended up living sort of reflects that decision-making, right? Politically, I think my dad is very much of that same sort of mindset still, very independently-minded, maybe, perhaps, with a liberal sort of bent to him. But, you know, he's a fiercely independent person, and, ultimately—I think I was maybe, I don't know, in elementary school or something. He had been working for a sawmill, like a lumber yard, and decided that he wanted to have his own business, to be sort of responsible for his own, I suppose, welfare a bit more and opened up his own business. It was a little bakery, and they still have the bakery. And then, when they did that, my folks ran it together. Before that, my mom was a stay-at-home mom and took care of us, and they just celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of their bakery in April, so about a month ago—actually, I think exactly a month ago.

Q: Oh, cool.

Rowland: [00:09:15] Yes. Yes, which is—I think it was liberating in some ways because he was not beholden to a company or another firm. But it was also difficult because if it's literally only, you know, two people running it, him and my mom, if they're not operating the bakery there's no income, anything like that.

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [00:09:41] So I think it's empowering in some respects but also very limiting in others, because they don't have a sort of safety net of being part of a larger organization that affords free time and typical sort of benefits that a lot of people expect nowadays like vacation time and health insurance and things like that.

Q: Yes. Do you have any memories from the bakery, which would have opened when you were, like, what—

Rowland: [00:10:13] Yes.

Q: —eight or something?

Rowland: [00:10:14] Yes. I think I was, yes, maybe second or—second or third grade. We spent a lot of time there growing up. During the summers we basically lived there, not literally, but we were there all day every day with our parents. There was a little back sort of storeroom area where we had shelves, stacks of, like, the fifty-pound bags of flour and things like that, and had a little couch back there. And my brother and I spent a lot of time back there. [Interruption]

But my brother and I spent a lot of time back there, I don't know, doing kid things like playing, fighting, whiling away the days. We had our bikes sort of stored back there. So, we'd come to town in the mornings in the summertime, and this timeframe we would go to swim practice.

There was a little Y [Young Men's Christian Association] not too far away, and then we'd hang out during the day and have another swim practice in the afternoon, and hang out at the bakery again after that. And then, the bakery closed around, I don't know, 5:30 or six o'clock at that time. So, yes, we spent a lot of time there. It was a little bit of a community hub of sorts, too, you know. It was not like a café-type bakery. People just walked in. There was a storefront, but a lot of my parents' friends and family members, too, would just come into the bakery and spend time standing around the baker's bench, and it was sort of fun that way. Friends and family came to us, and—yes, it was very much like a little community hub.

Q: What's a baker's bench?

Rowland: [00:12:11] It's where the baking is literally done. Normally it's a smooth wood surface, a large surface, so throwing out the flour, and you—

Q: Oh, so they would actually go stand back there.

Rowland: [00:12:22] I mean, they did the baking. Yes.

Q: I'm not talking about your parents but, like, their friends and their family.

Rowland: [00:12:25] Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. Yes, correct.

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [00:12:28] So there was the front sort of retail space with showcases where people would buy things, and a lot of their friends and family would just walk back to the actual bakery area just to sort of shoot the shit and hang out and chat, so—

Q: Oh, cool. They'd help bake the bread, too, and stuff or make it?

Rowland: [00:12:47] They wouldn't help with the baking, but they'd certainly watch have a cup of coffee, and just sort of, yes, hang out with my folks. I mean, it's sort of weird, thinking about it. They're there a lot, right? Generally, my dad would go into work between, I don't know, maybe midnight and 1:00 A.M. or 2:00 A.M. sometimes and leave at maybe 5:30 or 6:00 P.M., so, you know—

Q: Wow.

Rowland: [00:13:12]—there are a lot of hours, but I'm always sort of reluctant to describe it as working for sixteen or seventeen or eighteen hours. Because it's very different from, I think, the work that I do today where I come and sit at a desk, and, I don't know, maybe I write things. I'm in a stodgy sort of office-y environment for most of my day, whereas, for my folks, they bake. They spent time with their friends, too, and, you know, they've got their music. And it's not to say—I'm not trying to diminish at all the fact that they work a lot. You know, they work huge numbers of hours, particularly my dad, doing a lot of the night baking. That's, I think, just exhausting in a lot of ways, you know, being—

Q: Yes. All night. Yes.

Rowland: [00:14:08]—physically at the bakery from 1:00 or 2:00 A.M. until 5:00 or 6:00 P.M. every day. I mean, there are not a whole lot of other waking hours in the day, so—

Q: Yes. Would he just sleep from, like, 5:00 P.M. to, like—

Rowland: [00:14:19] Yes.

Q: —midnight?

Rowland: [00:14:21] Yes, exactly, so, you know, he'd try to go to bed early, early evening, so, yes. I mean, depending on the day he might go to bed anywhere from 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M., maybe, if he's getting really wild, 8:00 P.M., you know. [Laughs] But generally, he goes to bed very early and gets up very early as well, so—

Q: Yes, I would almost say he gets up late. [Laughter]

Rowland: [00:14:50] Yes. Yes, that's probably a fair assessment.

Q: He gets up when I go to bed.

Rowland: [00:14:55] Late for most people.

Q: Yes, yes, yes.

Rowland: [00:14:56] Yes. Yes, he often jokes that, you know, he should be having his last drink at the time that he's normally waking up, so—

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [00:15:06]—yes, so he puts in a lot of time, a lot of hours supporting the bakery. But, yes, they've been doing it for quite a long time now, and nowadays they talk a little bit more about, I think, maybe transitioning toward retirement at some point.

Q: Are you going to take over the bakery?

Rowland: [00:15:28] Oooh, it seems unlikely at this point. I sometimes try to persuade my brother that maybe he should do that. [Laughs]

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [00:15:36] I have a brother who lives back in South Carolina closer to my folks, so—

Q: What's he up to at the moment?

Rowland: [00:15:42] He manages a Jimmy John's or it's a couple of them. I know he did manage several of them at one point before he—he began to push back a little bit on Jimmy John's, I think, because he felt like they were taking advantage of his willingness to work—

Q: Oh, yes.

