

PARTICIPANT 1: I think if any white person, any Anglo person, wanted to really try to connect and try to understand African-Americans' struggle-- and I really appreciate your consciousness. I really appreciate your sitting here, saying what you've said today. Because as you just stated, most people simply don't care, OK?

They can care less because they're safe where they are.

PARTICIPANTS: That's right.

PARTICIPANT 1: And why bother to reach out?

WENDY: Comfortable.

PARTICIPANT 1: Yes. They're comfortable in your space. But if you're trying to understand where I'm coming from, I really respect that. I also like to say to you, with respect to what we're speaking of, I don't know if I'm really that concerned where a white person is with respect to racism. Because over the years, I think I've become sort of callous about it.

And at a point in my life where my mom taught me to be very fair, very equal, we're all the same folks. And for many, many years, I walked around believing that, very naive-- very naively. I really thought that I could just simply strive, be the best person I could be, get the education, try and go for the best possible jobs.

And once I got there, once I was-- because I'm bright and intelligent-- my career is going to take off. And going to be accepted as an equal. I come to learn out since then, that's BS. It just simply doesn't work that way.

And I'm really-- I regret sitting here sounding cynical tonight. But in reality, that equality thing that Martin Luther King really wanted to happen and see it achieved for us all, on one level, it happened. And on many levels, it didn't.

And for those African-Americans who are sitting out there, who are very complacently, think they have arrived, they haven't. And those are the type of folks I think need to be taken in the back and giving a whipping to.

[LAUGHTER]

[INAUDIBLE]

WENDY: Complacent.

PARTICIPANT 1: Yeah. And sisters, you know what I'm talking about. We're all professionals. We're all over the age of 30. We're very well-educated women.

But yet, in our own levels and our ways we've hit our own glass ceilings.

PARTICIPANT 2: That's right.

PARTICIPANT 1: Am I lying?

PARTICIPANT 2: Nope. That's right.

PARTICIPANT 1: While we were talking about-- we want to somehow draw a parallel between the Civil Rights issue and either being stigmatized or treated unjustly because of color. We also, as lesbians, are also stigmatized.

We can't come out. We can't begin to deal with that type of oppression, both simultaneously. So we hide that from society.

We're tired of it on many levels. And we--

WENDY: But that's something we can choose to hide, for the most part. Some of us, most of us, can choose to hide our lesbianism. Now that's an ongoing thing.

I was watching part of *Comic Relief* tonight. And Whoopi Goldberg was saying she didn't get any roles-- in beginning of her career, she didn't get roles. And she didn't get roles because she was Black, because she-- that's not what kept her from getting roles.

She got roles-- or didn't get roles, rather, because of the way she looked and the way she felt about her Blackness, and the way that she wore her hair, and the way she looked, and her ability to hold her head up and say, I am just as good as you. People didn't want to hear that.

They wanted Black people to take Black roles.

PARTICIPANT 2: Right.

WENDY: Whoopi didn't want to take Black roles. She wanted to take anybody's roles. And she was talking about, specifically, her persona, and saying, yeah, y'all didn't know what to do with me. You didn't know what to do with my hair. And now y'all all look like me.

[LAUGHTER]

And so, she goes, ha!

[LAUGHTER] So--

JILL: Look in the mirror.

WENDY: --that, to me, is pretty telling. That, to me, is making a statement about visual perception. And to add on to that, MCCR has developed a coalition, the Coalition of Colors.

And they have a group that is-- there's a group of multicultural people. And then there's another group that is specifically for people of color. And then there is another group specifically for white, Anglo-type people, that is called White People Healing Racism.

And the people in that group believe that it's because white people, in general, have a lot of power in our society, it's going to be up to white people to take an active role in healing racism. And I believe that--

PARTICIPANT 1: Oh, boy.

WENDY: I believe that that's also pretty important when it comes to the gay-and-lesbian struggle, because I think a lot of heterosexual people are going to have to start saying the words "lesbian," and "gay," and "homosexual," not in order for us to do anything, in order for them to do something.

I don't need anybody's approval or disapproval. But I want them to be aware of their own fears, and actions and inactions, and things like that. How do you all feel about those correlations? I know you've taken a deep, heavy breath over there. What do you think about those two little--

JILL: Let me interrupt just for a second--

[PHONE ALARM SOUNDING]

--do a little business. You heard that? That means it's 1 o'clock, beginning of the gay rush hour. And this is KPFT. You're listening to *After Hours*, KPFT Houston, 90.1.

WENDY: *After Hours*, world radio for the people, [INAUDIBLE].

JILL: OK, I don't want to-- yeah, that's all. I could never get it straight. I just--

PARTICIPANT 1: Don't get it straight, please.

[LAUGHTER]

JILL: OK, where were we?

WENDY: So we're about to take a song break in a minute. So what do you think about those two particular little topics of information? You're looking like you may want to--

PARTICIPANT 1: Well, I know Hollywood, somehow, the television and media always somehow seem to be-- always come to the forefront in trying to pave the way for the rest of society and America, lead us by the nose and say, it's OK if a person has AIDS--

WENDY: Gotta have a funny bone.

