

Voices of Southern Hospitality: An Oral History Project

Interviewee: Heyward, Willie

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Abstract: This interview begins with Willie Heyward describing his childhood and how it shaped him as a person, citing his parents and his environment as influential factors. He talks about the changes he has seen in his community in terms of friends and family he has lost, a shift in racial dealings, and an increase in activism for less privileged groups. He discusses how his occupation in public relations has encouraged him to speak up for what he believes in and what he thinks Charleston needs to change about its tourism industry. He also shares his feelings about the origins of Southern hospitality as well as the conversations that America should be having in order to create a more sustainable future.

Biographical Note: Willie Heyward, also known as Halo, was born in the marshlands of the Lowcountry. He attended school downtown Charleston but continued to be exposed to many areas on and around the peninsula. As a child, he was interested in many things, and as an adult he is in the occupation of public relations. He has a hand in the community and speaks about topics such as transportation, homelessness, and the wellbeing of the locals.

Project Details:

In the summer of 2018, student researchers from the College of Charleston conducted oral histories for the research project, *Voices of Southern Hospitality*. The project documents diverse opinions and stories about southern hospitality in Charleston, South Carolina, but also offers a deeper and more intimate history of a changing community. Over the past thirty years (early-1990s to 2018), the Charleston peninsula and its surrounding islands have experienced rapid economic growth and rapid cultural and ecological changes. The *Voices of Southern Hospitality* project chronicles this profound transformation with the personal histories of Charleston residents. The project was launched in June 2018 with funding from The Committee for Innovative Teaching and Learning in the Liberal Arts and Sciences at the College of Charleston. In addition to documenting important stories, the project was designed to train College of Charleston students in oral history research methods. Five student researchers and 42 interviewees participated in the first phase of this project (June and July, 2018).

Interview Begin

[Interviewer Initials]: S.B.

Interviewee Initials]: W.H.

SB: All right. It is July 2nd, 2018. We are at the West Ashley Branch of the County Library. This is Sylvie Baele doing an interview for the Oral History Project for Special Collections at the Addlestone Library in the Lowcountry Digital History Initiative. Would you go ahead and introduce yourself?

WH: My name is Willie Heyward. My Gullah given name is Halo [inaudible].

SB: Thank you. Thanks for doing this interview with me today. My first question for you is, what was your childhood like?

WH: Pretty sporadic. I started school downtown Charleston. It was a Catholic school and... don't know why I was in there, but my mom worked at MUSC and my grandfather was Robert Parks who [break in audio] church on President Street, so I was just always in the air, so they put me in their school, I guess. It didn't last long. Found out I had... I guess they said chronic ADD, so they just like put me in special classes, which I liked. Then they would... Then I transferred to different schools and, yeah, basically just hopped from school to school, I was in basically nine different schools. Got kicked out, not because of my grades, but just being talkative and fighting and stuff. Just yeah, pretty much all over. And then ended up at SCAD, College of Art and Design. Yeah.

SB: Are there any fond kind of moments or stories from your childhood? I know like I have some that I remember from like hanging out around the house or being out on Johns Island, but is there anything that comes to mind?

WH: I lived a pretty strict childhood. Most of my memories are either ones where I'm building something or watching my family do something for somebody else. I wasn't a child who got to watch TV. Anything I wanted to watch, I had to read it first. Anything I talked about, I had to research it first. Very strict household. And yeah, as far as child moments, I guess it was my own imagination that I could use. But you know, making music, painting, creating, you know, just, I don't know, I feel like children-- I think I forgot pretty much every other five years as I got older because I was so much in love with what I could do. I was just... I could remember more about other people's lives than my own, because I was such a sharer, I was such a giver. You couldn't disappoint me, you know, I was just one of those kids. So, I don't know. I don't have any lonely memories, 'cause those are usually the ones people can go, "Oh, I remember! Well they kicked me out of class, and I was by myself. And, I remember that day." I don't have any stories like that. I was just always lost in my own sauce.

SB: Mhm. Cool. I like it. So, it sounds like you spent a lot of time downtown as a kid, but was that your home area?