Rowland: [00:16:01]—a little too much, so it sounded like he was able to basically negotiate maintaining a lot of his sort of pay and benefits and things while managing, you know, I think one or maybe two stores. I don't know. But he lives in Columbia, closer to where my parents are, so—

Q: Okay.

Rowland: [00:16:28]—but, yes, I periodically try to persuade him that maybe he should take over the bakery. [Laughs]

Q: How does he react to that?

Rowland: [00:16:34] I'm not sure it's something that he really takes seriously, but give it time. Give it time. [Laughs] But, yes, I don't know what the timeframe is for my parents either, if they want to keep doing this for another three, five, ten years. I don't know. You know, they're in

their mid-sixties now, so I think it's getting a little bit harder to be awake and working for, you know, fifteen, sixteen hours a day.

Q: Definitely.

Rowland: [00:17:07] Yes.

Q: Tell me about the community where the bakery is located.

Rowland: [00:17:14] Camden, South Carolina.

Q: So that's the same place you grew up in, kind of rural—

Rowland: [00:17:19] Yes. Yes.

Q: —but describe to me that kind of area where the bakery is and stuff.

Rowland: [00:17:24] Sure. So Camden—yes, we grew up outside of Camden, about a twenty-minute drive in a just plain old rural area, no neighbors, that sort of thing, just sort of woods. Camden is—I don't know. There might be 15,000 people in Camden. It might be a little bit bigger than that now. It is, I think, the county seat of Kershaw County. I don't know. There's a small downtown area that's mainly one intersection of Dekalb [Street] and Broad Street. That's basically—yes, I mean, there are—so there's one main intersection, and my parents' bakery is

sort of near that intersection where there's a post office, you know, a few other businesses that have been there for a while. At this point, I think it's almost, like, a point of pride that their little bakery has been there for twenty-five years because there aren't, I think, many other businesses that have been there that long. There's a little jewelry shop across the street that has been there, I think, for—I don't know—almost a hundred years. So it seems like they've got them beat. They've got my parents beat by quite a few years. So it's a fairly small town. The downtown is—I don't know—yes, maybe a few blocks by a few blocks, but the heart of it is really sort of one intersection. I would sort of characterize the main sort of strip as being on—it's US 521, which is the same thing as Broad Street. It runs north to south, basically, through town between Dekalb and Rutledge Streets. You know, there are just a few little restaurants, some antique stores. That's a big thing in Camden, you know. They've planted some trees downtown to try to gussy it up a little bit, and now they've got some sort of year-round Christmas lights going on like a lot of towns are doing to try to give it a little sort of livelihood after hours. That's downtown. Sort of residentially, it's a little bit divided, I suppose. There's, as with most towns, sort of a pretty sort of old town, historic part of Camden, which is much more kind of higher-income, and then lower-income, you know, sort of areas. I think in Camden, as, I'm sure, in a lot of Southern towns, those most often correspond or are strongly correlated to sort of the white town and black town in some ways. I mean, even as a little kid I was pretty aware of sort of what that sort of breakdown was like in town.

Q: Well, how were you aware? Tell me about that. How were you thinking about it?

Rowland: [00:20:40] I mean, I was aware in the sense that you could see it. You go to one part of town, and it's, you know, very, very white, [laughs] nothing but white people, and well-manicured lawns, and trees, and hedges, and all those sorts of things. And you don't have to be a genius, you know, or even that observant. A kid can pick up on it. And then, yes, on the other side of town, again, you see it. No white people live there, and a lot of poor African Americans, and, like I said, it's like that in a lot of—or it seemed like it was like that in many of those small Southern towns, I think. I don't know. Maybe it was just a remnant, in a lot of ways, of that—sort of the historical legacy of the South, right? It's still, I think, deeply divided that way, so it's—I don't know. It's something that I was aware of even as a little kiddo, and I'm sure it's still to some extent like that now.

Q: Did you spend any time in the African American part of town?

Rowland: [00:22:06] I can't say that I spent a whole lot of time there. I remember going, for example, to visit—my dad was friends with this—I don't even remember his full name. I always knew him as Old Joe. He was an elderly black man that lived—I don't know—maybe a half-mile from the bakery, sort of in a less-well-off part of town. And he had some mental issues, some mental difficulties, and my—I remember—I don't remember who it was that explained it to me, but he had apparently—this man [phonetic] had been hit or run over by a car in the '50s or '60s, but the car didn't stop, and he had been dragged a substantial distance. Anyway, he had some, I guess, resulting mental issues. Apparently, Joe was deeply skeptical of white people, I guess, because the person that—I don't know—did this to him was white, and he did not forget that. And I don't remember the—I don't know the circumstances. This is all, you know, information

sort of passed on, but, anyway, Joe, a kind soul, some real mental difficulties, deeply, deeply poor. Dad and I would sometimes go over to his house and bring him, you know, some baked goods, bread, things like that, just to help out a little bit. Yes, we went into his house a couple of times, and it was genuinely sad, you know, just very, very dark. I don't remember if he had electricity or not, but he had a little single gas burner, and it was just very sad.

Q: And how did your dad get to know him? Was he just known in the town or—

Rowland: [00:24:50] He would come hang out in front of the bakery, and eventually my dad would walk out and be like, "Hi, can I help you?" I don't know. He just started talking to him, and eventually—I don't know—they got to know each other, and even then, even later, he would not come into the bakery. He would stand out front until my dad would recognize him, see him out front, and then he would walk out front and say, "Hi, Joe." And I think we gave him a bike to help him get around, and I think it seemed like it took some time for the two of them to—or for Joe to trust, you know, in some ways. I don't know. That's what it seemed like, but eventually he was a—yes, he was around, and we tried to help him out, whenever we could.

