

STUDY ON WHITE PEOPLE

The Reminiscences of

Jeremy Royer

INCITE

Columbia University

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## PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Jeremy Royer conducted by Whitney Dow on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 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: Jeremy Royer

Location: Cheyenne, WY

Interviewer: Whitney Dow

Date: May 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018

Q1: We appreciate it. Well, we gratefully appreciate you coming in and speaking with us, and can you give me your name, where you're from, and just a little about yourself?

Royer: [01:00:15] I'm Jeremy Royer. I'm from Cheyenne [Wyoming]. I lived in California for some time in the '80s and '90s, and moved back here in '95 with my dad. And married, two kids. I'm in the transportation industry, and I'm a musician in a rock band locally here, so.

Q1: Cool. So, how old were you when you moved back here?

Royer: [01:00:47] I would have been fifteen.

Q1: What was the neighborhood like that you grew up in in Cheyenne? Were you living in the city, outside the city? Was it like a neighborhood or a ranching area?

Royer: [01:00:57] Yes. I'm from the south side just over the county line, so we're in front of the trailer parks. My grandfather had a mobile-home business that he started here in the late '50s, early '60s, and so we lived back behind there on some land in a house that my dad

built.

So, how is that neighborhood? It's, I guess, considered one of the poorer parts of town, I think, you know, very blue collar. I would assume a good bit of like Section 8 [Housing Choice Voucher Program] and welfare stuff, and things like that. We were never that. We were just construction, blue-collar-type people.

Q1: And was it like a diverse neighborhood? Was it like mostly white people, Latino, Asian? Was it mixed? What type of neighborhood was it like?

Royer: [01:01:49] Our neighborhood is mixed as much as Cheyenne gets mixed, I think. Primarily, it was known as the Latino and Hispanic neighborhood, especially further north into the city limits, whereas we were just outside of the city limits, but I would say relatively diverse.

Q1: Do you remember if race was something that your family spoke about or was, sort of, like something on your radar screen as a kid growing up here?

Royer: [01:02:29] We didn't. Race is a tough thing because my family doesn't really believe that there's races, yes. I'm a Lutheran, and so our idea is that there's a human race, and that we're all, you know, the same. The only differences would be color, and culture, and things like that. And so, we would notice different cultures and different, maybe, cultural norms

that the people have. Stereotypes develop because they—there's some truth to them right? You know, so, we've all maybe known an Irish guy who's short-tempered [laughs] or something like that. But other than that, no.

I think my grandfather had some different experiences when he was in Korea that he would discuss from time to time. But it wasn't like a way to paint all people, just some of the different people that he had come to be around when he was in the service.

Q2: Are you wearing a chain or something?

Royer: I am.

Q2: Are you okay to take it off for the interview? Just because I think it's clicking on your microphone.

Royer: Yeah. Maybe.

Q1: You've got your Lutheran cross.

Royer: Yeah, crucifix. We're a lot like Catholics without the guilt.

Q2: Thanks. Sorry about that. Should have noticed that when I was putting it on.

Royer: No, no.

Q1: So, when you say that you don't really believe in race as a Lutheran, do you think of yourself as having a race?

Royer: [01:04:49] Well, no. I mean we're human, right? We have nationality. I suppose as a nationality, you're—or a [makes air quotes] “tribe” maybe, right? We're Americans at this point. I think people from Wyoming have certain characteristics that they don't even notice they have, which is true of people from New York.

I've traveled most of my life a lot, and so, when you get to spend time in other regions of the—even in this country, you notice the real differences between just food and mannerisms, you know, in the upper peninsula or up around the great lakes area or the East Coast. The West Coast definitely has its own fun things, you know?

I work for a company now that's based out of Utah, and I was back for some meetings. We went to some burger place to have lunch, and they said, “Do you want fry sauce?” I said, “What is fry sauce,” because—and it's a big thing in Utah and Idaho to have, and it's—do you know what it is? Fry sauce is ketchup mixed with mayonnaise because ketchup is just too darned spicy, so [laughs] for your French fries. So, everybody has their little flavor and

you get to notice those different things. So, if we can consider that tribal, I suppose there's tribalism. There are national tendencies that people have, but we're human beings, like all of our DNA is interchangeable. If we were a different species somehow then we wouldn't be able to procreate with one another, right, like a dog and a cat.

