

## Oral History Interview: Imani Woody Macko

Interviewee: Imani Woody Macko

Interviewer: Monique Moultrie

Date: October 31, 2017

Monique M. My name is Monique Moultrie and today is October 31, 2017, and I'm here with Dr. Imani Woody Macko. We are conducting an oral history to supplement the biographical statement on the LGBT-RAN website. We will begin early in life and hit milestones along the way. As an oral history, I'm going to offer some prompting questions, but this is really your show, so whatever you want to share, feel free to skip questions, feel free to go back to questions. If you remember a story and you want to insert it, feel free to do so. As I said, I want to begin quite early. I know you grew up in D.C., so could you tell me a bit about your early life, what type of neighborhood you grew up in, what type of people you were around?

Imani W. Wow. You know, this is daunting. [*Laughs.*] I'm 64, so let me rewind those tapes. So I was born in Washington, D.C. I was premature, three pounds, three ounces, and in 1952 the percentage of premature babies living without a disability was small. Apparently during that time babies were blinded because of the lights that were put on preemies. So I'm not blind and I'm certainly not underweight, so I feel that was the first time of God's intervention in my life, that I was supposed to do some work.

So I grew up. I was the first child on both sides of the family, my father's family and my mom's family, who were both from the South, my mom from South Carolina, my dad from North Carolina. And they raised, there were five of us, as if we were still in some small town in North Carolina, respectively Winston-Salem and Raleigh.

My early life, my mom didn't work. My father was of the opinion that his wife should stay home and take care of the kids. And even though we were working class people, my father wanted us to have that middle class life with the wife staying home. In a black neighborhood at that time, at least in our neighborhood, my mom was the only woman who didn't work on the block, only wife and woman that didn't work on the block, so that was pretty cool for us. So we lived in an apartment. I remember when my two youngest siblings were born we saved money to live in a house, which was my first kind of exposure to saving and its importance.

My dad was an entrepreneur for the earlier part of my life. He had a truck. They used to call it a huckster truck, where you had fresh fruits and vegetables. "Fresh watermelon! Fresh green beans!" And he hired neighborhood boys to work with him, so he was an entrepreneur and employed and guided young men. He was a reverend, and he was ordained by New Mount Carmel Baptist Church and went on to pastor his own church. That was held in the basement of our house. I had moved since that, but he would preach, be a visiting preacher to other places.

My mom died when I was ten. We had just moved into our house. We were the only black family on that street of houses in Washington. It was kind of the country where we lived in Southeast D.C., and no sidewalks and sewage system, per se. And then white flight happened, the houses were sold, white folks left, black folks moved in, and then apartment buildings, those were sold and apartment buildings sprouted out.

My mom died when I was ten and life became different. My mom's family, I think, was pretty middle class, my dad's family was pretty poor, and together they made a working class family. Through my life, though, my father was working, working, working. And us moving into a detached house with an apple tree, and a creek, grape vines set us up for living that middle class life that my mom aspired to.

When my mom died, though—and my mom was a Christian and the Pentecostal kind of faith as well—things just changed from being a carefree girl to being the oldest sibling and the surrogate mother of four other siblings. And the youngest had just turned one year old. My mom died in May and Steven was one in April. So life changed. That was a big thing. I need to stop right now.

Monique M. Absolutely. [*Break.*] Back on record.

Imani W. Thank you. So things changed. I mean, prior to my mother's death we had three sets of clothing. We had play clothing, school clothing and church clothing. And during the seasons, the seasons changing, the school clothes

would become play clothes, the church clothes would become school clothes, and you'd get new church clothes and shoes, and so we were always the most well dressed kids on the block. My mom was a member of a Baptist church, and very active, and so we went to the beach, which was segregated at the time, a place for coloreds and a place for whites, Haines Point in Maryland. And it's interesting. Haines Point now, the colored section is now the reserved section of the beach where you have to reserve it. It's funny to me now.

So I had a carefree life. You know, you'd play in the backyard in the morning while my mom was taking care of tasks. Then you'd come in in the afternoon and take a nap, and when you woke up you put on clean clothes to go out front to play and wait for my father to come home. My mother hated ordering groceries, so my father would order groceries on Friday, bring groceries home, and there were always some goodies for the kids like a box of Cracker Jacks, or he loved these soft peppermints, which, on Fridays you could get five. And I still eat those things. I actually have some in my bag. *[Laughs.]* Or ginger snaps or Fig Newtons. Because we always had all the healthy things. Because he was a huckster we always had fresh fruit, we always had fresh vegetables in season. My mom canned food, so obviously we had fruits and veggies. That was an interesting life.

There were other kids in the neighborhood and I always felt like I was a helper and a nurse, so I would pretend I was a nurse, and if someone got a

piece of sand in their eye or got a splinter in their hand or any of that stuff, they would come to me. This was at an early age, I want to say seven and eight and nine. And I would take it out. So helping instincts. I thought I was going to be a nurse, and that didn't happen, though.

Monique M. You mentioned that your mother was very active in a Baptist church. Was that the same one that your father attended?

Imani W. It was New Mount Carmel, yes, but before that it was Upper Room Baptist Church when I was smaller. First through fifth grade it was Upper Room Baptist Church, and then in sixth grade it was New Mount Carmel Baptist Church, and she was active in both churches.

Monique M. So can you talk a bit about some of the values you had, family values that were stated as important ethics for you to follow?

Imani W. Yes. Hard work, consistent work, doing your best. That was something that was shown rather than—I think I heard it, you know, do your best, but I saw my dad doing his best every day. He'd get up early in the morning, before daybreak, go out and come home late in the evening. He'd bring home money and he and my mom, when I was little, they would count it. The change would go into a jar. As we got older, I remember putting the pennies, nickels and dimes in the little slips so they could go into the bank. So we were all part of that you work hard, you bring money home.

And when I was eight or nine we were going to buy a house. My father sat us, me and my brother—I was nine, my brother was eight, and my little

sister was six or something. We were around the table. We were going to help build this house, buy this house, so that meant that we couldn't ask for money for the ice cream man, or we were going to use our old dresses and not get new clothes because all our money we had to save because we were going to get a new house and not live in an apartment. And they made it sound so exciting that if you found a—I remember finding a penny on the street, and you would bring it back to the table so we could buy this house. So I learned, which is a fallacy in some cases now, but that with hard work your dreams could come true. And so that was something I learned.