Q: And your school growing up, what kind of school did you go to? Was it public or—

Rowland: [00:26:00] Yes. So when I was, you know, kindergarten and elementary school, I went to—I think it was called the First Baptist Kindergarten for three- and four-year-old kindergarten, and five-year-old kindergarten, and then first through—I guess it would have been—third grade I went to Baron DeKalb Elementary, which is a little rural elementary school. It was actually fairly

close to where we lived, just a few miles away. And then, after that, I went to a little school called Pine Tree Hill Elementary, which was—this was after my parents opened their bakery, so it became a little more convenient to go to school in town because their bakery was in town. So then, I went to school in Camden instead of the kind of rural community schools. I went to middle school there, and I went to high school for my first year at Camden High School, the public school there. And after that, I found a little—I don't remember how my mom found the information. I think maybe she had gotten a brochure somehow, but it was for a scholarship opportunity for a boarding school. And I ended up applying. My mom sort of left it up to me. She was like, "Hey, is this something you're interested in?" And I said, "Yes," and I applied. And I ended up getting a scholarship to go to a boarding school, so—

Q: Oh, okay. Which boarding school did you go to?

Rowland: [00:27:43] It was called Christ School in western North Carolina, in Asheville, so it was an Episcopalian, all-boys boarding school. So I did that for my sophomore through senior years of high school. Yes, public school otherwise, but, yes, tenth through twelfth grade of high school I had an opportunity to go to a boarding school, and I took it.

Q: Do you remember what it was like, the boarding school, your reactions when you got there as compared to the public schools and stuff?

Rowland: [00:28:18] Yes, yes, yes. I mean, it was honestly a very good experience. I thought it was a lot of fun. You know, it was just, like, a great adventure. I was, I guess—was I thirteen or

fourteen? I guess I would have been fourteen when I went, because thirteen and fourteen as a freshman, fourteen and fifteen, fifteen and sixteen, sixteen and seventeen, yes, as a senior. Yes, it was just a big adventure for me, and it felt sort of surreal almost, like an opportunity to go to college but sooner. [Laughs] And it was in a really sort of picturesque kind of place. It was right outside of Asheville, North Carolina, so in the sort of Appalachian Mountains, sort of rolling mountains upon mountains, you know, green and purple and blue sort of hues and just a really great opportunity for me, not just school-wise. Socially, too, I think a lot of my best friends today are still the guys that I met there in the dorms when I was thirteen or fourteen, I guess.

Q: As compared to people you met before that in middle school and elementary school or—

Rowland: [00:29:34] Right. Right. To be honest, I don't really have a whole lot of close relationships from before that. I mean, I keep in touch with one of my friends that I carpoled with, like, back and forth to swim practice when I was a little kiddo. We keep in touch. She lives back in Camden today, but, yes, I think the people that I'm closest with are the folks that I ended up going to boarding school with. That was part of my, I guess, motivation in some ways for pursuing that scholarship opportunity a little bit. I can remember feeling—we were sort of talking about some of this, you know—some of these race-based concerns before. I remember having some—I don't know. I would kind of characterize them generally as middle-class, white friends, these boys, and I can remember even just this weird undercurrent of, you know, some—I don't know—uncomfortably, at times—I guess now I'd characterize them as racist sentiments. And I don't think a lot of—I don't know if they would have recognized it as such at that time,

just race-based humor and things that—you know, I don't think they probably appreciated that it was basically racist in some ways.

Q: You're talking about in high school, your friends.

Rowland: [00:31:23] I mean, even younger than that, but, yes, I think kids are in some ways just products of their environments. You know, a lot of these folks are good people, but I think they, yes, at that young age just did not appreciate that maybe some things they were saying were inappropriate and—I don't know. I can remember on a couple of occasions feeling a little uncomfortable with that.

Q: Yes. Tell me about those occasions.

Rowland: [00:31:57] I mean, just hearing people crack jokes that were—that I felt were pretty overtly wrong, using the n-word, and just kind of wondering what my relationship to this group was, right? Because these were sort of putatively my sort of peers, my sort of cohort, and still feeling sort of awkward, you know, [laughs] like I was somehow not that, I guess. Yes. Yes, I can remember I was—I'm thinking of this—I took this—I was in my newspaper class or journalism class my freshman year of high school, and there was this really, really sharp kid named Lance in the class. And I remember him talking about—I guess it prompted me to think a lot more about race in general because he was on the tennis team, and he was black. And I remember him writing a story one time about—I forget what the title of it was called, but the gist of it was that people, his black friends, accused him of acting white. And—I don't know—it

prompted a lot more thought, you know, about—thought for a thirteen-year-old or fourteen-year-old about sort of what the dynamic was between his peer groups, my peer groups. I don't know. It was eye-opening for sure, and it was around—

Q: This was in the school paper, you said?

Rowland: [00:33:54] Yes, yes, yes, but it was around that time that I was applying for this—to go to this boarding school, and I don't know that—I don't think going to boarding school had any real—it's not like the student body at the boarding school was wildly diverse or anything like that. But I can remember just having some very distinct sort of concerns about what my—I don't know—peer group was like there and feeling maybe a little uncomfortable with it. I don't know. On the one hand, I had these recollections of my dad telling me about volunteering to do work with the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People] or something like that—yes, I think it was the NAACP—in the '60s and being deeply sort of committed to social justice. And, you know, it's sort of hard to reconcile images like that and ideas like that with the culture that I was still seeing, which—in some ways it was deeply disconcerting, because as a kid that seemed like an eternity ago that—you know, Dad's growing up in the South and those sorts of issues, like race issues, seemed like historical episodes. And I don't know, maybe it was a process of coming to terms with the fact that, you know, time is a continuum, and we are still very much living those issues now, that it wasn't just a thing from long ago.

Q: Yes. You said something before about the history of the South and the town and stuff. I wanted to know a little bit about the history of your family and America. They came to the South, you said, in the—

Rowland: [00:36:22] Yes.

Q: —late 1700s or—

Rowland: [00:36:24] On my mom's side of the family. Yes. Yes.

Q: Yes. Is there any recorded history there or anything about their lineage, race relations where they were?