Q1: Was there ever a time that you became aware and thought to yourself, "Well, I'm a human race, but I'm also white." Is that something that's ever entered your mind?

Royer: Well, I mean you realize that you are, right, because you see that every day [laughs]. Other than that, other—do I know I'm white? Yes, of course, because that's—it's self-evident, yeah?

Q1: Do you think that you have different experiences in the world because you're white?

Royer: [01:07:29] Well, no, not necessarily, no. Maybe because of the decisions that I make, I might have different experiences. I have different experiences than other people I know that are white, yes. So, because I've gone to different places, and you know, mostly through work, so your job will give you experiences that you'll have that others won't have. I also have never been to college, right, so [laughs]. I've never had that experience where probably the majority of people might have. I can only assume what that would be like. But there are other people even in my industry, in my company that have the same job that I have that are from a different race or background, and they have the same experiences that I would have.

Q1: Could you point any advantages that it is that you have or that you have being white?

Royer: [01:08:48] I can't. I suppose because of just being the majority. Is that what you'd be asking?

Q1: Or anything. I guess my next question would be, what are the disadvantages? My first question would be are there advantages to being white? Or have you received any advantages from being white that you can point to?

Royer: [01:09:17] Can I point to any advantages of being white? I don't believe so, no. Accepting that in this area, finishing high school, we would be the majority in Cheyenne for the most part. Well I'm certain, statistically, we're a majority, so. You look like other people, but I can't imagine any advantage that's taken from that. I mean do I get a better deal on rent? No. Do I get a better deal on cars? No. Are there certain neighborhoods I shouldn't go to? Not here. Cheyenne is pretty quiet. But I don't think people would treat you differently either way.

Q1: And are there any disadvantages that you can point to being white?

Royer: [01:10:33] Well, I suppose, there are some disadvantages, but you don't want to feel like a—you don't want to act like a victim. This is not a matter of being a victim and, oh,

poor guy, you know, but there are a lot of grants to be able to go to school or to be able to start a business—small business grants and things like that that are available for minority communities that aren't available for the majority community. And that's a thing. You know school quotas, I assume Columbia [University] might have some kind of—what did they call that where—? It's like a big national thing for a while.

Q1: Affirmative action?

Royer: [01:11:30] Affirmative action, yes. They'll admit people based on they have to have x amount of representation for a race, for what they wouldn't have for the majority of population.

Q1: Do you think that's fair or unfair?

Royer: [01:11:51] I think affirmative action is generally unfair. I think that it's unfair to the people that had presented to help as well as to the majority who's—you know? Because if you wanted to go to a university, you would have to have your grades and everything at a certain achievement standard. And if they're lowering that standard for a minority population then that not only makes your hard work less valuable, right, but it also makes their work less valuable. It, kind of, says that they can't achieve a certain thing, a certain high level, a high standard, which of course, they can. You know, there's no reason—there's nothing genetically that would make them less intelligent or anything like that. So they could achieve

the same scores or whatnot that you could. But to cheapen that is kind of—it's an insult to them, right? You know, that would be my thought.

Q1: You know, I think that the theory behind it—and I'm not agreeing or disagreeing—is that there's been institutionalized racism and structural racism before the civil rights era, slavery, Jim Crow laws, and there's—because there's sort of the head start, we want to give something back. You and I sitting here in 2018, two white men, do we owe anything because of the past? Do we owe anything to blacks or Native Americans because of the way our country has acted in the past? Or is that not connected to us in any way? It's sort of like an extension of this conversation of affirmation action.

Royer: Sure.

Q1: Yes.

Royer: Can I get a drink of coffee?

Q1: Yeah, sure, absolutely.

Royer: Sorry. I don't take much [laughter] so my mouth gets dry.

Q1: Do you want water as well?

Royer: No, this is fine.

Q1: You're on the road driving, you're not talking?

Royer: Yes.

Q1: You don't have a CB [Citizens band radio, a system of short-distance radio communications between individuals, often used by truck drivers]? I have this fantasy of the CB, or maybe it's just Snapchat now instead.

Royer: We don't use CBs much anymore. The old timers do.