My mom always wanted us to go to college and she would talk about that. I remember her saying you're going to be in junior high school now, so you're going to have to have saddle shoes and you're going to have to study hard so that you can make sure that you get to college. And so that was...I just remember that clearly. She died before I even got to middle school. She died when I was in elementary school. But I remember that that theme was going to wear saddle shoes and you're going to go to college, those two things. So work ethic.

Also tell the truth. And if you promise someone something, you have to do it. Your word is your bond. And that was... If you said you were going to do it, then you had to keep your promise. It didn't matter if you were tired or whatever. I saw my parents—oh my god, I told so-and-so I was going to be here, and we've got to go, we've got to do it. Miss so-and-so is

expecting us. My father would take food, fruits and stuff to people who were sick and shut in, and he would come home tired. But he said he was going to go do that, or Wednesday night was his time to do that, so he just did that.

And my mother was his partner, and they would do that, leave me home to take care of the young kids and take my sister and my brother. And when my mom died, my dad would take us all on the Wednesday night thing. Oh, that was horrible. [*Laughs.*] God, who cared. And we would...oh, my goodness. And so he had this truck called the Suburban before Suburbans and the SUVs were trending, and we would pass our friends and we'd bend down and tie our shoe because we didn't want anybody to know we were in this vehicle. Ah, it's funny.

Monique M. So your home responsibilities increased when your mother passed. What were some markers, some main influences for you in her absence?

Imani W. I cooked. That was a marker. I didn't cook before and I cooked. My father used to say I could make something out of nothing because I could, you know. I remember the first time I made tomato soup out of ketchup. It was delicious. And even in a pinch now I guess I could do that.

So my dad got a job before my mom died. He got a job as a truck driver for a meat company, and so now instead of having fresh fruits and vegetables, which we still had, but he was a salaried guy, and it was more money, and now we had all these meats. And so when my mom died we

just, we were these kids who, I remember my sister cooking pork chops in the morning. I mean, we just had all this meat, so cooked pork chops in the morning. I'm getting ready for school. I'm in junior high. She's in elementary school. And man, the place would be burning up 'cause she's not... [*Laughs.*] But it was just regular. She did that.

My dad became different. He just lost his mind, actually, now, in retrospect. He didn't know how to raise five kids. He became abusive on many levels. I remember needing an iron and not having an iron, and he went somewhere to a thrift store and got an iron, but the iron wouldn't work, so we would heat the iron up on the stove to make it work. That was something. Including my little sister, who's six. I mean, who's...if I'm ten, nine, eight, seven, six. Six and seven. She's in elementary school, first grade, trying to iron, or me trying to do her hair with a hot comb, a nine-year-old with a hot comb. Not a good thing. I think I scarred her for life, actually, burning her hair out.

Monique M. Ohhh.

Imani W. Yeah.

Monique M. So at what point did your father remarry?

Imani W. I was out of the house. I was 18.

Monique M. Oh, okay, so for the bulk of your childhood you were the primary caregiver.



Imani W. Correct. Yeah. Oh, absolutely.

Monique M. So did school become a refuge, then, or a space where you didn't have as many responsibilities? Because I can't imagine you were in the cheerleading squad or extracurricular activities.

Imani W. I tried to be and my father wouldn't allow it. My brothers tried to play basketball. They were good. And he wouldn't allow it. My brother got a job at some store down in the neighborhood and my father said you can't hire him, he's my son and you cannot hire him. And he was just not a great guy. He was an awful man, actually, that way. But we always had food. We lived in this house that we helped buy. On the outside it looked like we were this middle class family, nice, and on the inside it was just kind of rotten.

Our pop was a reverend. He still did his Wednesday night caring for people. Sunday we'd go to church. He'd preach. We'd be in the audience. At some point, high school, I had had enough, and I ran away from home. And the courts got involved. I ran to a friend's house and her mother kept us for a couple days. She said but your father's knocking on the door every day so I can't really keep you. So I ended up going to an orphanage. It was called Junior Village. My sister and I were taken out of the house.

Monique M. So the two oldest children.

Imani W. No, the two girls.

Monique M. Oh.

Imani W. It's me, my brother, my sister, and two boys after that. So the two girls were taken out of the house and went to the orphanage. And it was the best place ever. So when I tell people that they say, wow, it must have been rough at your house. I guess it must have been rough at my house, but I don't equate it with rough, it just was.

But at the orphanage you had three squares and snacks. I didn't have to prepare any of them. We had clothes for school. I was one of the goody girls and one of the smart girls so I shared a room with another girl. Took the bus to high school. Never had taken the bus. We were very sheltered and kind of locked up. Learned to swim at the swimming pool. Just had friends. It was excellent and I had a great time at that orphanage.

My father couldn't stand the thought of that, though, us being in the orphanage, and sent us to live with my aunt in Philadelphia, my sister and I. And that lasted for about a year, a little less than a year, but my aunt was abusive and thought I was going after my uncle, so that made it really hard for my uncle and I and everybody else when she had that thought, which was, you know, that was the craziest thing I ever thought. But she had been abused by her father, so that cycle, that crazy cycle of dysfunction—my father, her brother, her... And their mother died when they were very young, and their father abused the girls. And so it was just this learned cycle of abuse and stuff. So I left there. I was missing my brothers, too.

Monique M. Did you see them while you were at the orphanage?

Imani W. Yes. My brother Greg would bring them, come up. I would see them. My dad didn't bring them. But the orphanage had all ages, and so there were some children in the, we called it, the baby cottage, that were young like my brothers, and so I befriended this one little boy. He was my guy. After school and homework I would go down to that cottage and we would take walks, help him with his homework, and got permission once to take him to the zoo, first time ever. I was 17 so yeah, they said. And they had their fingers crossed. Nobody had ever wanted to do that. I wanted to do that. They let me do that. That was awesome.

Monique M. Do you return to D.C. after your aunt?

Imani W. Yeah, I do. I had a little job. I had a job in a place where you'd...a carryout that you'd buy sandwiches, have smokes, hoagies, that kind of thing, so I had a part-time job and I was going to school. And there were lots of gangs in Philly at that time and the leader of the gang on our street took a fancy to me. And I was so naïve. I didn't even know. Even though I was being abused, I had no knowledge of sexuality, if you can imagine. It's just like two people or something, or the child in me never really understood the violation that was being done, and the two didn't equate. I remember being in high school, and this boy kissed me, a French kiss, and I thought I was pregnant. My period was late. And this abuse was going on, but it was just like two different things. I really thought I was

pregnant 'cause I had no idea how you would get pregnant. But at the same time was being abused, sexually abused, so that is something, now that I think about that.