WH: Most of my... I'm like a... I guess if you could surf on the marsh, I guess you could call me like a surfer dude but in the island way, you know, like, but I don't surf. But I lived on the country island side, like marsh. We don't really like saying it's just marsh cause people downplay marsh. It's actually fun. But I was a country-bred kid; Hollywood, Red Top, South Carolina, and my dad was the first one to kind of get out of that area. Got him a job, found him a good woman, and downtown is more of my mother's side of the family because they were the outreach ministry, the churches. My dad was more of a back dirt road racetrack, you know. I was the kid holding the grocery bag with 20,000 in it, but two cars running, and he'd be like [in Geechee accent] "Oh, they 'bout to race. All right, there go little Will at the end, there go little Will. As soon as he drops that bag you better go, better go, better go. All right we rolling, rolling." You could just hear the Geechee. [makes speeding noises]

SB: (laughter)

WH: That little kid. That was me, just that little kid at the end of the racetrack. And... I don't know. That's just pretty much just a country kid.

SB: I like it. Mhm, that resonates--

WH: But everyone thinks I'm from L.A. and stuff. I'm like, nah man. I just like, I don't know. I like colors here. I don't know. I don't know.

SB: It's funny, people are always like, "Are you from California?" And I'm like, "Nope. Johns Island, baby."

WH: They always say that. I'm like, no, I'm from the island. I'm in Edisto. I'm in Johns Island. I'm in James Island. I'm in Mount Pleasant. I'm on Long Point Road going to some little church in the hood, like, and then driving all across the bridge. That was me.

SB: I know, and people are like, "I had to sit in traffic for 20 minutes." I'm like, "I've driven across this town multiple times just today."

WH: Yeah. People... It's just crazy 'cause I was like on tour my whole life, like I've been playing instruments since I was like six, you know. So, every church wanted little Willie on their drum set, you know, like "Oh, it's little Willie! Well, he got the first service." And then you get out, my mom sent me to the second service, sent me to the third service and there's a late-night service. So, yeah.

SB: So how have your... I was going to ask your home area, but it seems like you have multiple ones. So how have your home areas changed since you were young?

WH: I guess we had a small amount of family members who lost their land and stuff like that. So, my family always had me aware of, you know, this is your nature, this is your habitat, enjoy it, blah, blah, blah. I don't know, I've never really noticed any change other than the lives that get older and then the negligence that comes after. So, then, the land has never changed and the intellect. Now, I can't say the same for other families, but my family's, you know, always been strong about letting the kids, what they call the children's dance, like let the children look at what we have and then we'll look at what they're saying and we go, okay: Little Willie wants to be an architect. We need to make sure we keep our land clean. You know, let's buy him some Legos. Let's show him grandma's house that's destroyed, the one we can't fix because when he sees Legos and he sees that, he's going to wonder why that doesn't look like his Legos. So, it's more of an intellectual thing. I would say the generations before me would notice more changes in their habitats and stuff like that. I've been one of the lucky, you know, Gullah Geechee people who could just look at the economics and just go, "Oh, this is nice." I can make a 20-year plan for my life, and a lot of people, the changes that I-- If I had to notice anything, it would be in my own appreciation of what I have. And that's something you don't hear much. And a lot of families who own lands, they can say, "Oh yeah, these people try and buy it up." and "Yeah, it's changing 'cause the white man doing this downtown is making me feel this way." It's like, no, that's personal. As far as the habitat changing, that's up to you. So, that's where I'm at on that.

SB: I got you. We kind of went into this in the last question but are there are some changes in the community you've witnessed in the past decade, or couple of decades, and how do you feel about them?

WH: I don't know. The most changes for me in this past decade have been, you know, loss of life. I can't sit here and say I really see any solutions any different than a decade ago because I know the law a little bit and I know policies enough to know it's going to take until I'm 40 to really say I see anything. However, the loss of life and what that life was sacrificing is kind of the changes I can see like Mr. Pinckney and the cameras and [inaudible] and justice. Like that's my best friend. Like people not from Charleston moved here and were actually just like, "I gotta go see Halo because that dude is just living in his own nature." So, I try to stay away from the negative energy so the changes I see, I can only affirm those through what I'm doing, you know, like I see changes, but I see propaganda. So, what is change? Is it changing the channel, but there's still a broadcast so we still have an issue or is it actually changing our broadcasts? Are we casting abroad now? Like, is there something outside of the TV? We could change everything, but that don't mean change is the answer. Sometimes it's complete destruction or complete construction. Who's the judge of that? Not me. So really I'm just like, no I haven't seen nothing changed but people I thought was going to live longer than me. My mom died; my best friends, two of them; my uncle; pastor friend; friends just mentally change. I've seen a lot of change in the church, and I'm not speaking like the church as a building, but the church inside. It's like, I've seen a lot of people get