Rowland: [00:36:39] Maybe just a little bit. Like I said, I've done just a little bit of amateur sleuthing about that side of the family. Yes, my general understanding is that—I think it was, yes, sort of late 1700s, I think post-revolution. My mother's family sailed to Philadelphia, I think. I don't remember his name. There was maybe a Commodore, something, Limehouse, and then eventually, yes, a few years later they sailed south to Charleston. And now, Charleston, that area is just littered with Limehouses and their graves. So, I mean, they've—on my mom's side of the family, they lived in Charleston and just outside of Charleston for quite a while, and I still have a lot of family there now, my grandfather and uncle, and, I guess, a lot of the cousins have moved away. But, yes, I've poked around just a little bit. Most of them lived outside of Charleston in, yes, Summerville, South Carolina. I mean, I don't know a lot about them, to be

honest. I'd have to go back and look at my sort of research file, I guess. One of the last times I was home I tried to go visit—I visited some of the graves, but I was trying to go visit—there are two graves, and I don't know how many greats removed they are, but I think she died in 1796 or something like that, and he died shortly thereafter. But they're in a kind of historic graveyard in downtown Charleston, but I guess it's sort of a tourist destination now, and you have to make a reservation or something to go visit the gravesite.

Q: The graveyard?

Rowland: [00:38:53] Yes.

Q: Oh, interesting.

Rowland: [00:38:54] Yes, because it's in sort of downtown Charleston, where they don't—nowadays, they don't—they're not building graveyards. There's not a graveyard in downtown Charleston, but there's this old historic graveyard. I had done a little bit of census research looking at the family, because you can find that stuff on Ancestry.com pretty easily. It may be relevant to sort of the point of this study, talking about whiteness. You know, I suppose it was a little discomfiting to find out that there were some family members that were slave owners, obviously a long, long, long time ago. I think I recall seeing one census entry that recorded, I think, two adults, two children, and two slaves. And I don't remember the timeframe on that. I think it was, like, early nineteenth century, but, yes, then there's definitely one or two or several Confederate soldiers in there, although it seems like they must not have been particularly

effective because I think they were prisoners of war for the better part of the entire war, [laughter] which I think is kind of amusing in some way. I don't know how that worked out. I don't know much about it, but that was another product of my Ancestry.com research. There are prisoner-of-war logs, which are sort of interesting to look at.

Q: That is interesting. Yes.

Rowland: [00:40:52] Yes. Yes, and then there's a little cemetery in Summerville that has many, many Limehouses, among lots of other people, obviously. But, yes, there are lots of—you see little rebel flag gravestones and little mini flags that people put on the graves. Yes, I mean, for better or worse, that's part of the family history, I guess, on that side of the family. That's my mom's side of the family.

Q: How did you feel when you discovered the slave owner stuff?

Rowland: [00:41:35] I mean [laughs] —

Q: How did you react to that?

Rowland: [00:41:38]— I suppose it was a little surprising in general. I feel like it's—for a lot of people that—or for some people, I think, that grow up in the South that are from there, it's sort of hard to reconcile having any sort of pride of place with what's obviously a deeply problematic history, you know. Obviously, I love my family, and I have great memories of growing up, and

these are all positive memories. And I don't think I have any sort of personal, you know, responsibility—I don't know if I'd call it that. You know, I don't know what my degree of responsibility is for, for example, my whatever it is, great-great-great-whomever-grandfather, who was in the Confederate Army. I don't know anything about him, and, you know, it's probably—it's unfortunate. Sure. I don't know. It's a difficult thing, I mean, to reconcile such a really, really awful history with a present love of family and how the two interact, you know. And to be honest, I just don't know that I've thought deeply enough about the relationship between the history and my present life. Does that history impose upon me an obligation to do something now, and what is that something? I don't know. I don't know, but it's something I think a little bit about but obviously not well enough to have a really coherent sort of response. You know? Does it give me shame, for example, to think about the fact that there are people in my family's history that fought for the Confederacy? Yes, it's not something, you know—

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [00:44:34]—definitely not something I'm proud about. It's also something that I can't undo.

Q: Yes. So are you shameful about it then, or—

Rowland: [00:44:42] Again, it's not something that I—you know, I'm not going to—I'm never going to be somebody that flies a rebel flag and shouts, "Heritage, not hate." That's never going to be me. That is a deeply horrific thing that the Confederacy stood for, and that's—I mean,

that's, yes, horrifying to me. I mean, shit, ten minutes ago I was describing the discomfort of people making off-color, race-based jokes and the idea of having some sort of pride for a former Confederate or a Confederate soldier in the family lineage, yes, that's just not ever going to be me. But at the same time, it's not something that I particularly want to ignore either. I guess I just don't know the best way to address that in the present, right? I mean, how do you respond when you find out that you have, yes, a family member that was a Confederate soldier? Do I publicize that? Do I—I don't know. Do I apologize to people? Do I ignore it?

Q: What have you done so far?

Rowland: [00:46:15] I've tried to learn about it. You know, like I said, I was sort of poking around on Ancestry.com trying to find out what I could about my family's history, because I had heard something about it. I couldn't even tell you when, but it prompted some thought about it, and I started doing some research. You know, I don't know that research, trying to educate myself about that history—I don't know that that's an answer in some way, but it hopefully, you know, will be illuminating in some way to help me guide my thoughts on what, if any, responsibility I have as—in the present to—I don't know—address that history. I think about in, you know, the context of now, what could I maybe do that would somehow sort of counterbalance historical sins, and I think in the context of where I grew up in the South there's a lot of debate right now about, for example, removing Confederate monuments and things like that. And, you know, maybe there's a role for me in that sort of debate. I read recently that there was, I think, a new monument being constructed to the—or a memorial, rather, to the victims of lynchings throughout the South, and I think that's a huge part of our history that requires

confrontation, right? You know, throughout the South, people memorialize Confederate soldiers and statues of people on horseback, and we see that history all the time, but much less present is a confrontation with the sort of brutal and horrific results of what those people on horseback stood for, right? So maybe—I don't know. Maybe, you know, it would be useful or constructive or even incumbent on me and other people from the South to confront that history more honestly, you know, in our public spaces.