So yeah, I came back home and knocked on the door, and the stepmother that I'm caring for right now, actually, said I can't let you in the house. My father said don't let anybody in the house. I can't let you in the house. So I came back when he was home and he said he couldn't take me back or something, so I went back to the orphanage.

Monique M. Did your sister remain in Philly?

Imani W. No, my aunt sent her back after... They were looking for me, so they... I had two teachers who took an interest in me and I wrote one of them. She said thank goodness you're all right, all the gangs are looking for you, that nobody could find you. So after that my aunt and uncle—I called them and they were so—my uncle for sure was just so upset. He just was so upset. He said you could have called and let us know and everything.

When I came back, the night I came back, Monique, though, it was interesting. I slept in the bus station 'cause it was too late to go to my father's house. I knew he wasn't going to open the door when it's too late. So I slept in the bus station and this guy came—his name was Jesus—he picked me up. He said are you hungry? And he was a handsome guy, suave. I saw you laying here. I'm thinking you might want something to

eat or a place to sleep. And I thought that was great, good. And we got some food somewhere.

And he took me to a place—I don't know where it is now—in D.C., and there were some mattresses on the floor. He said you can lay here until the morning. And I said okay. And the police raided the place that night. The police asked me how old was I, are you 18? I wasn't yet. I said yes. I had some good sense. I said yes. And he shook his head 'cause he didn't believe it. He said, well, did you know so-and-so? I said no, I just met him. He bought me some dinner and he just had me rest here. Do you want to go to your...where are your parents, and blah-blah-blah. I said my parents are dead and I just came back from a trip from Philadelphia and I just needed a place to sleep. So they let me go. It's like now, you know. But I could have been a different statistic, as I look back. Things could have... Because the guy was a pimp.

Monique M. Mm-hmm.

Imani W. [*Laughs.*] I had no...nothing. Just a nice-looking guy. And he looked at me, oh, wow, ooh, ooh, you know. I had some kind of something when I saw a room full of mattresses and it wasn't really clean enough for my sensibilities, but I was so tired.

So the next day I went to my father's house and that's when my stepmother said she can't open the door. And my father couldn't keep me. So I went to the Village and got a room and stayed there until I was 18. I

think I was almost 18. Women could stay till they were 18 and men could stay till they were 21.

Monique M. Hm.

Imani W. Yeah, that was an interesting thing. So the boys got to stay longer than the girls. And there were some older girls there who had to leave when I first got there. We were girls and they were women. I mean, you know, they were old hands. And most of the people at the Village were not like me. Most of the children there were taken from their parents. I mean, taken from their parents, had gotten in trouble, had lived in the world, not sheltered from the world, so I was a different kind of person, kind of like a novelty there.

Monique M. So at that point you graduated from high school?

Imani W. Yeah.

Monique M. So what do you do next? Do you get a job? Is it still in D.C.?

Imani W. I get a job in D.C. I apply for D.C. Teachers College, get accepted. But I meet this guy. When I left the orphanage I went and lived with my godmother, my father's aunt, and had a room there. And I had a job. And I was going to go to school in the fall. So I was just full of myself. I was cute, I was little, I was smart, full of myself.

And a person in our family died and my aunt and my cousin, they are going to North Carolina to bury this person who was my cousin, my

second or third cousin. And I meet the man who's going to be the father of my son. And I saw this man walking up in a Marine uniform, and I just looked at him and told my cousin, I said, I'm going to marry him. And she said you can't marry him, Bess, he's the husband of the person who died. I said out loud, oh. But I said to myself, hm. [*Laughs.*] And I married him, or he married me. After a three week courtship we married.

I took my first plane ride with him to North Carolina. He had to be back at the Marine Corps base, Camp Lejeune. And the first time I'm in a plane I'm just...it's a two seater, and oh my god, it was the bestest thing. So I'm moving from a really sheltered, still know nothing life. I mean, I know how babies are born, but that might be about it. And moved to Camp Lejeune into the same house that this woman has just died, so all her stuff is still there—her Avon, her clothing, everything is still there. And we're in that house. But I know how to make home. I've been making home for a family for a long time, so I know how to make home.

But what I didn't realize, young girl, barely 18, I had been 18 for two weeks when I got married, so didn't realize that this man had relationships and such with other people down there that did not include me or couldn't include me, including women. And so he would come home or not come home on the weekends. And wow. So we had this boy, this little boy, Philip Brown. And I went to Philadelphia, which it was his home, and stayed with his people until we could get—he went to Vietnam—until we could get settled on a military base.

And he was stationed in Kaneohe, Hawaii. We ended up there. And that was interesting. The same thing, though. He had these relationships, da-da-da-da-da. But I wasn't so dependent. I had the opportunity to live life, a little life, so I got a job on the base at the gas station and put the baby in daycare. And my then husband could pick him up. And I realized from a friend that he was having his mistress and him, and she would say that was her son. So I confronted him and things got bad, and the Red Cross stepped in, and I moved home, back with my father, with my crib and my baby, all that stuff.

And my father had preconceived ideas about how married women should act. You should be home before dark, and you should... I'm an 18-year-old new wife, I mean, girl, really, with a baby, and I had friends who had babies, and I had friends, and so, you know, I'd spend the night. You can't spend the night out. What are you doing? "Wives are, women don't do that, when you're married da-da." So one time I came home and he had put all the baby's stuff, all our stuff out on the front porch, and that was amazing. We didn't have anyplace to go. I called my aunt, the same aunt I lived with coming out of Junior Village. She said of course. So we took the baby stuff over there. That was amazing.

Monique M. So did you return to the plan of going to Teachers College?

Imani W. Did not right away, no. Just worked. Worked and worked and worked. Worked. Went to Georgetown after a minute. Georgetown had a paralegal



program. And I was doing paralegal work, actually, at GW, their first paralegal. I was good at it. I would represent people who had grievances in front of the unions and in front of GW's process. I really thought I was going to go to school to be a lawyer. I'd got that bug and started taking some classes at GW before the paralegal program. But then ended up completing that program, which was a great thing. Didn't go back to school to get a master's until way later at Lincoln University. And then the doctorate at Capella way later still.