past a wall that used to be called racism and really it's reverse racism and if there's been a change, it's been non-melanated and melanated, white, black, whatever you want to call it actually admitting, "Hey, I feel what you feel and I can't help you because you feel what you feel and you can't help me because I feel what I feel. So let's like stop changing feelings and just do something." And that's the change I see. I seen people doing more without announcing, "Oh, let's promote this idea and campaign." It's like we're going downtown, Women's March. That was the first symbol. The year of the woman was the first symbol I think everyone should really pay attention to, is women are tired of watching men have the power to not share it at all. It's hilarious. It's like... So I don't know, and that's a whole other topic, but change. If there was anything, it was the woman, the decade of the woman. That has changed crazy. Yeah. I mean ain't nothing changed more than that, than the power of a woman. Dead serious.

SB: I believe it. That resonates with me.

WH: That's really the only thing I have noticed.

SB: Alright, Halo, we're going to switch gears. What is your occupation and why did you pursue this type of work?

WH: I guess occupation, I can say public relation. I mean, once I found out the federal government was a PR firm, I was like, oh, that's how you protect your land. Got it. So, I've always been an architect at heart, but in my culture, architect doesn't mean someone who builds just buildings. It's pretty much like a universal person who has to describe and prescribe, so I'm technically a scribe who just walks the hieroglyphics like, oh this elder said that this year's sea turtles. People look at you like, what do you mean "this year's sea turtles"? I'm just saying this year's sea turtles, and I mean everything from someone's pastor preaching about it to some lady wearing it on a necklace to the aquarium, wanting to do stuff like sea turtles. Just saying. So you know, I would say my occupation would have to be PR because I'm such a random person and how I think. The only way I can even communicate with you is to publicly relate because other than that I don't publicly relate. Like if you just saw me and my own essence and what I do, you'd be like, "What is this kid up to?" PR was the way I could take Geechee, English, my intellect, my metaphysical intellect, and combine it into a way to communicate to people that, "Oh, this makes sense. I feel that. He's talking about the year of the woman, but his whole staff is women." We get that before we say 'year of the woman' because it's like, "Why are you hiring all women? You a pimp or something?" It's like, no, they actually own their own business, and I work for them. PR was the only way to humble myself as a man to where if I stand up and go, "You don't get to say that to Sarah. You don't get to say that to Willis," they looking at me like still as a man like, "Okay, okay," but I'm still humbled enough to where I'm relating to you publicly, not as an angry black guy. I'm actually stating facts, putting solutions behind my facts. Then sustaining them and making it economical. So, you're actually going to make your mind, your way feel better because of just how I have to articulate myself. I've been kicked out of so many classes just for communication. So, PR has been the occupation that saved my life. Actually, what's her name? Callie Walpole, the Vicar from

Grace Church, was, I would say my mentor for a brief, brief moment because she felt that I was going into a pilgrimage and I was like visiting Tent City and stuff like that. And I was like, "How am I able to go everywhere and relate?... But I feel so trapped, like just as a black man in America." And she said, "Because you have to publicly relate your pilgrimage, like, you're going on a pilgrimage. As a child, you didn't think like a child. As an adult, you don't think like an adult." She was like, "You're different." And she was like, "You... PR is probably the best way." And I said, "Well, I want my first meeting to be Mayor Tech and his wife." She said, "Okay. Okra soup dinner. Let's do it right." And that was the first time I got to eat and be a PR agent and sit there and go, "Okay, so Mr. Mayor, I see you're into economics. I'm glad you're the mayor, more power to you. Let's do a jazz show together." Instead of me going, "I'm black, Pinckney died, blah blah blah, what are we gonna do about racism?" I go, "You play piano, and I play drums. Let's do a jazz show together." That's PR. I don't have to say anything else, bro. Bill Clinton understood that. He wouldn't have won if he didn't go (makes trumpet noise). Oh yeah, all good press, man. He wouldn't have won if he didn't do that. There's a magic, there's a science, and PR is like the king of communication that no one thinks about. It's hilarious. So, no wonder, no wonder. I hope that answered the question. I'm sorry.

SB: You did. No apologies needed. How has tourism affected your work with PR and the Geechee community?