Q: Do you have Southern pride?

Rowland: [00:49:35] I don't know [phonetic]. [Laughs] I think there are a lot of great things about where I came from. You know, I love how close my family is. I love our love of each other. You know, there's some great food in the South. [Laughs]

Q: Yes.

Rowland: You know, those things are all great, but I feel like even the expression “Southern pride” is somehow tainted because it's impossibly linked to its history, which is—I've used the word many times already—I mean, horrific. I listen to this band a fair amount. They're called the Drive-By Truckers. Have you heard of them, by chance?

Q: No, I haven't.

Rowland: [00:50:31] Okay. And they're a sort of Southern rock band, right, and one of the reasons that I like them is because I think they wrestle with exactly the subject that we're talking about, reconciling one's pride of place with their deeply problematic history, but, you know, also recognizing the sort of complications that come with it. The South is not like a monolithic thing, obviously. There are definitely some bad themes that stretch across wide portions of it, but one sort of unifying theme in a lot of parts of the South is just a lot of poor people, irrespective of race. There are a lot of not-very-well-off people and people that just need access to more opportunity, and they're not getting it. You know, I'm not entirely quite sure why that is, but—sorry, go ahead. I felt like a—

Q: No, no, so how do you—how does anyone—how do you specifically, you know—how do you reconcile a pride of place or a pride of the specific area where you're from in the South with the history of that place and with the things that are ugly? I think this is something that a lot of people question and, I think, people as Americans can question, too, as a whole.

Rowland: [00:52:34] Yes. Yes.

Q: So, I mean, how do you do that with any place, I guess, and do you have any specific examples you can draw from your own life or lessons you've learned of how to do that?

Rowland: [00:52:46] Like I was talking about a little while ago, I think confronting the bad is a large part of being able to sort of reconcile those feelings in the present, right, not running from or obscuring or whitewashing or ignoring the problematic elements of the history of your place,

right? Being from the South, obviously, like we were talking about before, rather than erecting monuments for Confederate generals on every corner, why not erect memorials to the people that died, the people that were lynched in the name of that Confederacy? You know, I think that's, in the case of sort of the deep South, coming to terms with that history, but it's not just the South. I mean, I'm here in Cheyenne, Wyoming, now, and there are complicated parts of history here as well, different, for sure. But in the Mountain West and the West here, there are obviously some really horrific things that went on here as well, I mean, in the nineteenth century in particular. And one of the end results is that we have reservations today for Native Americans, and I think we could probably do a better job of being honest about that history as well, not obscuring that history. You know, America obviously has a very long history of—I don't know what you want to—what the right word is—sort of subjugating Native Americans that were here first, sort of in the name of Manifest Destiny, you know, and—yes, that's also deeply problematic. But I think for people alive today it's very useful to learn about it and to not ignore it, you know.

Q: Yes, but how can you be prideful of—or maybe “pride” is the wrong word then. How do you respond to a lynching museum, and how do you incorporate that into that idea of your place and yourself and where you come from? [phone ringing] Feel free to take it if you have to.

Rowland: [00:56:03] No, it's [unclear] voicemail. Sorry. I'm sorry. Could you ask that again?

Q: Yes. Yes, so the question is, as an example, how do you respond to a lynching museum as someone who has an identity with that place, and, I mean, is that even something that—my question is how do you respond and how do you bring that into your idea of yourself and your

place? And is it pride, then, or are we just too focused on this idea of pride of place in this country?

Rowland: [00:56:45] I mean, I think for a lot of people they do feel—they feel pride. Like when you said the word Southern pride earlier, I feel like I don't identify with that as a phrase, right—

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [00:56:57]—because I feel like whenever anybody hears “Southern pride,” I don't know, there's this—it conjures up this sort of image of rebel-flag-flying types that I don't identify with, you know. That's just not going to be me. [Laughs] That's not me. You know, so maybe “pride” is not the right—maybe that's not the right word. You know, I'm not quite sure how to describe it. I'm thinking about how my life is connected to historical events and what my relationship to those events is, right. Have I personally done the things, these horrific things? No, I didn't do them, but what is my responsibility as sort of the—I suppose if you want to get down to sort of brass tacks about it—as the beneficiary of that legacy, right, going back to my whiteness, I guess? You know, I think a lot of people would argue that I am definitively the beneficiary of that legacy of subjugation, whether or not you're talking about the subjugation of African Americans or you're talking about Native Americans or—I mean, during other periods of immigration, I suppose, that concept of whiteness would not have applied to, for example, Italian Americans or even other groups that are probably now considered, quote-unquote, “white.” But, yes, maybe I am a beneficiary of that, that history in a lot of ways.

That being said, this is sort of speculation on my part, but I feel like there are lots of poor white people today, for example, that would say—they would really, really strongly object to the notion that they are, quote-unquote, the “beneficiaries” of that historical legacy, right? They would say, “Look at my life. I’m still poor. I still have no opportunities.” And I think they would take a whole lot of umbrage with the idea that, you know, their lives are somehow easy or easier or—they would object to the idea that they are somehow on the easy street by virtue of their white racial identity. I think for a lot of white folks that’s sort of a hard pill to swallow in some ways, right? Yes. Yes. There are definitely poorer white people that have, you know—I think would have a lot of problem with that kind of idea. I mean, even for me it’s a complicated idea. I’m sure I have greatly benefited in my life from the fact of my apparent whiteness. You know, I’m sure that that has yielded me benefits in my life. I probably have not had many obstacles that lots of other folks have had, but, yes, I don’t know. I guess I’m still sort of hanging onto this idea of what is my responsibility if I am the beneficiary of some historic wrong, you know. What is it incumbent upon me to do with that now?

Q: Yes, you’ve brought that up several times—

Rowland: [01:02:10] Yes. Yes.