So I raised my son. Had an independent school. It was back in the day where people were recognizing the word black was good, say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud. So I had this independent Saturday school with the neighbors. I had teachers and food. We would do trips to the nature center, the arboretum. We'd have nutrition classes, history classes. We'd go to...the Kennedy Center had classes for young people and we'd have the parents come in and talk to the parents. And I was a young person, Jiminy. But I had no supervisory skills. I had leadership skills, but no real supervisory skills. You know, when you're the oldest of five you can be a leader, and you can be a tyrant, too, I suppose. *[Laughs.]*

And so I was leading, doing that, using those skills. And I was very clear the teachers had to come in dressed this way. I was very Afrocentric. My whole house, my whole world was Afrocentric. Women couldn't come in showing their boobs, and, you know, you just had to be right. And these were young people like me. *[Laughs.]* And so they rebelled, had a coup,

said we're not doing this anymore. [*Laughs.*] So that was a very good lesson learned. Thank God I learned it later in life, you know. So now I supervise by consensus, usually, with the last, you know, the buck stops here as opposed to my way or the highway, so it's a different framing of the same thing, but, you know. Oh, man, that was something.

Monique M. I want to ask a question, to go back just a bit about the role of religion during these many transitions for you, and did you choose to raise your son in a faith tradition.

Imani W. My father was a Holiness minister, and his god was an S&M god. I wasn't trying to do that. My mother died when I was ten. God had kind of not been on the scene for me, in my mind. I asked God to take us out of the situation, to help us, and it didn't seem that I was getting an answer. And my country—this is probably a place—my country was not recognizing black people as citizens. So those two things, no god, no country, I felt. So I put my son in red, white and blue once in his life and then only recently, in my 50s, did I come to understand the red, white and blue and kind of embrace it. Can you imagine that whole lifetime of not having a country?

Monique M. That's something.

Imani W. And my not having a god was almost that same length of time. Having a god that I could call my own, let me just say it that way. So the answer to that is I did not raise my son to necessarily be Christian or in a faith-based tradition, except that on Christmas and Easters, and times when my father

asked, we would go to his churches, so my son had that. And we had Kwanza, which I practiced religiously, but he was a little person, to take the place of. So we had that tradition, that African tradition. Easter, not until my niece was born did I even embrace that thing. And that's because I wanted to take her to the White House to roll eggs, but not actually any faith-based on that.

I was in my 40s, I suspect, and my son was an adult, so the answer, I was in my 40s. I was dating a woman who had a unique relationship with God. She would say, "God, what the fuck is that?" She could talk to her god. "Oh! God, I asked you to help me. Where the fuck were you, da-da." And she had this relationship with God that was so raw and unique. She said I can talk to God any way, 'cause God knows me. He knows me all the ways I am, any way I am. And that was a *huh*. And she took me to MCC church, MCC D.C. And I thought that was good. All these lesbians, and that was good. So that happened.

And a friend died, and I went to her wake, and the eulogy was being done by a lesbian...a woman and a lesbian. And I grew up in the Pentecostal faith, and there were very few women. And lesbian, are you freakin' kidding me? So to see a lesbian minister, that was hot dogs. All this is kind of happening at the same time, in my 40s.

And then the real epiphany, Monique, is I was flying, and there was a storm, and it was storming really badly—keep your seatbelts on, and they

reiterated the oxygen mask and all. They reiterated that, so it was really serious. People were nervous. I was scared. And we kept going up and up. And as we went up, there was the sun. The sun was shining. And my epiphany was the sun, S-U-N, is always shining, and the son of man, the S-O-N is always shining, and it's just, whoa. The sun is always shining and the son is always shining. And that, with all this other stuff that had made the bed fertile, I came back to God.

Monique M. You mentioned this woman who was your first sort of entree point back. So at what point did you become aware or acknowledge for yourself your same gender attraction?

Imani W. Before her. I was married to my second husband. Had to do it twice before I got it right, Monique. [*Laughs.*] I was married to my second husband. But I had inklings of it throughout my life. When I was in elementary school I wrote a poem to a girl about her breast, her budding breast and something. I don't even remember it. What I do remember is my dad found the poem. My mom had just died, so I was ten, so older than seven, ten. And my dad found the poem and asked me what the poem was about, and why was I writing this poem. And I said we had to do some kind of—I said something to him that he didn't kill me and didn't beat me. But that poem, I was enamored with this girl and her breast, and I could write, even at that young age I could write. I used to write plays for us to do and all that kind of stuff. So at seven.

And when I was working at GW I hung out with a woman who was, everybody said was gay, but she was just lots of fun for me, and she was going to marry this doctor because he was a doctor. But then she found this med student, Thea, who was all of that, and she was studying to be a doctor. And so my friend Connie said, you know, I don't have to marry this guy doctor, I can marry Thea. But she ended up marrying the guy doctor, and Thea was so upset that, you know, she could not, Connie could not get it together. And so Thea spent a lot of time at my house crying the blues. And I was infatuated with her. Not on a sexual level, but on a wow, she's a med student, and she's gay, she's butch, she's just lovely.

And I had a book called—I can't remember, but it had a lesbian theme, and it was in the closet, and Thea cracked up that I had this. She said you're in the closet. 'Cause I had never said I was gay. I was just Connie's friend. So you're in the closet. So I learned what that meant. My second husband actually told me. He said, you know what, I think you like women. I said yeah, I think I do, too.

Anyway, we divorced because I did like women. And I looked for the women. I moved out of our home and my brother, who was gay, David, found an apartment, and I got that apartment. And my son was 15 at this time, around 15, and my husband threatened to tell him that I was a lesbian. And I was like, wow. So I just said Philip, you know, I think that I'm a homosexual. I think I might be a homosexual. I hope you still love

me. He said Mom, I'll still love you if you still love me and I'm a heterosexual. So how cool is that? I raised a good kid.

But we...yeah, we had a good relationship. I remember he was in the ninth grade. He said, Mom, I need this from the store. I said you need what from the store, boy? I just gave you your allowance. Whatever you need, you better get it from that. He said, Mom, really, I need this. And we were in CVS or it might have been People's at the time. And he's in front of the prophylactics. I said you know what, you better be glad I'm a modern mother. He said, well, that's better than being a modern grandmother.

Monique M. True. [*Laughs.*]

Imani W. So, you know, so when I told him I was gay, you know, it was built upon that relationship that he was my left eyeball.

Monique M. So you come out to your son. Do you come out to the rest of your family and friends at the same time?

Imani W. I come out to my brother.

Monique M. The one who'd already come out as gay?

Imani W. Yes. He couldn't believe it. How you gonna be gay and you got a son, you have two husbands and...? Said what do you mean how I'm gonna be gay? How are you gonna be gay? So he couldn't believe it. But he helped me find that apartment. And he was living with my husband at the time.