WH: I guess the fact that people are still touring... Oh, this a good one. Thank you, God. I think people are still touring the New Testament of slavery. Such a tickly conversation 'cause like we're still calling people black, white and we're still thinking Charleston's slavery history is all there is. If Charleston wanted to be able to make money off of the history, they should really try to dive in further. Like there's ways we can all be sharks and still swim in the water. Like, you know, like we want something, I want something. If you want tourism, and we're number one in the world right now, it's probably going to get a little boring to just think we all started with these basket weaves, cotton-picking slave people, like that's not where it started. There's history beyond that. There's Puerto Rican history, there's Cherokee history, there's European history, there's Irish history. Like we're not respecting the Crayola box full of colors. And so, tourism and PR are definitely like polar opposites right now because if they were to publicly relate what they're touring, it wouldn't be worth touring. So, it's almost like... I don't know. I don't know how to answer it any further than if we start touring the truth, and that's why I advocate for transportation. We just had the event of course, and I told them, I said, look, I don't want my name on that. I said, because I have to be a PR agent. Like I have to see that what you're saying and what you're writing, that's cool, that's propaganda. Now, are you going to do that? Did you talk to Miss Louise? Did you talk to the elders? Okay, then come on out to Island Breeze, I like you guys. You know, so they get it, we get it. They know that it takes transportation, but people get so caught up in their egos that they go, "Oh, well tourism is already working for me, and we don't need to update CARTA." But that slows down other people getting a tour of other areas. So, it's like, what is the real issue? Is it transportation or is it tourism or is it PR or is it the mayor? I don't know, but I think if we were to

even hear the requests of the people who were here first, then tourists will make their own decision.

SB: I think you're right. It sounds like that's the thing you would change about the tourism industry, that it's not really listening to the people in the area, which is, it seems ironic because the people are really what seems like is bringing the tourism here now, is the people because the people are the culture.

WH: It's like you're letting fans of Lil Wayne listen to Tha Carter I over and over again. It's like, dude, Carter II is dope, and Carter III is even better. Whoa, whoa. Y'all are still going on, y'all still making Lil Wayne go on tour with Carter I. I feel like *Back to the Future*, like there's a whole other culture that really could show you Carter II, Carter III and IV, V, VI, VII in the future, but I can see why they keep the tourism from that truth is because the tourism would backfire, what Charleston actually did to us. You know, like, that they tour Magnolia Gardens and a Gullah Geechee person was the tour's host. They wouldn't say a damn thing about Magnolias. They would go, "Oh, that's the Magnolia Garden. But that's where they also threw my people over in a swamp, when they couldn't, when they weren't able." That's where the word hurricane comes from. "Oh hurricane. She ain't able. Hurricane, throw her overboard" on the slave ship called Jesus. And when you throw a woman from West Africa overboard, you just caused an ancestral rift. Now those winds come here every year. You still got slaves coming to the East Coast, they're just not people. They are the lives that have been lost. The winds of change. Those are the real tourists who are visiting us, seasonally. Like, we're here. You're going to remember. You can do tourism all you want, but if we don't go back into the history and look at what I call the "Disney, National Geographic, ESPN effect", where we have some cool, little imaginative, a woman coming out of the ocean as a big hurricane, got some attitude. But that word is truth. It originated from somewhere. West Africa's the area. Do I need to keep going? Like it just makes sense. And I mean, I'm young, maybe, well off the east coast of... 'cause coming up, so I'm not the geographical guy. However, tourism can gain everything it needs to gain if it just tells the truth, and let the people be the people. Because you're going to have all of your little pillars. You're going to have all your products, you can have all your- I mean, I just think they're not doing it because it would bring up things that would keep them from looking like they can control tourism. I'm actually a verified host. I don't have to go through... I go through the Internet now. So, I have people like Airbnb experienced hitting me like, "Oh, we're sailing in. Me and my wife would love to learn more about the Gullah Geechee culture." So, I feel a wave of change coming where we look at these new companies like Airbnb and these other things and Facebook, whatever. You can control your own little gift to what you want. And that's what I believe in. Like, I'm not just out here chanting what I should see change. I think I'm a little superhero that just has like one little city, and I'm just Halo. I'm just here trying me, you know. I believe in ripples of change. I don't want to be that tsunami because that's how you break stuff.

SB: There are a lot of things we'll have to chat about later that you're saying that I'm feeling. So, kind of switching gears again a little bit, still has to do with tourism. What do you consider to be Southern hospitality?