Q1: My dad used to have a CB. That was like, we'd be talking in the car, "what are you doing?" He'd be talking to a trucker. [Laughs]

Royer: It was all the rage.

Q1: He was a college professor, he'd be like, "hey, how you doing?" He's got his little shitty Sedan, it's like, "what are you doing?" [Laughter]

Royer: That's funny. So no, I'm in a supervisory role so I spend a lot of time on the phone. The CB just sort of annoys you, especially in the winter time when everybody comes up from the South. And they want to tell you how bad the roads are. No, [gestures turning radio off], I know what the roads are like, I just turn it off. [laughs]

Q1: [unclear] The roads suck.

Royer: [01:15:03] Always. Yeah, and we go from winter to road construction seamlessly, there's no season in between. [Laughs] Anyway, do I believe generally that we owe—what would you call that—almost like a reparation?

Q1: Yes, or something because of the sins of the past of our country, which we can all agree were—exist. It's now 2018, are we connected to that in any way? Do we have an obligation to somehow make right? Or is that past now because now that in the eyes of the law everybody is equal, there's equal opportunities, you can't discriminate?

Royer: [01:15:50] It's been a long time, so if I was to answer that from a personal standpoint, I'd have to say, not only did I not have anything to do with it, you would be hard-pressed to find anybody from my family because we just, frankly, weren't here [laughs]. We came from Germany in two different waves, from German regions. My grandpa's family, I think, was in the middle 1800s when they came over from—what were they called Haitians [*sic*], right?

And—

Q1: Wait, your grandfather was Haitian?

Royer: [01:16:45] The Haitians [*sic*]. They were not from Haiti—

Q1: Oh, I was going to say.

Royer: [01:16:48] No, not from Haiti. It was the Hessians?

Q1: Hessians, okay.

Royer: [01:16:52] How would you say it? It was a German sub-providence, anyway. Well and Saxony, right? So, they mostly wind up being called Pennsylvania Dutch [laughs]. My great-grandfather—I knew my great-grandfather. He died in the '90s—insisted that we were Pennsylvania Dutch because it was very unpopular to be German when he was a kid or a young adult for obvious reasons. And so, he insisted we're Pennsylvania Dutch. You know, that's where the name Royer comes from. So, if you go to Ohio, or Pennsylvania, there's Royerton, Royerville kind of little towns out there that were Pennsylvania Dutch towns. You probably know more about them than I do being from the East Coast. And then my grandmother's family was Prussian, and they came to, basically, live in Colorado and picked sugar beets as migrant farmworkers in the 1920s.

I guess the point of that is that we weren't here to participate in slavery. I mean so maybe there's a time limit on it if you can prove that your family was a slave owner or something like that maybe. And you talked about Jim Crow and segregation, and those were terrible things that were just sanctioned by a really misguided government, yes. I don't think that our government is able to be just in a lot of ways. But this is what happens with democracy. You know, this is why our founding fathers—air quotes, right—our constitutional constructionists were against democracy because democracy is three wolves and a sheep deciding what's for dinner [laughs]. Guess who loses? So whenever you find yourself in a minority, in direct democracy, you have a problem.

And so, all the segregation laws show up with Jim Crow or with the start of the progressive era. The president was like [Thomas] Woodrow Wilson, yes? I believe it's right that he showed the film *[The] Birth of a Nation* in the White House. He's also, sort of, a progressive hero, so his descendants now would be the ones who would say, "Hey, we should have some sort of reparation, shouldn't we?" That's not an American ideal or an American value. That was a corruption of that American ideal and American value would be my opinion.

Q1: I mean it's complicated because if you're a constructionist or if you're an originalist, there was a lot of fucked-up things about, you know, whether if you're a woman or if you're a minority, if you weren't a landowner. There was like a lot of things that we could—you know, that were complicated in the founding of the country. The ideals might have been

something that we think—the way they were implicated were complicated.

Royer: [01:20:29] Well, yes. That's part of their culture, too, they're a product of their time, right? So, I suppose you could say that. If you've ever read any of Thomas Jefferson's thoughts on slavery, and he was a big abolitionist. He would have liked to have been rid of it. He bemoaned the institution in a lot of ways, but he also recognized—what did he say one time? He said the—it's like having a tiger by the tail. You know, you better not hold on, but you better not let go, yes [laughs]. So, it's not as if these people invented it. They, sort of, inherited it.