And my son stayed, so my son and my brother stayed with my husband at the time.

And I met a revolutionary woman, a woman who had carried arms, like a Black Panther kind of woman, and a feminist—a womanist, actually, because she was a black woman. She was most definitely a womanist. And being a lesbian was just part of her being black. Being black was the most important part. Her being a lesbian was just a part. And gosh, that opened my eyes to... It opened my eyes, but it took me back to that place where, like, I had the independent school, and being an African aware person. Awesome, awesome, awesome.

And I was still driving—I still had a car that was in my husband's name and he thought he should have access to my life because I still had that car. And my friend Linda said that shouldn't be. You can get your own car. So she took me back to take the car back. Here's the car, here's the keys. And she was helping me to get a car. That was an amazing announcement of being woman identified. It had nothing to do with sex. It was women helping women.

So the whole concept of loving women, I believe all women are lesbians because of part of that education and that experience, because it has nothing to do with the act. When you're three or five, you don't have to be heterosexual. That's the default. You may very well be lesbian, if that's a choice we're given, as when I was a little person and I wrote that poem. I

didn't know until my Pop really told me—I kind of knew, maybe—that that was not a choice for me to be a woman loving woman, but if that is on the table as anything, I...oh, man.

Monique M. So I read in one of your blogs that your father had a very negative reaction to your brother coming out as gay. Did you have a similar experience with the rest of your family? Because at some point you then joined Nubian Women. So at some point you—

Imani W. Wow, you researched me. Wow! [*Laughs.*]

Monique M. Yes, I'm trying to help—

Imani W. Help make—yes.

Monique M. Help the audience see at what point you become an independent identifying woman loving woman.

Imani W. Okay, so, you know, all right, so two things. So I meet Linda. Linda's part of Nubian Women. And it is the first time I'm around a lot of black women who are women identified who are over 35, because Nubian Women is over 35. So it's that, and I meet all these women. And I meet Linda, 'cause actually that's where I met Linda, at this place. And there was this woman, this dark brown skinned woman with a small 'fro, a fit body, red shorts and white t-shirt, that kind of impact. It's long ago. [*Laughs.*] And she was laughing and smiling, and I said to my friend



Cheryl, you know what, I'm gonna date her. And Cheryl says no, 'cause she goes with that woman. I said, oh. [*Laughs.*] And I do.

So I'll put a pin in the Nubian Women story and go back to... So I tell my son, I move into this space. I am now looking for the lesbians. I have declared to myself, to my husband, to my son, to my sister, who's a Jehovah's Witness, and who stops speaking to me for a year. And I am now looking for the lesbians. If I'm a lesbian. And there is a lesbian on my job, working class, works as a security guard. Before I leave my husband, she was probably part of the catalyst of me leaving, because I have a brief affair with her.

My son has left to go into the Navy. My husband is out doing things. I've just had a miscarriage and he was nowhere to be found. And so I'm in a space wherein I really need to be true to myself, my authentic self. And so the hints for coming out. He's with this other woman. So the real, the first inkling as an adult, or the first acting on is me beginning to date this woman. And I had like a Nefertiti necklace on, and she touches it, said this is nice, and the electricity that happens, said what the fuck? Whoa! It's just amazing. And we go see "Roger Rabbit," and my favorite line is, "I'm not bad, I'm just made that way." And we both talk about that on a kind of sexual basis. And things move from there. And I really acknowledge I'm out.

So I'm looking for the lesbians, and I see an article in the *Washington Post* about the book "Rubyfruit Jungle." And it's a book about this woman being a lesbian, and you can get the book at Lamma's bookstore, which I had never heard of. And I read this article at work. So I told folks I'm going to take a long lunch. I get on the Metro in D.C., so it's the train, take the train and take the bus and walk to get to this store. And I'm nervous as heck, 'cause how, if there are other lesbians, then I'm going to be a lesbian, that whole story, you know. And when I walk in, there's nobody there, but there's all these books that start with L-E-S-B-I-A-N. God! Magazines, papers, dildos, stuff and stuff. Wow.

Then a woman walks in, a black woman, and she says hey, how are you? I said I'm good, how are you? She said I'm fine. Said I haven't seen you around. My name is so-and-so. I said hey, my name is so-and-so. She said ah, did you know there's going to be an Audre Lorde concert on Saturday? It's going to be at Howard's auditorium. I said no, I hadn't heard. She said, well, I'm doing part of the lighting. Do you want to attend? I mean, we had some conversation before that, I'm sure, but that was the bottom line conversation. And I said yeah, maybe so. I think so. I'll have to check with my husband. She said oh, you're married? I said yeah, but—no, that's not true. I said I have to check with somebody. I didn't want to say yes. So not my husband, 'cause I'm living in my own apartment. Yes, I think I'm living in my own apartment at that time. It gets foggy, though.

But anyway, this woman was a catalyst for me. I didn't have any furniture in my apartment, and she says I have some pillows from a couch. We can put the pillows on and make a bed. You know, you can borrow the pillows. I thought that was pretty cool, so... Until I could get some furniture. I don't remember getting furniture, but I eventually got furniture. I went to the Audre Lorde memorial. And hooked up with Linda, this womanist superwoman.

And so talking to this woman and talking to Linda kind of solidified my being. And I'm a leader and got to go to the...we went to New York to do a memorial, Linda and I, for Audre Lorde and met all kinds of people, and went to the Nubian Women activities, and started doing the newsletter. Had some help. The folks didn't know how to do a newsletter. And so the first newsletter went out and people called and said you know what, you need help next time, we'll help you.

Monique M. *[Laughs.]*

Imani W. I mean, it was bad, Monique. It was like...it was bad. I do a newsletter now for my organization and I'm just so picayune, but that thing, that first one we did was bad. I wish I had some copies of that. And my friend Linda had an actual newsletter, I mean, an actual newsprint newsletter that she put out about black women in particular, and had a series of things called Black Women in Particular in art, in history, and government, and I would help her put those kinds of things on.

So that was in my 40s. So in my 40s my identity as a lesbian was fully blown. I gave myself a 40<sup>th</sup> birthday party, sort of like a coming out party, and it was also the time that I merged all my selves. Like I would see there's part of me, and part that I've been a bridge to communities. So there's been white women in my life, and native women, and Asian women, and women of African descent. But I did not interact with these women all at the same time. Led a kind of separatist life.