Q: —already, so what are you thinking about it?

Rowland: [01:02:13] I mean, I was just thinking about it, actually—I was thinking about a legal concept a minute ago. [Laughs]

Q: Yes?

Rowland: [01:02:24] Sometimes we talk about what are called third-party beneficiaries to a contract. This is sort of an analogy, a tangent here.

Q: Yes. Well, explain it. Yes.

Rowland: [01:02:33] A third-party beneficiary to a contract, usually you differentiate between these two groups, between intended third-party beneficiaries and incidental third-party beneficiaries, right? An intended third-party beneficiary is somebody whom, you know—person A, person B, they contract for a thing, and the contract is explicitly for the benefit of this third person over here, right? And that's contrasted to, let's say, person A, person B contract for a thing, and it's not explicitly contemplated to benefit this third person over here, but maybe a benefit is conferred. And legally, we sort of make this differentiation, and we say that if you're an intended third-party beneficiary you've got the right to enforce that contract between the two people, right? And if you're an incidental beneficiary, you don't have any right to enforce that contract because it's sort of by happenstance that you benefited from that thing. So you have less entitlement to seek out the benefit of that thing, to enforce the benefit of that thing. I was thinking about that in the context of our discussion. Would I be an incidental beneficiary of this horrific historical arrangement as a present-day white person growing up in the South? I think it would be hard to say that I'm not.

Q: Incidental, at least. Yes.

Rowland: [01:04:27] Yes, at least an incidental beneficiary of that really, really awful historical legacy. You know, I'm not sure if that really clarifies anything for us, but—

Q: Yes. Are you an intended beneficiary of that?

Rowland: [01:04:45] You know, I mean, when you look—when you talk about the intended beneficiaries, you always talk about the contracting parties. And in some ways, I would say that, you know, it seems fairly reasonable that, you know, white people in the nineteenth century probably intended to benefit future generations, even those people that weren't around then. And, yes, that's a—I don't know. It's unsettling to think, you know, that—it's like—have you ever received a gift that was awful that you never wanted? You know, what do you—

Q: Yes. Well, yes.

Rowland: [01:05:45] And a gift that you can't get rid of, to boot, you know.

Q: But is it so awful?

Rowland: [01:05:57] I mean, is it awful to be what, to be white, to have that benefit?

Q: What I'm asking, I mean, we can think about it conceptually, of course, and say that it's awful that this happened and awful to benefit from that legacy in any way, but at the same time, when you're experiencing those benefits, do you experience them as awful things, or do you enjoy them?

Rowland: [01:06:26] I mean, I suppose for most people, right, you don't think about them in your daily life because it's like the sort of proverbial fish in water, you know. You don't realize—

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [01:06:44]—that the medium of your existence is the water. You go through life swimming happily along, and I think for a lot of people that's the case. But like we were talking about earlier, though, confronting that history, I think, is really essential to acknowledging, I guess—to continue with this fish—this tortured fish analogy here—confronting kind of the medium of your existence, right, that all the things that, you know, I and other white people probably take for granted around them in some ways are there because lots of terrible things were done in history, right—not even just in history, I mean, in recent past, too. So, anyway, I don't know if that answers your question [phonetic] at all.

Q: Yes. No, I mean, they're interesting questions to ponder. I don't know if there are any answers to them.

Rowland: [01:07:55] Yes. Yes, I don't either. I definitely don't know either. I promise I'm not being rude. I'm trying to—

Q: Go for it.

Rowland: [01:08:10]—look at my phone here. I promise I'm doing something relevant. [Laughs]

Q: No, no, it's totally fine. No, no, take your time. Sorry.

Rowland: [01:08:35] Yes. I was looking up the lyrics to a song—what is it called? I don't know if this is the right one, “The Three Great Alabama Icons” [“The Three Alabama Icons”] by the Drive-By Truckers. [Laughs]

Q: Okay. Yes. Do you want to recite some of it?

Rowland: [01:08:52] I'm trying to find out if this is the song that I was looking for. I mean, this is kind of a long song. It's, like, less singing and more him talking with music in the background. [phone ringing] I'm going to send that to voicemail too. But I thought some of it might be relevant to our conversation. I'm just flipping through here. Sorry.

Q: No problem.

Rowland: [01:10:03] Let's try to find—there was a lyric that I thought sort of encapsulated this sort of relationship between, you know, sort of guilt and pride of place that we were talking about, and I was trying to find it, but I'm having a hard time right now.

Q: You can also find it later and add it into the transcript if you'd like.

Rowland: [01:10:37] Okay. Yes. [The song was “The Southern Thing” by the Drive-By Truckers]

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [01:10:38] Okay. Maybe I'll do that. Yes.

Q: I mean, you'll read—when you review the transcript, you'll read this part where we're talking about the song, and you'll probably find it and go back, and you can add it in right then.

Rowland: [01:10:48] Yes. Yes, okay. I'll find it later then.

Q: That's fine. Yes.

Rowland: [01:10:51] All right. Yes.

Q: So I wanted to ask you more generally, because I don't want to get—I don't want to focus too much on this question of pride of place because we could spend the entire interview on this.

Rowland: [01:11:02] I know. Yes.

Q: But I wanted to get back to your story a little bit. So where did you go to college and stuff like that?

Rowland: [01:11:09] I ended up going to Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, yes, and then I ended up going to law school at Catholic University [of America] in D.C. [District of Columbia].

Q: How did you decide to do law?

Rowland: [01:11:27] I suppose for a long time I was interested in health policy mostly because my—like I mentioned before, my parents had their bakery, and they didn't have health insurance [phone ringing] for, like, twenty years or more. And I was interested in policy and policy and law, and I thought I might be able to do something useful with that. So for a long time I thought—[phone ringing] sorry.

Q: All good.

Rowland: [01:11:57] I thought that was going to be my avenue to sort of addressing what I viewed as some very, very bad health insurance problems in the US, but it was while I was in law school—no, right—yes, when the Affordable Care Act was passed. So that was useful in a lot of ways, because then my mom got health insurance. [Laughs] And it was shortly thereafter that she got diagnosed with breast cancer, so she's fine. She got some—got the care she needed, but that could have gone very differently.

