I've been talking to Queen Mothers and looking at the role they're playing in villages in West Africa. I would say in West Africa, I talk to Queen Mothers and then around the rest of Africa I look at their origins. Like in the Nile Valley you have the "Candaces". So, we have a history, and then we have a contemporary phenomenon. And when I first went to Ghana, I met people who didn't really think the Queen Mother's existed. So, I wondered and I begin to go to the villages and ask about them more directly and then I met with several university students and they explained how they went primarily to Queen Mothers when they wanted to develop a project in the villages, they would go to the Queen Mothers. And that's how I first got started now I've been working with Queen Mothers for around... let's see since 2010, so seven years. So, what do you think is important for typically African-Americans communities
to know about the Queen Mothers,

and well, just any American really.

[Hewitt:] So, you know in the United States there was a time in the Sixties,

like 19... around '65

when Daniel Patrick Moynihan came out with the...

with the pathology... matriarchal
pathology theory,

Where he argued that in the African-American community

women were holding inordinate power within the family,

or leadership within the family.

But the reality is that not only did we hold it here in the United States,

but we always held it.

And not only did we always hold it,

but it was a really really good thing for society.

So literally when we understand where we come from

and why we do what we do

we see that...

things people tell us are bad are actually good.

So I can say more, you know, about the Queen Mothers and why that's really important, why they're so important.

[Claiborne:] Do you think there are any examples of great Queen Mothers that we can point to in the United States?
Yes, so we just begin with people like Harriet Tubman ...

Sojourner Truth ... Queen Mother Moore ...

Fannie Lou Hamer ... Ella Baker

All of them were playing a Queen Mother role because the key things that Queen Mother's do is to be a counterpart and a compliment to male leadership and male leadership is complementary to the Queen Mother's leadership.

Oh with the point, with the Queenship in Africa was never either or.

It wasn't that you only have a queen, like a Queen Elizabeth and there's no king, right, you always have both.

[Claiborne:] And what do you think can actually help people want to study Africa more, return to Africa?

Or, do you feel like people are already doing that?

[Hewitt:] We're in a really difficult turning point because society has moved to focus on the individual and African culture is so much not about the individual.

So it's a little difficult to make that orientation.

I find that if we bring some positive information about our African heritage to people,
they grab right on that.

And that that's probably the way...

y'know, it's like you can catch more...

catch more, I wanna say catch more flies with honey than you can with something bitter.

So we have a shared history of a bitter past,

we have to know it in order not to repeat it.

But we want to really be careful to bring all the nice, positive things that we have together,

I think that makes us want to know more.