But at this party, please, everybody come. And young and old women, white, black women, Hispanic. And it was awesome. I had a coconut cake and someone put 40 candles on the damn cake. The cake started burning the coconut it had so many candles. [*Laughs.*] I carried the cake anyway. I said the cake is burning, said but okay, happy birthday to me. So that was an awesome time. So that was my real coming out as a lesbian.

Monique M. So how do you go from that perhaps social interaction as a lesbian to actively organizing for lesbian causes?

Imani W. Well, I was doing Nubian Women. I was doing Black Women in Particular, that series, which pulled together a panel of black women who were in either art or history, whatever subject, started advocating. And then I had a series—Monique, you make me remember that for five years—and I think it started with my 40<sup>th</sup> year—I did this thing called Celebration of Life, a Living Wake. It was tied into this woman who died, and I saw the lesbian minister. This woman died and I found out she died

and her light bill was cut, her electric bill, her lights were off. Her daughter was giving her grief. Her telephone was off. And she had some health issues. But some people believed that she just gave up the ghost because life just got too hard. And when I heard that, it just broke my heart because a lot of us, sometimes you just need a hug to get you over.

And so I got a lot of women around in my house and I said we should have this—I talked to Linda first—I said we should have this celebration of life, we should have a living wake. All these people were at this lady's wake, this woman's wake, and they're saying... And it's all these flowers. And she's freakin' dead. One bouquet of flowers could have kept her freakin' phone on. One flower sent to her house could have made her life more... That just... So I said, you know, we need to do a living wake. We need to do a wake and celebrate each other.

Man, it was something else. It was a lot of hard work. Nobody had really done it. We were on the radio. So this is probably my first project as a lesbian honoring women of African descent. It was not for white women. My white women friends were upset that they couldn't come. But we made it. And men were upset because they couldn't come. And we just wanted it a place for women of African descent. And what happened was like three generations would show up, the woman my age, her mother, and her child, her daughter, or women older than me and their mother and their daughters. It was amazing.

We got flowers donated. We went around—on Friday night in the city people sell flowers, but at the end of the night, what are they going to do with those flowers? So we got them either at a cut-rate price or free. Went to all these places, me and my friend Cheryl, and had no idea how to do that kind of stuff. But knew that we wanted it. Got a church, St. Augustine's Church, asked if we could have their place. They said yes.

Set it up like a wake and asked people to bring flowers so they could give flowers to people while they live, to the women while they live. And if people didn't have flowers, then all the flowers we had all around on the pews and in the front and in the back, you could give those flowers. And we had Gayle Porter, Dr. Gayle Porter, and she brought her family. Do you know Gayle Porter?

Monique M. No.

Imani W. You should look her up as one of the people, you might want to get her story. She and Marilyn are—they're not out lesbians. I don't know if they've ever said it. But they've been a couple for a hundred years. And they do this black women's health project thing about black women. Oh, God, what is it actually called? The Circle. I can't remember, but if you look them up, they would be a great piece to talk to. I don't know about their spiritual journey, though.

But anyway, so Gayle gave a talk about how we're bombarded with how we need a man in all these magazine articles, magazine covers she had,

with “Cosmo,” “Essence,” all of them had that on there. So it was amazing. The people had...I did a play, [Opal Adisa’s] play “Walking in the Sunlight,” so we adapted that, I directed that, so that was part of the—gosh, I’m tired of walking in the sunlight. Oh, that was awesome. So I did that for, I want to say, four to five years. So that was my big thing honoring women, and many of the women were lesbian. I’m lesbian and was able to do that.

Monique M. So that leads you to career identities that are also associated with activism.

Imani W. Yeah.

Monique M. So I saw this natural progression of your interest in all things, diversity-oriented, but as you said, being a helper and seeing different areas to serve in. So can you talk a bit about what animated some of those career moves and this interest for working particularly within and for the LGBT community?

Imani W. Yeah, I can talk a little about it. So I’m working in this field, and I’m working with black women, so I’m known as a womanist activist, I suppose. And the Mautner Project for Lesbians with Cancer is starting up, has started up, but is a white bread organization, and they wanted to have some color in there. And so I was living in Southeast D.C., and the founder of that organization, Susan Hester, said I’ll meet you, I’ll meet you anywhere. I said, well, come over to my house. And she’s an upscale rich girl, really.

And she came with her friend into...I had invited her so we could have a meeting, and I invited all these womanist women, so she was like walking in the den of have your shit together or not. [*Laughs.*] And she had her stuff together. And she talked about cancer and how cancer was impacting lesbians of color, killing—they were impacting white and black lesbians at the same rate, perhaps, but it was killing us more. And sadly, that statistic is still the same statistic. And so she was given this program at GW and she wanted more African women there, and she was inviting us to help plan it, not as guests. So she had all the right words. And actually, she had the right motive. And I ended up getting on that board, being asked to be on that board, and so I was on that board. It was a national board.

I ended up at some point applying for a job as a client services coordinator and then director of client services, and I started some programs there.

There were...lesbians would die and their families would have their bodies, and they would erase their gay. They would put butch lesbians in dresses. They would not mention any of the loved ones who were gay to the audience. And so I started this program—God, I can't remember what it is, but we had...it was like the wake, a living wake, a memorial service. So the lesbians, you were a friend of this lesbian who came to the Mautner project for services, but their family turned into something else. And even if not, we would have a memorial service with the candles. We would have a preacher come. And people would be honored for their love of this



person and the person's life. Their real life would be honored as well. So that was a proud moment.

And so that was my...I did a lot of stuff on the national level for lesbians at that point. I'm trying to figure out what I did after that. I don't know.

Oh, yeah. I went to work with the black caucus or black elders or something like that, working with the health disparities of older black women. And from that I think I started working at AARP, and I was doing trainings and coordinating trainings nationally, and also integrating LGBT in it because we would talk about things like elder abuse, and there was no section that would identify elder abuse as it happens to gay folks.

Everybody, when you're abused, you often want to hide it. That's one of the main components. You're ashamed and you want to hide it. But what happens when you're a gay male, for example, and you're taken advantage of, when this is your companion. It happens a lot in the gay male community. So we got some vignettes and put that into our curriculum.

And I was working at the D.C. bar at some point, and we put in an AIDS training. People were dying before they got their Social Security. And worked with some people, Ruth Eisenberg and some other people to have an HIV-AIDS Social Security training so that people could get their checks before they died. So always implementing, always looking through life and my work with the LGBT SGL sensitivity, and through a multicultural, as in race, ethnicity and age sensitivity.