I think we can trace the first slave owner to a black man if you go back in history. It was in the 1600 sometime when the British court ruled that you could, indeed, own another man. Before then it was this indentured servitude sort of idea and—which of course, isn't probably right either, but it was, sort of, the economic system, you know?

It is complicated because—what do we do now? Is the black family better off since the Great Society programs? I don't know. I mean we used to go watch hockey games at the L.A. [Los Angeles] Forum, and you could drive through some pretty tough neighborhoods. These people are not better off. I hear it's better now. I haven't been back to L.A. for a long time. These people are not better off with the welfare system and the modern welfare state. Fatherhood is a real issue. The war on drugs is probably—it's probably still racist.

Do we still have an institutionalized [makes air quotes] “racist” program? I think the war on drugs very well might be. I think the welfare state very well might be. I think Planned Parenthood very well might be if you look at the disproportionate numbers of minorities who have abortions compared to whites statistically—per capita, I guess, is the right word to say for that—whites still have the majority of the abortions, okay. But based on the per capita, the size for the minorities is staggering and then it’s sad. There could be reasons for that, but it’s sad.

Q1: I have to get to get a t-shirt that says, “what do we do now?” It’s got something that could applies to almost everything, right?

Royer: [01:24:03] Yes.

Q1: I mean it is. You seem like a very—like you’ve thought a lot about this stuff. I want to just remind you, again, it’s like I don’t expect you to be an expert in anything except your own opinion.

Royer: [01:24:14] Sure.

Q1: So then when you start talking about this stuff, and you feel like, “Oh, I’ve got to pull out this fact,” [unclear]. I know you feel like, “Oh,” you know, that sometimes that’s—but you clearly have read a lot and thought a lot about this stuff. Are you politically active?

Royer: [01:24:30] Not, not anymore, no. I caucused for Ron [E.] Paul in '08, and so root for that. Read a lot. Now the road is boring, yes, so there's a—

Q1: Would you say you're like liberal, conservative, progressive, Democrat, Libertarian, Republican? Where do you fit into the—in, sort of, the political-philosophical spectrum?

Royer: [01:25:03] I'm a registered Libertarian, registered to vote as Libertarian. So I don't have a card for the national committee, but I am a registered voter as a Libertarian.

Q1: And what was it that you drew you to libertarianism? What was it about? Is there, sort of, an origin story of that?

Royer: [01:25:22] Yes. Kind of realizing that both of the other parties get you into war and steal your money, [laughs] is a big thing. Starting to earn enough to actually become a tax payer as a young adult, and I go, "Wow, this is not good. I could use that money," yes [laughs]. And so, seeing government do things that affects your conscience when you just know it's wrong, and that by having Washington, D.C., do this whether it's a bombing raid in Syria or the aspirin factory in Sudan, or whatever the case might be, you know, you think, "I don't want my name attached to that. That's wrong, "

So, just the idea of saying, "We should be able to make our own decisions. We should be

able to let the market work for itself.” It doesn’t really affect me if people make decisions different than I would make ethically for example. I’m not interested in being the world’s babysitter or caretaker. The nonaggression principle is a thing in the libertarian movement that wraps up a lot of what I just generally believe. You know, you don’t do things to hurt other people, physically, financially, whatever the case might be.

Q1: Did you vote in the last election?

Royer: [01:27:14] I did.

Q1: Did you vote for Gary [E.] Johnson?

Royer: [01:27:15] I didn’t. Oh, no, I couldn’t because he was a schmuck. I voted for Darrell [L.] Castle and he was a Constitutional candidate. Nobody knew he was running, [laughs] which was too bad. He was really just the best option. I, kind of, pride myself on trying not to be partisan and to vote for Gary Johnson just because he was the Libertarian on the ticket when he wasn’t so very Libertarian really. He still believed in broad-market controls. And he knew very little about our foreign interventions, which is important because we can’t have a better domestic economic situation without getting our foreign situation in line and getting our guys back home. There’s a lot of capital that’s blown up overseas.

[INTERRUPTION]

Q1: Are you happy you're white?