PARTICIPANT 1: --or let's put it in the sitcoms. Let's talk about this, have gay characters depicted in television and movies and the like. Hollywood somehow, sometimes seems to help us as to become more accepting, as individuals, of the different sorts and types in society.

With respect to a straight person, per se, a heterosexual person saying the word "gay" or "lesbian" and being accepting of it all, wonderful, great. But you know what? Maybe we all do need to come out and acknowledge the fact that, yes, we are all lesbians.

You just mentioned before, we're four very attractive African-American lesbians.

JILL: Oh, yes.

PARTICIPANT 1: I think if we walk down the street, no one will readily know that we are lesbians.

JILL: Right.

PARTICIPANT 1: He-- excuse me-- heck. Maybe they need to know.

[LAUGHTER]

Maybe they need to know that there can be four charming, beautiful women out here who are not out here trying to grab men. It's shocking. Maybe some person-- maybe some of these people need to be shocked into reality--

JILL: I agree.

PARTICIPANT 1:--that we are their sisters, their secretaries, we're--

WENDY: Hold hands in the grocery store.

PARTICIPANT 1: Sure. And I've become more brazen about that myself. I don't mind holding my girlfriend's hand in public, in restaurants, pulling her chair out, the entire nine yards, discussing the check as we check out of the restaurant, grabbing around the waist and the entire nine yards.

But perhaps people need that bit of shock. Because the more they see it, perhaps we could help usher them into reality instead of them allowing us to hide.

JILL: It's my belief that the thing that causes prejudice for people-- toward people of color-- is the same feeling, the same emotion, the same place, that the hate for gay-and-lesbian people comes from. That-- it's the same place.

It's fear. It's envy. I believe there's a great deal of envy involved in prejudice. I can't be different. A lot of people--

PARTICIPANT 1: Kind of boring?

JILL: Yeah, exactly. Unique. People want to think that everybody wants to think they're unique, or different, or exotic. And I think there's a great deal of envy that comes from it. And this is something I've looked at a great deal, believe me.

And the thing that-- to bring it back to-- one of the big reasons that we wanted to have people of color here tonight, Martin Luther King celebration, is that, how do you combat, in two different movements, the same emotional-- the same-- where does that-- that anger and fear and prejudice comes from, form two different places.

I think that the Black Civil Rights movement tried to address this in a very Gandhiesque kind of way, in civil disobedience, very patiently, very tolerantly saying, we will not take this anymore. We are not going to fight with you. We're just not going to participate in this anymore-- and how different that is that the gay and lesbian community is out there screaming and yelling. And I was wondering if you-- I mean, not all of them.

But a lot of this is come out, come out, and let people know you're here. Be aggressive. Be assertive. Tell people that you're gay. Tell people--

WENDY: Tactics.

JILL: Yeah, the tactics are different. And I was wondering if you thought the tactics-- the two different kinds, the two camps of tactics, attacking the same-- what I believe is the same emotional space the prejudice comes from-- do you think that the two tactics, either one, by themselves, are going to work?

What I'm looking for, I guess, is, shouldn't we all combat that, with the same tactics of one or the other, both the same place that this prejudice comes from? If we're going to kick it, if we're going to kill it, if we're going to ever-- and I don't believe that it'll ever be solved in our lifetimes. I just don't believe that.

But I think that what we can do is take the steps today that they'll build the steps on tomorrow, that they'll build on the next day and the next day. And I want to know, from people who live with this on a daily basis, and two, from both worlds, from lesbians who are obviously part of the community-- you sound like you're involved and right up with what's going on, politically correct. I don't want to use that.

But knowing and participating in our community, and the aggressiveness to handle this prejudice, yet still coming from, just ignore that bleep bleep bleep over there. He doesn't know. He's ignorant. That's where it's coming from. And just let's-- if we participate in his stuff, we become like him. And I say "him," because I believe that the male is where a lot of prejudice comes from.

WENDY: Here's those phone's ringing now, ladies and gentlemen.

JILL: That white male who has the power, the ultimate power, is where a lot-- and I say--

WENDY: Beat up the patriarchy.

JILL: 78%-- of herpes--

PARTICIPANT 2:--between their legs--

JILL: --come from.

PARTICIPANT 2:--they know. Yes. That's where it is, the power.

JILL: And how the tactics-- how we think-- or how you will think that these two different very, very different kinds of tactics apply to these situations. Have I-- help me here. Help me here.

PARTICIPANT 1:What do you guys think about working with the system or against it? Have you have any of the four of you ever participated in civil disobedience in any way, shape, or form? And for what cause?

PARTICIPANT 2:Yes, I do. But it was for-- and I was in high school. And I grew up in a state that has four seasons.

[LAUGHTER]

PARTICIPANT 1:North of here, right?