WH: Other than myself with a nice suit on? Hmm. Good Mama taught me manners, man. Southern hospitality... I would say... Based on the good and the bad that has happened in Charleston, and to give an example, how Dylann Roof was welcomed into Bible study, I think Southern churches invented Southern hospitality because infiltration has also been a very good fact of how hospitality works. We've been hospitable forever down here, and that usually started with the church. So yeah, I would say Southern churches is Southern hospitality because I don't know, just from good and bad news, you see, we don't push nobody away.

SB: Right.

WH: And I would think, I would say churches invented it and I would say the homeless sustained it. Churches invented hospitality, but the homeless people created the outreach ministry of hospitality because the only way we learned about Tent City was that they called themselves that and welcomed you to it. I got footage of me locking my keys in the car in Tent City and they're like, "Hey, you need help?" Like angels and I'm like, "What the heck?" They start searching... All the little things they pick up around you laughing at them. Those are tools, like, they got in the car. I met their leader, this guy named Noah. He prays for me. He goes, "Man, I don't know who you are, but you were led here, you're obviously on a quest that brings answers that not too many people get to see." And so just by my own walk I only speak the truth on that. I've been the usher, I've been the little minister, I've been the keyboard player. I've been all of those things to know the program of how to treat someone who's a new member, and I've seen it on the outside, too, with homeless people. Now, when it comes to the church going outside the church and being hospitable, I can't say they're doing that. But homeless people, wherever they are, man, hospitality, just like glows on them because they are looking at you like, "How are you doing? Can I..." They have a better way of asking for things because they are in that moment of survival. Like everything is hospitable. I don't know. It almost makes you feel like you're in their situation. That's hospitality: you're in my situation. "Hey, you want a sandwich?" That's the same thing if I was rich or poor, "Hey you want a sandwich?" It just makes you feel like "I'm being given something", you know? I don't know if that makes any sense, but that's kind of where I'm at.

SB: No, it makes perfect sense. I have a very good friend who chooses to be homeless and when I met him, I met him in a setting where he wasn't homeless, working at a ski lodge and he just had this really hospitable vibe. And when, like, my personal shit blew up, I just knew I had to go to him to have him care for me. And I knew he was just accepting of my pain. And they exude it, and it's amazing. It's a treasure that they have cultivated without even intending to, right, which is like, I think, one of the most beautiful, like meaningful things.

WH: It's the building without walls. You know, like, you meet someone like that. They have, literally, a temple. Everyone is a temple. We all have angels and demons. The most wisest man, apparently, in the Bible, Solomon, had issues like that too. Like, "Oh man, what do I do with this wisdom, and you gave me this armor that make me look so dope. I mean, shoot, if I take it off, they're going to think I'm poor." If I take this gold chain off, they gonna think gold ain't made out of trash, and it really is. That's why I wear it 'cause when people go, "Man, how much chain is?" It's trash, you know, like, and when someone is homeless it's like an animal that has no reason. You can look at that and say that animal is not as smart as you. They have no reason to fail. They have no reason to need more. They have found the ultimate sustainability. And usually someone who puts themselves in a homeless situation has found treasured lands. So, you know, I just love people who put themselves in the pressure to become the diamond. Like, and that's what Callie Walpole told me. She was like, "So you were sleeping in your SUV for two weeks during the night of the red moon in 2015 and extended the coastline of America and no one talked to you but the Turner Foundation?" "Exactly." "I wonder why." [inaudible], Turner Foundation. Ah, Gotcha. I know what y'all want. I know what y'all doing. So, it's not hate. It's not love. It's facts. Y'all the best to either reparate or keep doing what you're doing. Like, it's not up to me. There are companies like Monsanto who was owned by someone who probably treasured land before, like, "Oh my gosh, seeds, nature." And then he started seeing the wheels and the deals of life when he threw himself in that pressure and essentially became something where it's like, you know, "Am I wrong? Am I right?" So, I just feel like when you put yourself in that essence, you pretty much just have to, I don't know, just be hospitable to yourself and usually when you put yourself where it's only you versus you, when you meet someone else who even cares to look at you and go, hey, whoa hospitality, you're completely- 'cause you're within yourself so deeply that even appreciation is hospitable, it's like, "You appreciate me. You notice me and my sign." Do they really want money, or do they really want your attention? Now if we pay attention, that's like money.

SB: You're paying out.