Royer: [01:29:14] I couldn't possibly know. As opposed to what?

Q1: Being in a different race.

Royer: [01:29:25] Am I happy I'm white? I'm comfortable with who I am, and that takes sort of some maturity maybe. I don't think most people start out being comfortable with who they are as a teenager, you know? That's why teenagers act like assholes sometimes [laughs] because they don't know who they are yet. But I'm comfortable with who I am, and this is how I was made. I couldn't possibly be anything else at this point, so.

Q1: Do you think your life would be different or wouldn't be different if you—or would it have been different if you were born another race; black, or Latino, or something?

Royer: [01:30:22] Yes. I mean I suppose it would be. It would be different if my dad was a lawyer, or a doctor, or a famous inventor maybe instead of a construction guy, too, you know? He was successful. He's had a great career of his life, but what if your dad was [Dr.] Heathcliff Huxtable, yes? [Laughs]

Q1: I would be in jail.

Royer: [01:30:58] Well—[laughter]

Q1: You'd visit him of course.

Royer: No [laughs]. That's unfortunate. Not [makes air quotes] [William Henry] Bill Cosby [Jr.] but Heathcliff Huxtable. You'd have to think of the character in the story where that was a fantastic storyline. He was a doctor, she was an attorney, they lived in a brownstone, you know what—five kids in the family? Everybody goes to college and becomes successful in their life. It's quite a story that sitcom. I'm willing to bet that most white people don't live like that, let alone most black people, so, because that—so those are fantastic achievements. It was for entertainment I understand but—

Q1: Tell me a little bit about the culture of Wyoming? One of the reasons that we came out here originally was to—because it was a majority white state. Despite the fact that the demographics in this country are trending to the point where it's—we're going to be a white minority by, some people say, 2045 [unclear]. And yet, Wyoming had stayed majority white especially outside of Cheyenne. And so I was wondering a little bit about what the cultures were. It's such sort of a dominant white culture, how do you think that people view both themselves as white people and also their relationship to the nonwhites in the state?

Royer: [01:32:34] How do I think people feel? [unclear]. Wyoming is interesting as a state because nobody wants to live here. Even the people who live here don't necessarily always want to live here. They have some reason why they're here. We're very transient. The climate is difficult to deal with. There are not a lot of land resources. It's either owned or off limits for some reason. So even in Cheyenne, we're very much landlocked where we can build. It's hard to build, and that makes it hard to grow.

Although, [burps]—pardon me—I think we saw more diverse populations come up in different waves. We used to have a pretty big Asian community here way, way back when, and they were probably left over from the railroad and things like that. We just don't grow like our neighbors, Colorado and Idaho. I think they're very afraid of competition and different things like that. So, I think, generally, people in Wyoming are reactive and don't like to see much change. People in Wyoming consider themselves to be very conservative. I don't necessarily agree that they're very conservative. I think that they're—business-wise very oligarchical. They make rules to just protect their own—their own nest. And so, that'll affect the way minorities come in, the way anybody comes in, the way just people, in general, come in.

The Indian reservation has been—it's in the center of the state, so Brown, Riverton, and Lander, the Wind River Indian Reservation. It's always been a source of crime and things like that, so I think that people, generally, react negatively to that. Over the last, oh, say, eight, ten years maybe, there's been a lot of discussion about illegal immigration. We probably weren't affected by the early waves of that much because we're not a farming

community. So where you were seeing a lot of migrant farmworkers come up from Mexico and South America, we didn't have those because we don't have any crops to go work.

But now and over the last eight or ten years, you're seeing a lot more in the construction trades, and things like that have come up possibly illegally, I don't know. And I think that there's a bad attitude about them around Wyoming generally. But there's always been a pretty vibrant Mexican, Hispanic. I think it's safe to say Mexican because it's primarily where they are. We're not dealing with a lot of Cubans and Venezuelans here, but—so, there's always been a pretty vibrant Mexican community in Cheyenne.

Q1: Tell me about like just family. Is there anybody in your family who is—you know, extended family, who's not white?

Royer: [01:37:01] We have a recessive redhead gene [laughs]. No, I have an adopted cousin who's of Latino background, and he was adopted as a child.

Q1: And you have two children?

Royer: [01:37:21] I have two children.