PARTICIPANT 2:Yeah, right. And--

JILL: --should be--

PARTICIPANT 2:--we weren't allowed to wear slacks. And I participated in a Slack-in day. All the females wore slacks. And I participated in helping getting the flyers ready, putting them in all the bathrooms, to let everybody know that we were going to do this on such and such a day-- and the next day, actually, so that the school wouldn't have time to really--

PARTICIPANT 1:Sister, obviously, these were decades ago. What year was this?

[LAUGHTER]

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

WENDY: It wasn't that long ago.

PARTICIPANT 1: Date yourself, OK?

PARTICIPANT 2: And since then, the school now has adopted that-- when females could wear slacks. And that was a very big thing.

PARTICIPANT 1: See what happens when you slack in?

[LAUGHTER]

PARTICIPANT 2: So, yes. And that was quietly done. But we were-- because we were so many, and we were all doing the same thing, we were able to get what we wanted, so--

PARTICIPANT 1: Pretty tame?

PARTICIPANT 2: Yeah, [INAUDIBLE]

JILL: And I guess that's what I'm looking for. Can you-- do you believe that we're going to beat-- we're going to win the battle-- which I believe is a constant battle-- the battle will be won by coming at it with two different-- I think what I'm looking for is that I think that when you do this with the peace and love for other human beings that Martin Luther King did-- and I believe he loved other human beings. It did not matter that what color they were, that his point was that he wanted other people to be able to love his people and that he loved other-- he didn't-- it didn't matter.

From that point, or from the real aggressive, political, screaming and yelling-- and I'm not-- oh, god love you Michael, but the Michael Crawfords in the world, who are out there--

PARTICIPANT 1: Chained himself to a whole Randalls.

JILL: --screaming and chaining himself to Randalls, and making themselves--

WENDY: I was there.

JILL: --as ugly as possible so that people will say, I saw this guy, he was there, and talk about him. Do you-- have you ever had this, what will I do?

PARTICIPANT 1: I think that would be the least-effective measure. That would be the least-effective approach. I like to say, with respect to Martin Luther King, and you mentioned Gandhi-- Gandhi, one of the reasons that he became the person that he was, the world leader that he was, is because at one point, he went to South Africa. And he experienced that oppression.

JILL: He was a lawyer.

PARTICIPANT 1: Yes.

JILL: And he was--

PARTICIPANT 1: Exactly. And so with respect to Gandhi, or Martin Luther King was a-- he really greatly admired the man. So he modeled a lot of the Civil Rights movement behind the techniques that Gandhi himself had used.

And so the idea is-- and also with respect to Gandhi, obviously having lived in India, which is the origin of Buddhism-- the idea behind this entire issue is to recognize the absolute dignity of each and every human being, regardless of their race, and their ethnicity, their lifestyle, and the other.

PARTICIPANT 2:--which is being one with God. And until we are one with God, we're never going to have peace.

JILL: That's right.

PARTICIPANT 2:There's always going to be strife. And that's the reason why we-- so.

PARTICIPANT 1:And sister, recognize that God, like being, spirit, that dwells in each human being, period.

JILL: That's right.

PARTICIPANT 1:OK.

JILL: God as we see it.

PARTICIPANT 2:--out there flying around, it's right within all of us.

WENDY: Your higher being, your higher self, higher than all of us.

PARTICIPANT 1:Yeah. So to me, that's the real issue. So when it comes to a person being extreme, when a person is an extremist, people really want to see you as, to me, as crazy, OK? You're radical. You're offensive, and the like.

I think that the calmer approach is a much better approach. I don't think that, as gays and lesbians, it's necessary for us to march and scream and yell. Why don't we just simply be the professionals, be the-- the unemployed or whatever-- that we are, as we are. That's one issue of it.

But the real issue for us, as African-American lesbians, is African-American lesbians. But you're like, we are carrying two heavy loads of crap on our backs. And why do we have to do that? It's very easy for someone to see that I'm an African-American, and that immediately, I'm going to experience, sometimes, that oppression.

Then simultaneously they find out that I'm a lesbian? Oh boy. I might as well pack it up. So is-- I don't know there ever come a day when I'm going to rant, scream, and say, to all Houston, yes, here I am. I'm African-American lesbian, and march in front of some major [INAUDIBLE].

WENDY: Respect me or else I'll beat you up.

PARTICIPANT 1:But what I am going to do is get myself a little stamp to put on my checks, to indicate that this is African-American, lesbian money.

[INTERPOSING VOICES]

JILL: --money. Gay money, gay money, gay money.

WENDY: Ladies and gentlemen of the listening audience, you can buy those in Inklings, lesbian money.

PARTICIPANT 1:Yes, exactly. I think, to me, that's a powerful statement in itself. Because I think that more of those dollars need to be in circulation so that eventually, when they get back to the mint, so the government knows.

WENDY: Let me ask you one thing. Are you impatient? Because I know that I have been, as a young person, especially-- I mean, not to say that I'm not-- but as a young person, I've been really involved with Queer Nation Houston. And I want-- I hate to sound pious. But I want oppression to end, period.