Monique M. Do you feel that your spirituality or your religion in any way was of value, was of use in your activism, was a basis for the justice you wanted to see in the world?

Imani W. You know, I don't know how to answer that. My epiphany came at 40. Before that God and I didn't have any relationship. And so my epiphany came in my 40s, and my being an out lesbian came in my 40s. So I started...so the answer may be yes because I started looking for a god that looked like me. There's actually a book called that. And studied that book and began to, you know, understand how the Christian religion took women out of the Bible and how the Christian religion used the Bible to negate my existence as a black person, individual.

So I would say perhaps my underpinnings, my spiritual underpinnings have a spiritual foundation. I could say that. I could say that I'm not Christian in the traditional sense, but I love to be Christ-like as I walk through the world. I want to be Christ-like in my dealings. Christ wasn't a Christian.

So I think, you know, I want people to be valued. I feel like I was valued as a person before my mother died, and so I have a sense, a real good sense of self that I am a valuable person. I have a sense of being valued as a good person, as I'm competent, I'm smart, and that has been confirmed through my life post 40.

I never, ever thought there was something wrong with being a lesbian. I don't know how that happened. But I never, ever thought there was something wrong with my brother being gay. When I say something wrong, something religiously untoward about being LGBTQ SGL, never, ever.

And I wonder if that's part of my hero worship of my mother, because she had a brother, half brother, who was gay. I didn't realize it until I'm older. But my dad didn't like him to come around, didn't like him to be with us. And she would have him come over when my dad wasn't there. And I didn't put all this together until as an adult. And she loved Uncle Bobby, and would apologize for my father, and God didn't make mistakes, and we're all equal in God's sight. She would say that about race, and apparently about this, because I'm remembering we're all equal in God's sight.

I remember during the March on Washington people came down where you can see in the back of our house, and I remember saying Mommy, I saw a white man. Because we lived in a segregated community. I said Mommy, I saw a white man. And she said, you see the color of this sheet? She was making up the bed. See the color of this sheet? And I'm looking at her, why is she so woo-woo? I said no. Then she said then he wasn't a white man, he was just a man, like that. And I'm sure some other conversation probably happened around there, but that's all I remember. And it was like he's not special, he's just a man to me. That's just a man,

just a person. So people who are...we're just people, and we're all the same. We're all created by our creator. So that's a value I have.

Monique M. Okay. Can you talk a bit about—you've used several different terms and so I want to get on record the term you most prefer to identify. So you've used same gender loving, you've talked about lesbian, you've talked about women identifying women. Were these categories that evolved over time, or are they all-encompassing categories for you?

Imani W. They're categories that are specific. I believe if you don't name it, you don't say it. So when I say same gender loving I am honoring people, and usually people of African descent, who prefer same gender loving. So I want to put that in my conversation because it acknowledges that there's a certain part of the population that doesn't like to be called lesbian or gay, and so that's why I use that. So it's like just being inclusive in my language.

Monique M. So for you personally, where do you fall?

Imani W. I think for me personally, I like same gender loving. Although I say lesbian a lot because it's accepted, it's easy, it's shorthand.

Monique M. So talk to me some about your wife.

Imani W. Ah.

Monique M. Where did you meet?

Imani W. We met at a party I was having at my house. And that's where we met. But we didn't get together until after, long after that. We became good friends. She would come and sit at my kitchen table and talk. Lots of people came to my kitchen table and talked, and she was one of the ones. I would serve tea and whatever. I used to have salons at my house and she would come. You know, have a bunch of women come over and we'd look at videos. There was a video I remember distinctly. God, it just left me. It was about hair, black hair. So I had these salons and we'd talk. We would have tea, we would have wine, we'd have grapes, whatever. And she would come there.

She is the love of my life. I love her so much. She's in Greenland right now. And it's the first time we've been apart so long. She's going to be there for a year, but she stays 13 weeks and comes home four weeks. So this is the first time, so she'll be home in November, the 17<sup>th</sup>, so I miss her. I could not do what I do without her. And I'm finding that without her I miss what she does. She has a strong spiritual belief. And it's nice to be with somebody who believes in God. That's a plus. That you can say let's say a prayer, that believes that prayer works. How cool is that? That knows my story, and I know her story, and it's okay. Loves me in spite of it. Loves me because of it. She's the Frick to my Frack, the yin to my yang. She is beautiful.

Monique M. So she's in Greenland. As an activist, where are you finding support—spiritual support, emotional support? In addition to, because we of course

have FaceTime and other mechanisms that still keep us connected. But self-care for the activist.

Imani W. It's hard with her in Greenland because she is my support. And I have good friends. I have what I call my kitchen cabinet. There are three women in my kitchen cabinet, and these are the women that I call in the middle of the night. When you say who can you call, you know, you don't know who you can call, they're one of those women. And so they're who I... They are, the three women and I, when my dad died and I was trying to figure out what I was going to do with this house, Mary's House that I'm working on. So it's Lena, Kim, Dre, my wife. They're my kitchen cabinet. So they're the core of the kitchen cabinet.

And then there are women outside. So the support kind of goes like, so I have a fight with Dre, there are people that I say, you know, I didn't have a good morning, I just had some things going on. Then there are some people I say, you know, I had a fight with Dre. And then there's the people I say I had a fight with Dre, it was an awful fight, and it was about... So I have that level of support. But Kim and Lena and Andrea are...

Kim was by on Sunday, me trying to prepare for this conference, and I needed to put together a shower chair for my stepmother. And I can't put together shit. I can't read A goes to B. And she said I'll come by, don't worry. And she came by. She said you know what? I'm at Olive Garden. You want me to get some dinner? Yes. And she put the chair together. I

couldn't get my printer to work. She did the printer. And on the flip side, I'm part of her kitchen cabinet. So that's damn awesome. The same thing with Lena, trying to figure out what to do with my stepmother and how to do it. So I get that support.

And I get to go swimming. I haven't done that in over a month, actually. But I really need to start doing it again. But swimming in the morning. I used to do it 6:00 every morning and for an hour, and so that's comforting. I read. I don't write anymore. I used to write a lot because that's really self-care.

Monique M. You mentioned Mary's House, and you hadn't talked about it yet.

*[Laughs.]*

Imani W. I thought oh, that's amazing. *[Laughs.]*

Monique M. Well, I thought it was going to come up when you were talking about the various stages of your career.

Imani W. Yeah.