WH: Exactly. So, it works in that way.

SB: Do you think that there are, or has developed in Charleston, things or topics that are respectable to talk about and ones that are not? And how do you feel about that?

WH: Are there...? Repeat that one more time 'cause that's a good question.

SB: So, are there things that have been deemed respectable to talk about or be about, and why is that, do you think?

WH: I'm trying to see anything deemed respectable.

SB: Like, respectable or appropriate, accepted to talk about.

WH: That shouldn't be or should be?

SB: That are, or people think that you can't really talk about them or shouldn't talk about them.

WH: Things you think you can't talk about, but you should because they are respectable. Women. I don't know. I'm such a sustainable guy. I believe that life can only come through literally understanding women. Land is something I think we don't talk about that we should, but like I said, yeah, women is pretty much the one thing we don't respect that should be the number one conversation.

SB: There's two pretty big forces in the world: land and women.

WH: Yeah. Land, woman. I don't want to say religion because I don't believe in real legions. I don't want to say culture because I don't really believe in cults, but I use transitional words to teach people. Like if I meet a brother, I go, "Oh, you're melanated. Cool, but that ain't real. You're a carbon-based humanoid."

SB: (laughing) Yeah.

WH: They're like, "Man, roll up." Yeah, you're right. You might want to because I just hit you, I know. So, woman. That's a term. Wo-man, land, and spirituality I would say are three topics that we don't bring up enough that deserve the most respect on the planet.

SB: I would actually agree. People must know I'm interviewing you because Brandon Fish just called me, Aaron just called me. They're like, "Are you interviewing him yet?"

WH: [inaudible] called me, I was like...

SB: Hang on. Two minds are meeting right now. All right. You know, the other questions I think I kind of get, you know, get them. It seems like this experience of Southern hospitality doesn't seem deep enough for this conversation, but do you think you provide this experience of Southern hospitality to others? I mean, I think I kind of got an idea from your other stories, but want to add anything to that? How you are hospitable Southernly or not Southernly hospitable or whatever.

WH: Mm... I guess because one thing that helps Southerners really get your best feeling is their accents, their demeanor, how they just carry themselves. We're like the little America within America down here, you know. We're true patriots, you know. I think because of what people will say, the negatives, like, "Oh, you're black in America. You have tattoos. You're from South Carolina. You like things that they don't like, that are illegal," whatever you want to say. Because I look both parts, and then when I speak, it's the same effect as you coming from New York down here and they go, "Oh, go ahead through." "Did you just say I could... You're letting me over?"

"Yeah. It's a red light. Go ahead." That's the same thing as me going, "Hey, come over here and eat with [inaudible]. Welcome to Mosquito Beach." And they're like, "Wakanda. We're in Wakanda!" See it took a movie by a South Carolinian actor to play that part for people to build all of those parallels and go "You know what? Chad Boswick [meaning Chadwick Boseman] is probably just a really cool king leader type of guy."

SB: What movie are you referring to?

WH: *Black Panther*.

SB: Okay. Thank you.

WH: And so, I felt like... Luke Cage, too. That dude is from South Carolina. I just don't think it's a coincidence they found some Southern brothers who went in that, those interviews or whatever, their tryout, and he probably was like, "Hey, I'm Chad Boswick from South Carolina." Whoa. So, to use him as T'Challa, he has to have that Afrikaans, Southern... And the only way you can get that out of someone who could speak like an actor and act it out, it's probably someone from the southern area with that demeanor. Right. Like you can't let Will Smith be Black Panther.

SB: Great guy, but not that.

WH: Keep it in Philly, you know?

SB: He is so Philly.

WH: He's so Philly and that's why I'm like, you just can't...that's why Tupac could get into acting and be, like, a terrible actor because he's L.A., like any kind of New Yorkers- [overlapping conversation]. They ripple those unique effects. But nah man, it's like trying to, yeah.

SB: Like trying to run away from your own tail when you try to deny where you're from.

WH: It's like come on dude.

SB: I ran from it for a long time and my ass is right back here.

WH: All the music came through here. The essence of, what I would say specialized gifts, came from out here. So, I don't know. I just think my negatives make my positives stand out based on how propaganda is right now to where if I smile and shake the hand of a white man, that speaks more volumes than me going, "I like white people" because I'm tired of talking about it. Like my great granddad looks like me, like my whiskers don't grow like this for no reason. Like I'm not just-

I know what I'm mixed with, and I think it's in me. I think I got the business mindset of a European, German, whatever my great granddad was. I've got the physicality and nature of an African, I've got the survival skills of a Cherokee, like just... Geeky. I'm Geeky.