I don't want to be treated like this anymore. I don't have to worry about my safety on the streets. I don't have to-- I don't want to have to worry about my effeminate brothers getting beat up, and called names, and dying just because they know where the gay bars are located.

I worry about my straight guy friends that I work with at my store because they ride their bikes around Montrose at night. I'm afraid they're going to get gay bashed. And when I get pushed to that limit, yes, I want to fight back, number one. But number two, I also want it to be addressed.

And when it's not being addressed with respect, when it's not being addressed with the importance, and the urgency, and the necessity that I feel like it needs to be addressed, it just makes me crazy. I just want to go do something. And I have to vent that energy somehow, in a positive way. How do you think you handle that? Do you ever feel that way? Do you feel impatient?

PARTICIPANT 1: I do. I do, because--

WENDY: Frustrated?

PARTICIPANT 1: There are times-- yes, very frustrated, to a point to whereby I wish I had fangs. And like invite the males standing next to me on the ankle. No place else, just on his ankle. Because every time I hear the statement, I can tell a gay, a lesbian, or queer, a mile away, I think, you dummy. You have one standing right next to you. And--

WENDY: And do they use those words? Or do they use derogatory words?

PARTICIPANT 1: They use those words. They use those words. Because they will see someone coming in. And simply because of the way that they are dressed, the way that they walk, something that they may say, the way that they wear their hair, they will make that statement. And the whole time, it's like, I've got these horns that started to appear. And I want so bad--

WENDY: [INAUDIBLE]

PARTICIPANT 1: Yes. And I want so bad just to bite them, and say, you're dead.

[LAUGHTER]

But it is. It hurts to hear it and not be able to fight back.

WENDY: I was--

JILL: We-- we don't want to-- but we really need to beg for membership. We really-- well, this is marathon week. And what I'm going to say here is that if you're a person of color, join this conversation. You know our phone number, JAM, KPFT. Call us and participate in this conversation.

You got something to add or you heard something you didn't agree with? Call up and help us share this information with everyone, not only a person of color, anybody. But I'm especially appealing to-- appealing-- I'm--
[LAUGHS]

WENDY: You're appealing to us?

JILL: I'm appealing here. I'm especially asking that people of color call to participate in this, because we really want to have this discussion. And we need all kinds of input. And we want to let you know that this is your program too.

While the majority of the people who put this program on are white--

WENDY: Poor.

JILL: --poor, white people, we--

PARTICIPANT 1: PWP?

JILL: --we nonetheless are very aggressive. All of us are very aggressive--

WENDY: Come down and volunteer--

JILL: --in our community about prejudice and homophobia. And that's what we're talking about right now, and the ways and the strides that we've taken. And this is what you can hear on-- 4,000 line for calls. What?

WENDY: 4,000 line for call ins, 526--

WENDY AND JILL: 4,000.

JILL: Oh yeah, they're doing the other one for the marathon.

WENDY: 526-4000, that'd be your marathon line. And when you call in, make sure and say you love *After Hours*.

JILL: Now wait a minute. Is that the call-in number or is that the marathon number?

WENDY: That's the money number. If you have money--

JILL: Money, call 4,000. No, if you want to talk to us on the show, call 526-4000. If you want to be a member of KPFT, you call JAM KPFT. I think that's got it written somewhere around here. I'll find that in a minute.

But let me tell you a little bit about what we're doing here. This is marathon. There it is, 5738. This is a marathon. And a couple of times a year, we allow people to join, become members of KPFT. And the reason we do this is because we are listener-supported radio.

There are no commercials. And we're free to discuss whatever we want. And we're free to--

WENDY: [LAUGHS]

JILL: --really-- whenever we want, however we want. And that's important to us, certainly the people sitting in this room, certainly to the staff of the *After Hours* and the people here at KPFT. And we think it's important too. And we want you, right now, to pick up your phone and call us.

We'll take MasterCard, Visa, or American Express. And I'll tell you about some of the things that you can have. Let's see.

For \$35 is basic membership. You get a quarterly program guide. Now this program guide used to be kind of like a weekly reader, a couple of pieces of sheets of paper. But now they've really, really upgraded it. And it's going to be with color pictures and-- wow color pictures.

If you've ever seen the old one, you know what a big jump that is. And it's really a very nice program guide. I've seen it. For \$60 you get a porcelain mug with the World Radio white-and-purple logo on it, for-- or a T-shirt with the-three color purple T-shirt with the--

WENDY: They look good this year.

JILL: Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah. They're talking about changing the logo next year. For \$90, you get two of the World Radio porcelain mugs, and for \$120, the ever-popular BBC briefcase. I understand that was the big thing, last marathon, that people were really, really crazy about getting that.

WENDY: [INAUDIBLE]

JILL: Uh-huh the silver logo. And for \$250, you get day sponsorship, four on-air credits the day of your choice. So what they'll do is thank you personally, the day that you pick, four times during the day.