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [01:12:42] So, yes, to be honest I don't know if Duke was a great fit for me. [Laughs]

Q: Why?

Rowland: [01:12:57] I don't know. It just seemed like a very sort of bougie [bourgeois] campus. [Laughs] I went there because, I mean, basically it was the best school I got into, and I thought, "Oh, well, I should go there, because that will afford the greatest opportunity." But I think culturally it was maybe not the best fit.

Q: Yes, it's definitely something to think about. Yes.

Rowland: [01:13:21] Yes. Yes. I mean, I still have some friends from there, but I just never felt a great sort of affinity for the place, you know. I feel like a lot of folks are really diehard fans and sort of college loyalists, you know, but I don't know. It's the place I went for school, and it was

just useful for that. And they do lots of great things, I'm sure, but I don't know. It just didn't stick with me like it does for some people.

Q: Yes. And then, afterwards, you went to law school, and tell me a little bit about how you ended up here in Cheyenne.

Rowland: [01:14:10] Well, I was finishing up law school, and I had some inkling that I wanted to try something a little bit different because I had lived in D.C. for almost eight years at that point. And I didn't plan on being there for that long. I thought D.C. was going to be a one- or two-year stop for me sort of en route to going to law school somewhere else. And, yes, this was in my last year of law school, and I was chatting with a friend of mine about applying for jobs out here. You know, I think—I don't know. I think he had been to a wedding or something where he chatted with a few people, but he had known from a time when he had lived in Wyoming briefly—he was a reporter, and he lived in Gillette, Wyoming, briefly—I don't know—for a couple of years or something like that. And one of them was a judge, and—I don't know—they were just making small chat, and I think she had mentioned something about reviewing applications for law clerk positions. And he had mentioned that to me, that she was hiring, and I had applied to a handful of places, and I had sent—so I said, “Oh, maybe I'll apply to a job there.” And I applied for a job here. [Laughs] And I don't know if, you know, the only reason my application got pulled was because somehow that connection was made or what, but, in any case, I got a job out here.

Q: You were here as a clerk first?

Rowland: [01:16:05] Yes. Yes, I came out here for a clerkship with the court, and that was a one-year job.

Q: Which judge were you working with?

Rowland: [01:16:14] Judge [Nancy] Freudenthal is her name.

Q: Oh, I've met her. Yes.

Rowland: [01:16:16] Okay. Yes.

Q: Yes, I actually talked to her for the project.

Rowland: [01:16:18] Oh, did you really?

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [01:16:19] Wow. Yes. Yes. So I worked with her for a year, and during that year I met a lot of great people including my partner Amy, and Dan White, who's my former boss here with the city. He was a city attorney. And I decided after I met Amy that maybe I wanted to stick around for a little while and sort of see where that goes, and conveniently, also, Dan said—Dan

was looking to hire somebody here at the city, another attorney for the city, so that seemed convenient and like a good job, so I said, “Great.”

Q: Great.

Rowland: [01:17:01] “This will help me accomplish two things. I can be employed as a lawyer, and I can stay here in Cheyenne.” Yes, and that was—I guess in August I will have been here for about—for four years.

Q: Four years.

Rowland: [01:17:15] Yes. Yes.

Q: In Cheyenne or at this specific job?

Rowland: [01:17:18] In Cheyenne for four years.

Q: In Cheyenne for four years.

Rowland: [01:17:21] Yes. Yes, so—yes, I’ve been enjoying it though. I like Cheyenne, in a lot of ways. I feel like it’s a place you have a lot of capacity to sort of make your own. Living in D.C. before, it’s definitely a harder place to sort of sculpt around you, right, whereas I feel like this is

an environment where if you have a vision for doing something, if you want to accomplish something, it's easier in some ways to do those things. Right?

Q: Do you have a vision?

Rowland: [01:18:10] That's a big question, a vision. [Laughs]

Q: You just spoke about having a vision for doing things.

Rowland: [01:18:16] Yes. If you have a vision for a place, if you wanted—I don't know—it to be, you know, a particular way, if you see a problem that needs fixing, for example, one of the things we're working on here in Cheyenne is basically diversifying our local economy. I think a lot of folks recognize that we could benefit from greater sort of economic diversity, and increasingly a big part of that is building connections and relationships to far-flung parts of the world with, for example, the Internet. So one of the things that we're trying to do is to consider ways, policies, laws that might make for a friendlier environment for broadband expansion so that we can have the infrastructure necessary to support, you know, deployment of high-speed, affordable, and ubiquitous broadband access, which—you know, for a lot of folks I think that kind of thing is maybe taken for granted, but it's still a really valuable asset that you don't have everywhere.

Q: So that could attract companies here, is the idea, or—

Rowland: [01:19:37] Yes, it could attract companies here or—

Q: —or is that just something for me to use as an everyday person?

Rowland: [01:19:40] I mean, both. You know, for a lot of folks I'm sure that just means my Netflix buffers a little bit, and that bothers me, and that's annoying, but it's a lot more than that. You know, we are looking to now, but we're also looking ten, fifteen, twenty years down the road at having the infrastructure in place to support autonomous vehicles that communicate with each other and with the ground and signs and being able to support industries that we don't necessarily have now. So, you know, it's not a small undertaking, building out physical infrastructure. I know we don't live in a giant city here. It's only about 60,000 people, but it still takes a lot of effort to sort of roll those things out, you know. So we're trying to make that happen, and that's something that I care about, among other things, I guess. [Laughs] So I suppose that's one example of a thing that I think we can change here that could greatly improve the quality of people's lives not just now but moving forward, you know, for everybody. What else? I don't know. I suppose also, I mean, just interacting with your—I'm an attorney for the city, but for people that want to interact with, let's say, the city council—I don't know—if you have some issue that you want to address, it's still a small enough community so that, you know, you can communicate with those people, and they're generally very responsive. So I think that's sort of, you know, an enlightening civic experiment in a lot of ways. You know, people can really communicate with their government and get responses. It's a lot more challenging at the federal level, for example, because it takes a lot longer for the sort of gears to turn, right—

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [01:21:56]—to achieve policy results. And, you know, I worked briefly for a Senate committee, and—I don't know—maybe I added some value to somebody, but mostly researching things here and there and contributing to some reports. But it's very gratifying to be able to do a little research, write an ordinance, discuss, review with the council people, have it on an agenda, and then, a few weeks later, that's law, and it's doing something for people. So that's satisfying in a lot of ways.