Monique M. So talk a bit about your consultancy, slash, CEO-ing of Mary's House.

Imani W. Okay. So Mary's House. My Ph.D. is in nonprofit management. It is not in constructing and building houses, trust and believe. *[Laughs.]* Ooh, and my dad got sick and we needed to put him into an assisted living facility, and we found a good one. By this time he's a middle class guy. He's got a couple of cars, he's got money in the bank, he's a mover and shaker in his

little world as a respected member of the community, of communities, feeding the poor, visiting the sick, going to prisons, all that kind of stuff. So he was a big deal and he could go to a good nursing facility. He had advocates. He had me, he had my stepmother, my siblings, his grandkids.

But he went in continent and he came out incontinent. Actually, we pulled him out so he could die at home. And that made an impression on me because the people weren't mean. It was a high level, respected facility. But he still was like Room 232. He wasn't Rev. Woody, Mr. Woody, a person who had a life. And I wondered what would have happened to him had he been an out gay man in that space, what kind of care would he have gotten. This is the kind of care he got. What would have happened had he been a trans person? What would have happened had he been an out lesbian? And the answers that I got hurt my heart. And already I'm in the field, and I've been in the field a while, so I know anecdotally and with empirical research that people are not treated well—some people are not treated well if they're LGBTQ SGL and in a nursing facility or a retirement home.

He dies, leaves me this house, and I try to figure out what I'm going to do with the house. The house is in Washington, D.C. The market is booming. I don't have to be as poor as I am really if I sell the house. I think about that. And then I have my kitchen table around the dining table, the dining room table, my kitchen table cabinet, and we talk about it. And I said sisters, I think I want to build housing for older adults that's LGBTQ,



what do you think about that? I said it has four bedrooms now, but we can make like eight rooms, and everybody can have their own bathroom. And the dream just started unfolding around the table. And these three women said yeah, we can do it.

And my pop had all this stuff. He had like four washing machines in the house. We're talking the wringer kind, four this, four that. He was a collector of stuff. I found out from my uncle that he fixed those kinds of things and sold them. I had no idea. I just thought he collected junk. But that's what my uncle said. And these women helped me get that stuff out of there, and demolition people come in and begin tearing down the walls. And introduced to an African American lesbian who had her own construction company—I mean design company, and she helped do that first phase. We got all the way to going to the Office on Planning, and they say we can't have eight rooms and have locks and leases. You can't lock if you're in a residential facility. I said what in the heck are you talking about? My pop locked up his rooms all the time. What? Nope. If you're in a residential you can't really lock your rooms.

So that was like being thrown under the bus, and so we had to go back to the drawing board and get zoning, which was hard, hard, hard. But we had a pro bono lawyer, the best zoning lawyer in our city, who volunteered for us. How cool is that? It's like divine intervention. So in my spiritual life I still get these things that I know are, I know it's divine intervention. We have no money. We can't hire a lawyer. We need a lawyer. God help. And

we get the best, not just a lawyer, but the best zoning firm in Washington, D.C. Hot dog. And we persevere.

There's a side story. And my board, I have a wonderful board of directors. My board, many of them come to the zoning hearing. And right next door to us, to the property, are Jehovah's Witnesses, and they are not real keen on LGBT folks. So we're thinking, when they come to this hearing, that they're there in a negative stance. They're not. They want to testify that there's some water impediments that affect their property and will probably impact our property, and they wanted to let us know about it, and they're glad that we are building and that the place won't be vacant. What? That's freakin' divine intervention. The Jehovah's Witnesses? And we've had not a turbulent, but kind of sketchy relationship with them. And they're here at this hearing on our behalf. Ah, God is so good.

So that's where we are now. So we've jumped all the hoops that the city wants us to jump through. We are in the correct zoning. We got special exception to be a CRC—I know I'm messing up the acronym. But a community...oh, my god, it just left me. Doggone it. But we just got that. We're able to be that. CFC maybe. Something, one of those things. Unity Residential Facility, CRC. So we've done that, and so now we need...there's a grant that we're trying to get that we need to bring \$700,000 to the table. And I'm not as crazy as I could be in trying to get that because I think everything is in divine order, that we're on the right

side of the equation, and God hasn't let me down yet. And so we think it's coming and it'll open in 2020.

Monique M. So my closing question that I've asked everyone is to think back through your span about what you're most proud of and then talk to me about contemporarily what brings you joy.

Imani W. Okay. Before I get to that I want to say that my dad was one of the reasons I did this, and that this guy found out a month later that this guy died in his place. He was in an upscale place and somebody found him five days later in the space. And Mary's House is not going to be like that. It's going to be communal living. You know, we all live in these big apartments and nobody knows you there. Somebody's going to say hi, Miss Monique, how are you doing this morning? That's what's going to happen at Mary's House. And that's an important part of it, being not just a place to house people, to let them be their whole selves. Like there's so much stuff around ageism. So you can be old. It's okay to creak. It's okay to talk about your arthritis. You don't have to be this person. You can be old, you can be black, you can be trans, you can be lesbian, you can be straight. Whatever you need to be in this house, you can be you. I wanted to make sure I say that. Okay.

What I'm most proud of. I am so proud of raising a man child, a black man who's, he's not taking drugs, he's not in prison. He's married, has two kids. He has a grandkid. And he tries to do the next right thing. We

don't always see eye-to-eye, but he's still the apple of my eye. And I am most proud of the way he's trying to move in the world. He moves in the world in being a man in a place where it can be hard to be a black man. And he's married to a white woman, so all the things that would go with that, just I'm proud of that.

What brings me joy, two things. One, being with my wife brings me joy. She brings me flowers, breakfast in bed, words for the day, challenges for my soul, comfort for my heart. She brings me joy. And lets me know I can put down the burdens of the day, of the week, of the month. Just sleep, just read, just don't think about that. Gives me permission just to be just a human girl, not superhuman Dr. Imani, just Imani. So she brings me joy.

And I have a two-year-old grandson. Nana. Oh, my god, that is joy. I keep him once a week. He visits once a week, I keep him, and we do two-year-old stuff. Nana, light. He can't say light, really, but he wants to say light, he wants to say fan. He pulls you where he wants to go. He's singularly focused. And then there are those moments he'll look right in my face, get right underneath me, look in my face and then kiss me. Ah, that's joyous. Beautiful.

Monique M. Well, I have gone to the end of my questions. So what's going to happen next. I am going to give you the consent form. I'm going to stop all types of recording.

*[End of recording.]*