Now this these may seem like little bitty things. But they're really important. People who see that you're listening to World Radio KPFT, on your mug, will ask you what it is and where-- this way you can share your experience at KPFT with your friends, and wear your shirt proudly-- I know that several of us do-- and participate, and be a member of KPFT.

And being a member of KPFT is like being a member of *After Hours*. Now if you're listening to us, you find some value in what goes on here at KPFT. You listen to our program on a regular basis. You know what I'm talking about.

And you are the ones we're talking about. Those who are listening right now can call us. And we'll take MasterCard, Visa, or American Express. And there are people in the lobby who are waiting. And I done my pitch for this hour. And we'll be back at you in about 20 minutes to talk a little bit more about membership, which is a wonderful thing.

I know I'm a member. Are you a member? Don't say no.

WENDY: Well, um--

JILL: Well, um--

WENDY: I did the show.

JILL: Karen, you better call.

WENDY: I'm grateful. Yeah, I want to say hi to a couple of people. Say hi to Terry and Veronica, who are out, hopefully sleeping right now. I think that that's what they said they were going to be doing. I want to talk to the lovely Karen, who I believe is also sleeping right now. But she should be taping the show for me. Love you, honey.

JILL: Wife 'o mine.

PARTICIPANT 1: [INAUDIBLE]

WENDY: That's right. And I want to tell people out there that listening to give us a call. Hi, Susan Palmer. Hi. Who else would I tell to call, to tell to listen this week?

JILL: Is Susan out there? Oh, cutie, Susan.

WENDY: Susan Palmer, I think, should be out there this evening. And Reverend Carolyn, if you're listening or if you're taping, hi, girl. How are you?

PARTICIPANT 1:How about Michelle? Drop a quarter and call us up.

JILL: That's right. Call us and--

WENDY: Call us up.

JILL: --we'll include you in this conversation.

WENDY: Please do, like the caller we have on line one.

JILL: Is Tom on line one? Can we go straight on to push? Or do you have to do something? We're consulting with our production crew. OK.

WENDY: We'll get this first, then do this. [INAUDIBLE]

JILL: OK, Tom, are you there?

WENDY: I think Tom's there. Tom, you still there?

TOM (ON PHONE): Yeah, can you hear me?

JILL: Yeah, we sure can.

TOM (ON PHONE): OK. I have to turn the radio on to hear you.

WENDY: OK.

JILL: Aha.

TOM (ON PHONE): Hey, look, Jill, how are you?

JILL: I'm fine. How are you, Tom?

TOM (ON PHONE): Well, that's good. Hey, look, I'm [INAUDIBLE] didn't-- I really don't have to ask my question. I'm beginning to stutter because I get excited about these things. Anyway-- and then I'll hang up and then let the sisters answer the question. But I'm finding quite a bit of bigotry toward the gay community from the Black community, that some people call, however you want to put it.

Can you maybe just comment on this, why this is so-- why there is so much hate coming from the Black community to the gay community? I just simply don't understand it. As a group that should understand prejudice and hate, that should be the group. And I just don't understand that at all.

WENDY: OK, thanks, Tom. We'll tell you about that. So what do you think? Do you think that communities of color, specifically-- he was talking about the African-American community. Do you think that-- I don't know whether you were necessarily talking about African-American gay or lesbians, or if you were talking about African-American heterosexuals.

What I was going to ask is a little bit about stereotyping too. Go ahead and answer that question. And we'll see if that segues onto my next little moment here. What do you think?

JILL: I think he's talking about-- I know the NAACP and their new president recently--

PARTICIPANT 1:N-A-A-C-P.

JILL: N-A-A-C-P?

PARTICIPANT 1:They insist on that now.

JILL: OK, N-A-A-C-P and their new president have been very supportive of the gay movement, were there in Washington, made a very wonderful and eloquent speech there. I was frankly moved to tears when this man spoke, about the way he spoke and the things he said.

But then there are the other Black American groups. Some of the Baptist groups around the country have been just exactly the opposite. And they don't care what color you are. If you're a lesbian or a gay person--

PARTICIPANT 1:[INAUDIBLE]

JILL: --they are--

WENDY: The church groups supported the Jewish-- I can't even remember the name of the group right now. But it's the largest coalition of Jewish and Hebrew peoples-- were there supporting the March on Washington, and came out just in force to support. What do you think about--

PARTICIPANT 1:Well, with respect to--

WENDY: --being supported.

PARTICIPANT 1:Well, with respect to what Tom was saying-- thank you, darling. My girl is rubbing my back here, because I guess she knows I'm tense.

JILL: Yes, we get free back rubs here. Call in. Join. be a member.

PARTICIPANT 1:Yeah, that's right. That's one of those thank you gifts.

[LAUGHTER]

But with respect to Tom's question, I know that he was speaking specifically in the city of Houston. I'm not sure what his own personal experience was. I'm not sure if indeed he is a gay male and he has experienced some type of bigotry, maybe, perhaps presented toward him from another African-American gay or lesbian here in the city of Houston.