Q: I heard you're thinking of running for office, right? Do you even want that in the interview right now? [Laughter]

Rowland: [01:22:53] I mean, I don't know if it's—I don't know. You know, I think about it. I think it would be fun in some ways, right, to be able to be more proactive in giving back to the community, doing cool things, helping, for example, deploy broadband on a much wider scale. I think there are lots of issues that need to be addressed, and I think, like I said, we have a community that's of a size where it's easier for you to do that. You know, it's one thing if you live in a city of several million people. It's a lot harder to really make an impact.

Q: Oh, yes.

Rowland: [01:23:48] But in a community our size, it's possible, and that's a good feeling. Yes, so I guess I've toyed with the idea a little bit, but—

Q: What office would you run for?

Rowland: [01:24:01] I mean, I'm not entirely sure. I live in —If I ran for something now, there are house seats, state house seats—well, I suppose for me a house seat, because I live in a house district. [Laughs] But I think those are on the table, you know. Similarly, I live in a senate district, so a state senate seat. Those are partisan races. There are also non-partisan city council seats, but obviously I would not be an attorney for the city and do that. [Laughs] I don't know. It's something I think about. I like policy. I like law. I'm taking a community organizing class right now because I'm—

Q: Oh, interesting.

Rowland: [01:24:46]—getting a little more, yes, involved in, I suppose, learning about community organizing. It's a remote class, so it's online. It's a semester-long program with a little certificate, and, you know—but I had done another program. It was a little—again, a semester-long class. It was over here at the University of Wyoming last winter. And one of the readings was by this guy—Marshall Ganz was his name, and it was really—I don't know. I was like, “Wow, this guy, he seems to know what he's talking about.” [Laughs] So I started doing a little Googling, right, and watching some YouTube videos, and I learned about a program they offered, so it was great. [Laughs]

Q: Yes, that's great.

Rowland: [01:25:37] So I'm doing that now. That's almost done.

Q: Oh, so you're doing the program with Marshall Ganz right now.

Rowland: [01:25:41] Yes.

Q: Oh, cool.

Rowland: [01:25:42] Yes, so it's fun. It's a little bit different from my regular legal work, right?

Q: Yes. Yes. No, he—that's funny. Yes. I actually work with someone who works with him.

Rowland: [01:25:53] Oh, do you really? [Laughs]

Q: Yes, yes, yes, or has worked with him.

Rowland: [01:25:55] Small world.

Q: Well, community organizing is not that big of a world despite the impact—

Rowland: [01:26:00] Yes, yes, yes.

Q: —that it's had on the United States in a lot of ways. Yes.

Rowland: [01:26:04] Yes. I mean, I kind of think of it in some ways as a continuum or a continuation of what my sort of professional training is, right, that sort of lawyering is about persuasion in a very kind of defined context normally, and this is sort of about persuasion but in a less defined context, you know?

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [01:26:31] If you think about laws on a timeline, as a lawyer I'm usually working with them on the sort of back end of the timeline where they're already passed. They're implemented. Oftentimes there's a dispute regarding—I don't know—some law, the terms of the law, the interpretation, whereas people that are organizing, they're way to the, you know, left on that timeline where they're talking about organizing because oftentimes they want to change a law, you know, because maybe they don't think it reflects the—I don't know—proper allocation of justice or whatever the case may be.

Q: Yes, that's an interesting way to think about it. Yes.

Rowland: [01:27:16] Yes. Yes, so I tend to think of it as a, yes, different—just a different point on that timeline. I realized I was supposed to call my dad at three o'clock.

Q: Yes, you probably have to go, so we're—

Rowland: [01:27:33] Yes. Yes.

Q: —we can cut it here. Yes. Do you have any other thoughts or questions or anything that you want to add before we're done?

Rowland: [01:27:44] Thoughts or questions? Not really. I guess my only comment is, I mean, thinking about whiteness, we talked a lot about sort of pride of place, you know, what that meant, and to be honest I don't know. I think about it periodically, and it's evident in the music I listen to, even, among other things. But it's still something I sort of—I don't know—wrestle with. I'm just not entirely sure.

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [01:28:18] And I, yes, continue to think about it. Yes, I just don't know the answer, and, as you mentioned earlier, it's not totally clear that there is an answer to such a thing. But it's something to continue thinking about.

Q: Yes. Yes. Well, it's interesting for us to hear how people think about it, not even so much “the solution,” you know. [Laughter]

Rowland: [01:28:43] Yes, yes, yes.

Q: We don't have the grand solution to this hundreds-year-old problem.

Rowland: [01:28:47] The answer is not forty-two. [Laughter]

Q: Yes.

Rowland: [01:28:49] Yes, yes, yes. There's not a numeric answer here, but—

Q: I thought it was forty-one, but—yes.

Rowland: [01:28:56] Is it forty-one? Yes. [Laughter]

Q: Yes, or—no, I just—

Rowland: [01:28:59] Yes, yes, yes. [Laughs]

Q: Yes, I was just shooting the shit.

Rowland: [01:29:04] Yes, it's a complicated thing to continue thinking about, but it's, yes, something I will I'm sure continue with, so—

Q: Great. Well, thank you so much, Ben. Thanks for having me, and, yes—

Rowland: [01:29:17] Yes. Yes.

Q: —we'll be in touch.

Rowland: No, it's—

[END OF INTERVIEW]