SB: We're all more blended than people think.

WH: I'm Geechee Cherokee and I wondered why they called me a geek all my life. I'm like, "You know what? You're right!" I'm a Geek. A Geechee Cherokee. Wow. Makes a lot of sense now.

SB: Funny how things ring true once you open your mind.

WH: Year of the geeks, man. Hopefully that answers...

SB: Yeah, no it does. How do you picture or think or hope this area will be like in the future?

WH: I hope... I hope that it will be sort of... I hope it will be what women and children need 'cause if it ain't, we all dead.

SB: That is literal truth.

WH: If I put anything else, it's my ego talking but if it was really about what I'm hoping for, I'm hoping women and children... See children is how you keep the gender conversation to a low 'cause their like "What do you mean just women?" Women and children can own their own intellect, and I hope that the future, in the South specifically, I want the highest paid occupation to be teachers. I want teachers to get paid like doctors and I want women and children to be able to own their ideas and have shares in certain companies that move here within the radius of the community. If you're a woman, you're a [inaudible]. How many kids you got? What do they want to do? What's the scholarship? There needs to be sustainability for women and children. I know that's a fact because I had to fake like I was wanting a job at Cultural Affairs just to meet with them and when I got there I said I'm not here for the job. I just know if y'all knew my face and who I was, you wouldn't bring me here. I wasn't looking for a job and I found out all the churches are closing down and I'm like, oh my God. You want to know why? It ain't 'cause a man ain't up there preaching. It's because no one's nurturing what nurtures us: the land, the woman and the spirituality. That's where it all falls back into that trinity. I hope the future is women, land, spirituality and that will only come through paying our teachers and only come through letting women and kids own their ideas. Simple as that. Because we don't have any idea right now. Only a woman or a child-- that nurturing, like, only they have really the answers right now. It's 2018; things change every year. We were just using, like, thick iPhones. Now it's like the [inaudible] thing like I know what that does like it's crazy, man. Kids on iPads now and there's no one paying the teachers enough to announce that that blue light affects their eyes. It all adds up and I don't know. Women, land, spirituality.

SB: That seems like a pretty good trifecta.

WH: This is a really good interview. I mean if I don't... I tell people I write music, but I never freestyle because my style ain't free. So, the only time you ever seen me freestyle is when I'm either questioned or I'm, like, talking to somebody. I like to be so pure that I actually give you those moments to be like "Hmm..." because these things are so in me, I really can't say how much I know them unless I'm just talking about what I've experienced. That's when I'm like, I'm not just shouting like "I'm Tim Scott and women and children." My Mom died for me. So, I wrote a song telling Jesus, take a back seat 'cause you rose but my Mama raised, you feel me? Like, I get it, but I don't think you get it like my mama do. Is that a sin? I don't think so. So, it's like, I was that child that my mother put herself in the system and died for just so I could see. And she smiled on her deathbed. That hospice center held a sponge in her mouth to give her while she looked at me and bit it and smiled, and when she died, she wouldn't let it go. And I was like, Dad, you're a clown. That's hilarious. Like she would not let me mourn. That was so funny. And so, what she doing-- was her whole life the sacrifice? Or was at that moment of momentum for me? I think it was that moment. People need to know it takes your whole life to get to get to that moment to where a child who is scorned by everybody, called gay 'cause my pants on my waist, called nerdy 'cause I'm sketching Dragon Ball Z. If it wasn't for that moment that she died like that, I'd have thought life was lost, my music would have been negative. I had to put this mind to a whole other place because there were no teachers to confirm that my mother was wise except one lady named Ms. King, my third-grade art teacher, and she's still on my Facebook now. "I put you on Live 5 News with that little goldfish you painted all those years ago just to show you." And I'm like... So, that's kind of where I'm at. You know, women have been sacrificing too long and children are subject to everything. It's like the women are the cages and the kids are the rats, you know, it's like... why are you putting everything in chemistry, like let it just be. [inaudible] You can put iPads in front of them and go, "All right. What website you like?" "Worldstar!" Then you'll find out what the real issue is, you know?

SB: It's amazing what kids will do and say and create if you just let them, and you give them the tools to do it.