I'm very happy to hear what you said, what happened, with respect to Washington. And I also like to simultaneously acknowledge the fact, as we've already discussed, that, if in the African-American community, there's-- lots of homophobia still exists, period. And it's as though because you are African-American, if you let someone know that you're-- who happens to be straight-- that you're a gay or lesbian, they definitely want to basically disown you, or look down upon you.

I'm not sure what Tom's actual experience was. I'm not sure, even, if indeed, the African-American community in Houston is actually putting that type of bigotry out--

WENDY: MODERATOR: --as a whole.

PARTICIPANT 1: Yeah, as a whole. So I understand where you're coming from, Tom. Unfortunately, I, myself, feel quite the opposite. I feel as though quite a bit of bigotry is aimed toward African-Americans. That's what my experience, personally, have been.

I wish that I felt differently. But at this moment. I really don't. Louis, if you want to clarify your question a bit, I would like to approach it again.

WENDY: I want to talk briefly about-- I was watching TV today. And I was watching--

[SIGHS]

I don't to say *Access Houston*. It was one of the shows that they have about African-American culture within the city of Houston. And they were talking to a writer. And the writer was saying his books-- and I can't even remember his name either. He was saying, in his books, he mentions-- he does little satire, stick chapters and characters based on real-life people. And one of his narratives talked about how Muhammad Ali was a very, very important figure to him.

And because-- and he's a heterosexual person, I'm assuming. Maybe wrong, but I assume that he's a heterosexual person. And Muhammad Ali was a very important figure to him, because Muhammad Ali, as a Black man, stood up and said, I am the greatest. And that allowed him to think, hey, maybe I have some goodness and greatness in me too.

And that was a very powerful figure for him. And my-- I wouldn't want Muhammad Ali to be a role model for me, because of what he does for a living. But I can understand that he's probably a very good person. I can see goodness in that person as an entertainment figure.

At the same time, I don't see very many roles, especially for African-American men. I don't see any, let's just say any, strong, positive, effeminate, African-American role models for gay men. And yet at the same time, I can-- being a lesbian, maybe I know this. But I know strong, powerful African-American women that I just totally respect and look up to, and that I think are very strong, almost masculine, if you will, in their strength and power, as well as effeminate.

But women can really accept that power and go after that power, whereas I don't think men are allowed to go after their feminine sides. And I think that must be very hard for African-American men and the roles they play in our society.

JILL: You know, I'm-- thinking about gay and lesbian-- African-American men role models, who do I know off the top of my head? And the name that keeps jumping at me is RuPaul. And I'm thinking, well, that's not a role model. That's just a famous--

WENDY: I think-- no, I think--

JILL: But that's the image that I think that--

WENDY: I think that's brand new.

JILL: I think that's the image that a lot of young, Black, gay men have of Black, gay men, or these drag queens. Not that that's a terrible thing, but I would like it to expand to a wide spectrum of possibilities.

PARTICIPANT 2: Well, I think that--

WENDY: --a strong--

PARTICIPANT 2: --and this is--

WENDY: --masculine.

PARTICIPANT 2: --my opinion. But I believe that the singer-- what's his name?

PARTICIPANT 1: [INAUDIBLE]

PARTICIPANT 2: No, no, it goes back, back, back, Frank Sinatra days.

JILL: Nat King Cole?

PARTICIPANT 2: No, around that same era. In fact, he's still singing.

PARTICIPANT 1: Oh, are you talking about what's his face--

WENDY: Johnny Mathis.

JILL: Yes, Johnny Mathis.

WENDY: Johnny [INAUDIBLE], Johnny Litman.

JILL: Oh, yeah, Johnny [INAUDIBLE]

WENDY: --Mathis.

[LAUGHTER]

JILL: Johnny Mathis.

WENDY: Johnny, "go get it, girl" Mathis.

JILL: Johnny, "I'm not gay" Mathis.

WENDY: I'm not sleeping with boys. No, no, no, no, no.

PARTICIPANT 2: Anyway, I say to Johnny, come get me for slander. That's just my opinion. I think that he is gay. And I think that that's something that has been quite well known among the male, gay, Black, African-American community. And he's not the only one. Paul Robeson, I believe, was gay. There are a lot of famous Black--

WENDY: What about Langston Hughes?

JILL: Mm-hmm. And I was thinking about-- the reason I was thinking, the reason I brought this up is because this is what white America has an image of. That's what white America has an image of, is-- no gay-- yeah, Eddie Murphy gay-- is of gay, Black men, would be effeminate, drag queen. Those are the images.

PARTICIPANT 1: But derogatory?

JILL: The Black gay woman now-- is it Nikki Giovanni? Some Pat Parker?

WENDY: I think June [INAUDIBLE].

JILL: I mean, these women are strong. They're visible. They're saying something that is able to be heard by everybody, not just gay people. But the stuff you were reading in there could be listened to by anybody. These are strong Black women who are also-- who happen to be lesbians. But the image that I think gay Black males get is more on the more effeminate-- Johnny Mathis, RuPaul, these names that are current.