Q1: Are they boys, girls?

Royer: [01:37:24] I have a boy and a girl.

Q1: Would it bother you or affect you either positively or negatively if, like, they married someone who wasn't white and had children that weren't white?

Royer: [01:37:39] Is he a decent guy? I mean—

Q1: I don't know.

Royer: —that would be—[laughs]

Q1: I don't know [crosstalk]—

Royer: [01:37:45] I'm a father, and so I want my kids to be happy. I want my daughter especially to be married to a man who will care for her, and love her, and provide for her in the best way he can, and that might not be a white guy I suppose. Odds are probably, it will be because, again, we're just playing a statistics game at that point, right. But no, I don't think that that would bother me. If he was a thug, or a jerk, or a wife beater, or something like that, that would bother me, but that would be regard—if he drove a Ford, that might drive me insane. I mean I might really have a problem with that, but no. I don't think,

generally, that would bother me.

Q1: How might it—would it make you feel if your grandchildren didn't look like you, looked fundamentally different? Is that something—? Because you talk a lot about your history and you have this very attached history to Wyoming, and your family that came over, and the Germans.

Royer: Sure.

Q1: And all of a sudden now, that ends with you or your kids, and you now have a very different-looking set of grandchildren. Would that be an issue for you?

Royer: [01:39:19] I might have mentioned earlier—and I didn't so I apologize—but my wife is Jewish, not religiously Jewish anymore. She converted, but they were reformed, so she's—her ancestry is Polish and Austrian mostly, but, they have certain traits that are different than mine. In fact, she has health concerns that we have to worry about because of the Ashkenazi bloodline, and the BRCA [breast cancer] gene, and so we have to have—we spend a lot of money getting her MRIs [magnetic resonance imaging] every year to make sure she doesn't have cancer developing. My daughter will have that. [shows emotion], so no, I don't think it matters. Excuse me, I'm sorry. That was unexpected [laughs]. I apologize.

Q1: No need to apologize. I have three daughters myself, you know they carried a lot of

tears.

Royer: [01:40:50] Yes.

Q1: [Unclear]

Royer: [01:40:54] Yes, so a cure for cancer would be great [laughs]. At any given time that would be fantastic. So, yes, I suppose at that point, we're already mixed a little bit, you know. Everybody in the country, really, I mean they might have their majority bloodlines, but I don't think anybody can really say, "I am one hundred percent this thing." There's been plenty of—you know, just relationships develop how they develop. So, no, I don't think that would be a problem.

Q1: I mean we recognize this is kind of a weird project, you know? What was it that, sort of, attracted you to it or made you willing to do a—what motivated you to get involved when we said, "Oh, we're doing this project on whiteness," and—you know? It's not like your average survey, your average interview.

Royer: [01:42:06] Yes. Yes, it is interesting. I don't know. It has a lot of media attention now, doesn't it? So, we talk. The national conversation is a lot around racial tensions. And we had the police shootings, I think, in St. Louis [Missouri] and in other areas.

Honestly, I think the racial tensions have been higher since [Barack Hussein] Obama. I think that there's been some lines drawn since President Obama was in office, and I never understood it necessarily because I would think that when you have a black president, that would kind of make you think, "Well, see, things are just pretty normal. There were more white presidents, yes, but there were just more of us." And hey, I would have preferred maybe Thomas Sowell [phonetic] over Barack Obama, but Thomas didn't run, so, because he's smart, [laughs] and he stays out of politics [laughs].

I suppose that's what it is that I don't think the discussion is healthy now in America. I don't think that it seeks to unite people of different political ideologies or people of different ethnic backgrounds. I think that it's, sort of, intended to divide. And I think that the media finds these things to gin up some sort of response. Whether it's for ratings or whether it's just a political distraction, I'm not really sure.

Q1: So, is doing a project like this, having a conversation about whiteness even valid? Are we exacerbating a problem? Is it something that we shouldn't be talking about? Is it helping the problem by giving white people a voice in the conversation on race?

Royer: [01:44:39] No. I think it probably is valuable to have everybody's opinions and perspectives. So, some of the survey questions, I answered with a certain amount of suspicion. You see things, and it's not your guys' fault. You can only word things a certain way in a survey. You have to play with it. But sometimes you go, "What are they asking?"