WH: Oh yes, oh yes. That's why my mom... I think she raised me that certain way because she knew that "If I restrict him, he won't figure it out himself. He's just going to figure out what I want. And that's not enough because I may not be here." See if I was just a mama's boy, I'd probably have a 9-5, probably have kids, be married right now, part of the [inaudible] church consistently, just all good. However, I wouldn't have had the time to get the experience I have now. You know, Donna Gill said something to me yesterday, she said, "You know, I heard about you. I really thought you were an elder, like an old elder." I said, "I am." I said, "But we'll get there. People come back." I said, "But we'll leave it at that." I said, 'cause the fact that I showed up on the red moon the night before meeting Mike Martin and he goes, "Rosa Parks, Rosa Parks", and I'm sitting there looking at him, the descendant of Rosa Parks. Like, "White boy, you know what you saying?" [inaudible] "That means you're Geechee." I said, "I love me some old country white boy."

Like y'all got people back bro." And he's like, "Bro, [inaudible] crazy. It went from there. Red moon, solar eclipse, sea turtles.

SB: Signs. That's what spirituality is to me. Signs. Recognizing them.

WH: I've been so pressured by everything from lovers to haters to where I don't know what jewel God is turning me into, but it ain't going to break me. It may not look pretty, ain't going to break me. Nothing's going to break me. Nothing. It's so sad that people have to, especially women, are binded, and children, by egos. Like, just egos.

SB: I think that's maybe the biggest thing you've stated today. It's our own egos.

WH: It's the belly of the beast. And I was a victim of myself. You know, like I thought my idea, I thought "Preserve the Gullah." I was like, "Why are we focusing on anything else? Who cares about basketball? Anything! Preserve the Gullah!" Going crazy. But when you shine light through a diamond, like that starts turning into lasers and killing stuff like [imitates gun noises]. I'm like, "Whoa, I'm out here shooting people. I can't be just dropping that." So, it became something where I had to just focus on myself, like just worry about myself because normally I'm really worried about you and your own experience like you.

SB: Yeah.

WH: And that's why homeless people know how to treasure themselves on a level beyond because they're like an animal out here. They have no reason to need anything but God, and that's where I'm at. So, give me a dollar. I'm like, give me a door and a key. I'm like... even though I can build these things, the time it would take for one man to have all that power would mean his whole life, losing all those moments where he could have gained momentum earlier. And my mom taught me, I watched when she passed, my dad was like, "All right, I know I've been wearing the Superman costume, but I'm really just Batman. Sorry." I was like, "No, wait, you're still dope." But he really thought he was Superman who's doing this. Your mom's Superman. Yeah. Your mom is the transportation company. She was the CPR company. She was the, "You need to do soccer, you need to do math." He said, "Man, I lost my dream..." Was my mom. Now a man who looks at a woman like that usually ends up with great kids. I don't know a man like my dad that will literally... I watched him fend off a woman who was like, "She's got cancer. She can't please you." Beautiful woman, rich woman. My dad be like, "Why are you here?" "Well, we know Jackie is on her way out." "And so are you." I'm like, "Dad, that was like a 32-year-old model from BET." Yeah. 'Cause he knows people and they're like, oh man, handsome guy. I watched my dad completely break his ego all the way down to where he had to come [inaudible] "It wasn't me. It was your mom, and I needed two years to just learn what she was so talented at doing." So, these stay at home moms are really business owners. Like if someone stays at home-

SB: The biggest investors.

WH: Yeah, that's the biggest investment, on the planet. Stay at home mothers. So, if we're not involved in the tools to make those things logical, like I don't know, my mom knew to put me in the system 'cause she knew how my mind worked. She didn't let my sister go into school. She home schooled her all the way until she died. But now our youngest sister don't need nobody's help. She knows how to be bad at the right time and good at the wrong time. They both don't got nothing to do with me, her. Like she just, she gets it, she goes to school. She's like, "What a drag." And we're like, "You really don't like school." And then she'll get home and her homework is so fun to her because she's in her habitat, she's at home, she got her iPad. She can Google things. Kids really are not even needing school anymore because they can go, "What'd you say, Ms. Johnson?" "So, Vincent van Gogh was born..." They're checking the teacher's answers. So, you know, I just want to see those three things we talked about sustained better: woman, land and spirituality. That's where I'm at.

SB: Yeah, man. Well, let's wrap it up there. We can keep chatting. I think this interview is done though.