And what they're doing is making money. They're making the money. They're making the money. And that's--

PARTICIPANT 2: [INAUDIBLE] saying something was also.

WENDY: Raymond St. John.

PARTICIPANT 2: Yeah, Raymond St. John.

JILL: You were talking about Muhammad Ali. And I'm glad you brought him up because I knew him when I was a child. No, no, no, and I want to know--

[LAUGHTER]

No, I want you to know he and my father were childhood friends.

WENDY: Wow.

JILL: They would sit it together--

WENDY: Cassius?

JILL: --out in the backyard.

WENDY: Cassius?

JILL: Cassius Clay, that's right. They would sit together out in the backyard. And my very, very prejudiced grandfather would shoo him off. And he would come back.

And he and my father would play. And then my grandfather would shoo him off and tell my father, no, no, no, no, no, you don't understand. He's Black. You're white. This is-- no, no, no.

But my father and he would play out in the alleys. And my father became more connected to his family than he was connected to our family, to my grandparents, because my parents were prejudiced. And his parents were just folks, were just folks.

And my father grew up with that image. And thankfully he passed that on to me. Rather than my getting my grandfather's image, my father gave me this-- I was accepted into this house. And that was no easy feat. My father was a real pain in the butt, let me tell you.

And he had all his prejudice from his father that he had to overcome, even as a child. And he learned so much as a child. And I think that-- it was interesting that you brought him up-- that what interested me most about Muhammad Ali was that his whole life was an open book. And you could look and peer at everything he did.

The good things he did, he spent a lot of money on children in this country and around the world. But the bad things he did, he was a major pain in the butt when it came to the war and doing that. Not bad things. I agree with what he did. I prefer him to have done it a different way. But I agree with his stance.

Then becoming a Muslim, open and out, and just saying, this is me. I'm going to do my life the best I see how. It don't matter what color I am. It don't matter-- anything. I'm just going to live my life for me and what's best for me. And if it's best for me to upset you, well, I'm just sorry.

I'm not going to pay for that because I don't know you. And I'm not paying for it. And I always thought that Muhammad Ali, I think personally because-- one of the reasons was because my parents were connected to him, and I remember him as a child. But I also think because of who he was, he was always a role model for me, which you don't find very often, the cross-cultural role models, especially from the whites to a Black role model.

And he was always a role-- he was always somebody I looked up to.

WENDY:

Well, I know that as many white people my age and my generation, I grew up-- well, I grew up part of the time in Houston, part of the time in a really small town where I had a babysitter slash nanny who was a Black woman. And I thought she was just my mom.

I thought she was best-- all my relatives had really white skin, white hair, blue or brown eyes. And I had really dark eyes and dark hair. I can remember, even as a child, asking my parents if I was Black. And they said, no, honey. And they laughed. And they thought it was really funny.

And my nanny, whose name was Juanita-- and Juanita, if you should be listening in Houston sometime, I love you-- she was just like mom to me. And there was not such a cultural difference between them as you see maybe on TV, because they called each other by their first name.

She was definitely an employee, but she was also a friend. They called each other by their first name. We ate meals together. We sat and had coffee and hot chocolate together. It was very much a part of my family.

And every day as a child, we would go for a walk. And she would take me down to walk to see her grandfather, who was in the nursing home down the street. And she called him Papa. And she introduced me, this as Papa. And I called him Papa.

And I thought that this 80-year-old Black man was my papa. And he was that to me. I remember sitting in his lap in a cane rocking chair, listening to him spit and tell stories with no teeth. And you know I thought he was my grandfather.

And I feel so lucky to have that. And there was no perception of difference at all, not even-- barely even skin color. I knew enough to ask, am I Black? But had I not been dark skinned, I probably wouldn't have even asked that.

PARTICIPANT 2: Well, you know, dude, Wendy, since you're talking about that, I have an 11-year-old that is just this year, '93, '94, went into the sixth grade. And I remember thinking about her and her friends, and how innocent they were in their play and in their interaction with one another before junior high school. Seems like junior high school brings an awareness of, I'm different from who you are.

And I've had to really cajole her and encourage her to continue having friendships with children that are not of the same cultural background that she is. But it has definitely shown a difference in the junior-high-school years. So maybe it's something that happens right around that adolescent age. But there is a freedom in childhood and an innocence in childhood.

PARTICIPANT 1: I guess innocence, period. You said some pretty rich things here about, specifically in respect to Muhammad Ali, your childhood experiences that you had and the like, and the way that you were raised by your father. You were commenting on the fact of your Black nanny. And--

MODERATOR: Sounds terrible, god.

PARTICIPANT 1: A gentleman in a nursing home. That's when, as an angry young Black, I'm supposed to attack you right about now. So I'm going to save all that because it's early in the morning. But do you really think that, as a African-American, that I would have been that readily accepted in a white family, that I would have been allowed--

WENDY: PARTICIPANT 1: No.