You know you try to read between the lines too much maybe a little bit. “Do I feel like I have control over things in my life?” Those are one of the survey questions. Sometimes, you know. I mean does anybody really have control over their life at all? I could get hit by a bus leaving here. Well not here, but maybe a taxi or something but not a bus. But—

Q1: That’s the wrong [unclear].

Royer: [01:45:42] Yes [laughs]. A raving lunatic in a pickup truck, whatever the case might be.

Q1: Yes, some Ford driver.

Royer: [01:45:51] Some Ford driver, oh yes. It’s a valuable conversation to have. I would like to see us having more of a conversation about maybe what we have in common than what we have different. Because I think if you talk to people of any ethnic background, their primary concerns are, you know, “I want to have things okay for my kids. I want them to have it a little better maybe than I had it. And I want to generally get along in life without having any trouble from the law,” yes. Not many people are saying, “Boy, I sure hope I can get indicted for armed robbery,” you know. That’s the way we are, right. We have the same human interests because we’re humans.

Q1: Yes, I think that the idea really behind what, sort of, sparked this project is that—I mean

it's a—the conversation is very divisive now. But I really feel like that white people need to enter into it not as—as kind of having a little more—better understanding of themselves before they start talking to other people. Because we've never really explored our own race and how it, sort of, impacts our lives that it's very hard for us to have a conversation with things—with someone who's like if you're black American, your race has really impacted you a lot.

Royer: [01:47:19] Yes.

Q1: And so that's really was the impetus for the project was to sort of—if you're going to have a conversation, both people have to be talking and both people have to be listening.

Royer: Right.

Q1: Is there anything that we didn't touch on in the course of this conversation that's important to be said in a conversation like this?

Royer: [01:47:49] That's a good question. I don't know. I can't think of anything else on the top off my head. I probably will in twenty-five minutes, you know? [Laughs]

Q1: That's the way [unclear]. So, we're just going to take some stills of you now.

Royer: [01:48:15] Okay.

Q1: So, do you have any questions?

Q2: Everybody seems to say—when we're talking about race relations, everybody points to the media as inflating or inflaming the situation with maybe sensationalized coverage, which I think we could all probably agree is true when it comes to any mainstream media network in America. But, do you see any truth to what the media, like the quote, unquote "liberal media" is reporting on as it relates to race relations?

Royer: [01:49:00] I don't know if I would say liberal media. I don't know what they are. They're self-serving media.

Q1: Corporate media?

Royer: [01:49:09] Yes, the corporate media.

Q2: Corporate media. You see the reports and a lot of it is not captured by news cameras. It's captured by cell phone—by citizens with their cell phones. You know what I mean?

Royer: [01:49:20] Right, Yes. We've created a police state. We have too damn many laws, and so it's likely that any of us at any given time, we're running afoul of one or many of those laws. I think that media picks the ones that are going to be most sensational. Are there black people who are unfairly affected by law enforcement? Surely, there are. And depending on where you're at, St. Louis is—was really kind of a big catalyst for Black Lives Matter and all that stuff. I mean it started before that, right, but we didn't really see it build up until what happened in St. Louis. And I think we would say that St. Louis is very close to being a majority—a majority minority population now, isn't it? Urban, very urban community.

And there's white guys who are being gunned down by cops, by policemen, also, and those aren't always necessarily justified shootings. And they get a lot less press. I'm willing to bet that they probably happen even more because—because of, again, there's the just the numbers thing. We're a majority. So, yes, I think that there is always some truth in these things. That maybe is what makes it dangerous is when you just take a little bit of truth and then you, kind of, leaven it with a bunch of propaganda, and just to spur emotions. It's a whole societal discussion. You know, what do we do now? We have to, at some point in time, decide what is the role of—what is going to be the role of the police in our lives day to day. The more interactions we have with them, the more chances we have to have something go terribly wrong, you know, either because we're—we're just humans on both sides, so we're going to—we're prone to error, right [laughs]. So, that would be my thought on that.

Q1: Okay, good, So, we're going to take some stills of you, so now you just look at me.

Royer: [01:52:27] Okay.

Q1: And then we'll just roll a little bit under [unclear]. Just relax your face.

[END OF INTERVIEW]