PARTICIPANT 1: --perhaps that-- I wouldn't call it a privilege, because I think that, even though it might not have seemed like a privilege to you at that time to be in that welcome embrace and love-- I'm sure that they loved you and that she really enjoyed you in life. But do you really think I would have had that experience?

I would say not. And the reason why I say that is because I was raised in South Georgia. My mother was a maid. She worked for a very wealthy, rich family in South Georgia for 20 some odd years. And I was very proud of her one day when she came home crying, because she'd been there for 25 years, making about \$60 a week.

And she came home crying. And she says, I'm not going back. I'm not going back. And she was saying basically, that this particular man who was the head of the house-- he's a CEO of a major corporation, even right now in Georgia-- he called her a nigger. And she had basically raised their children also.

And as this poem indicated, the poem we read earlier, she raised white babies while she taught her babies to raise themselves. And as-- you know, she didn't-- my mom did not neglect us. But she definitely spent a heck of a lot of time on that family. And she raised basically raised those kids.

And when she passed away, the entire family, except for him-- he's bedridden and sick now-- they came to her funeral and cried as hard as we did. I can appreciate very much what you're saying. But do you really think that I had that same experience? I tell you not. I wore that young lady's hand-me-downs.

JILL: But you know, I don't think I would have had that same experience had I not been-- the luck of birth, that I was born into that situation and that place. I was thinking about having that situation. Had you lived next door to my family, you would have had that experience. My mother took an 18-year-old kid into her house--

PARTICIPANT 1: But if I had lived in your town, I would not have lived next door to your family.

JILL: But I don't know. See, my family's military. And we lived on a military base. At a very young age, I was exposed to almost all kinds of cultures at a very young age. What I was going to say is that my mother took in an 18-year-old kid and put him through college because his father was stationed in Japan. And he didn't want to leave to go to college in Japan.

So he stayed with my family. And he just never went home. He just never went home. He's always been a part of our family.

When we have Christmas and Thanksgiving, alternately, he spends it with his family, he spends it with our family. He's a doctor now. And he brings his children and his wife to my mother's house. And when we go there, he is just accepted.

Now, he's not the only one. My mother also did this for a young Asian child who was like 13. And his family was moving to another place. And rather than take him out of what school he was in at that time, she kept him for several years.

If you had been in-- I think what we were, we were lucky that we stumbled on to families that would accept us. I have also met Black families who would have shut the door in my face. And I don't say they would have done that out of-- because they-- I say they would have done that out of anger, out of seeing me, as a white face, and responsible for all the frustrations that they have, I'm also prejudiced against.

And in that sense, I know it doesn't compare. But I felt that. I have been on the other end of the-- and I dare to bring this up. I just-- I'm really risking here-- on the reparation conversations, whether Black people should have reparations for what happened. And I say, frankly, I didn't do that. And I just-- I can't afford to pay for it.

I didn't do that to you. And I can't afford to pay for it. And I've been on the other end of that. I've been the White face who is just naturally assumed to be prejudiced and bigoted. And I'm sitting here going, but that's not me. That's not me. And I can't convince-- you can't get through the wall of frustration because they don't want to hear it from me.

WENDY: Well, I think we're all, in a very definite sense, racist. White and maybe Black too. I can't speak for everybody. But I think-- I know I am.

And I even question-- I don't question my motives for trying to tell you that story. But I know that story is important for me to know because it's part of who I am as a person. And it just because I told you doesn't mean that I am not going to tell my white friends, or my Asian friends, or my whatever. I would tell anybody that's willing to listen to that because it's a very important time to me.

But I question why people who say-- who bring that up. I have to say that I'm almost embarrassed to tell people stories about my experiencing a kind of discrimination because I'm beige. I'm brown. I was in a restaurant the other day. And I experienced discrimination--

PARTICIPANT 1: I was going to ask you about that.

WENDY: --because this one-- I was having dinner with two very white women and me, in a Mexican restaurant. And everybody in that restaurant was dark skinned. And we got served less. We got served terribly.

We did not leave a tip because the person did not give us what we ordered, even though there was-- I don't think there was an actual language barrier. I think the waitress took advantage of the language barrier to charge us something more than what we wanted, like chili con queso versus queso.

And in the end, I went to her. The three of us went up to the front desk and asked to speak with someone who could explain the ticket to us. And the woman immediately pulled me to the side and started speaking Spanish to me.

PARTICIPANT 1: Yes, yes.

WENDY: And I do not understand Spanish. And why would you do that to me when I know you perfectly well you can speak English. You were speaking English just five minutes ago.

So-- and I get attacked from well-meaning white friends for being a racist because I would bring that story up. Or I get attacked for well-meaning people saying, why would I want to tell you something about my Black nanny? Doesn't that put people in a--

JILL: It's the old '60s thing. I have a Black friend. I'm a Democrat. I have a Black friend. Well, now they're doing it about gay people. I know a lesbian, Oh, there's a lesbian in my family.

WENDY: See, now I think often about--