

Excerpts of Interviews with Peers

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Name of the narrator is not included in this abridged transcription.

Peer Interview 2

1. Let us begin. Tell me your name and where you were born.

My name is _____ and I was born and raised in Greenwood, Mississippi. I am twenty years old.

2. I'd like you to describe the elder community where you grew up.

The elder community is pretty large in my town. It's a slow town with quite a few nursing homes and at-home care organizations that assist older people. I would say that the majority of people you will see around town are elderly.

3. Who is the eldest person in your family?

My grandmother on my dad's side is the eldest living generation in my family. She's eighty years old and has beaten type 2 diabetes but still has some complications. So, she goes to rehab to keep her body moving and her health is checked regularly.

4. What three words come to mind when you think about age?

Experience. Decision Making. Health.

5. Three words about aging?

Health. Physical Activity. Comfort.

6. What is your perception of the elder community in Black America?

In the Black community? In the Black community, elders are looked at as a jewel to most because of what they have to say to those who sit on the porch and talk to them for a minute or two. But there are still some elderly folks who get treated pretty poorly in

the Black community because of the circumstances they may be in at the moment (drugs, homeless, disabled).

7. Define ageism. In your own words.

I would say ageism is simply discrimination against a certain group of people due to their age and their health.

8. Can you think of any examples of ageist behavior that you might be guilty of?

I tend to sometimes talk in a “baby” voice or take some liberties away from my grandmother to make it easier for her to do things. However, I always saw it as being helpful and considerate, where she sometimes feels like a child again.

9. What are some of the social changes of aging?

I see children, housing, employment, health care.

10. Any mental changes?

Maybe memory troubles, different phrases and lingos that might be confusing.

11. Any other changes?

Slower metabolism, lighter appetite, maybe more bathroom breaks, and other changes that are common for older people who aren't in their “prime.”

12. Do you think of aging as a positive or a negative experience?

Positive!

13. Why?

With aging comes many opportunities to change the outcome you had and make it better for those who are younger. To me, that's the most humbling and worthwhile thing about aging.

14. What do you look forward when you think about getting older?

CHILDREN!

15. What do you fear?

Not leaving a legacy for my off springs.

16. Why?

It would hurt my heart knowing that in this world as a member of the Black community, that I do not have any wealth or assets for my children and my children's children because that increases the burden put on from generation to generation.

17. What have you learned from the elders around you?

The power of patience and a good listening ear.

18. What advice about life has impacted you the most?

A wise man learns from the mistakes of others; a fool learns from his own.

19. If you could choose one word to describe this experience, what would it be?

Humbling.

Peer Interview 3

- 1. Please tell me your name, your age, where you were born, and whatever else you would like to share.**

My name is __. I was born in Silver Spring, Maryland and lived there until I was about 10 years old. I moved to Concord, North Carolina with my mom and have lived there since I came to Atlanta for college.

2. Tell me about the elder community where you live in Silver Spring.

Where I'm from, in Maryland, the elderly are very prominent, a lot of old money. It's a good mix of races but Black and White are the big two, and they're equally financially prosperous. Some of them are warm and friendly. Will wave you walk past and even lend a story if you ask, I love that. In North Carolina however, where we live is mostly white and suburban. There's a bit more racism here, and a little less friendliness. You feel targeted as a young Black person here more often times than not.

3. Tell me about the eldest person in your family.

That would be my grandmother. She lives with us now. She developed early Alzheimer's I don't know maybe like two years ago. She lived back home by herself, but when it got a little bit too much for her to do so, we decided it was time. She's very old Black money, very uppity and old school on things like tattoos and music and social issues. We're not as close as I'd like us to be, but we're also drastically different. I think this was a lesson for me to learn.

4. What are three words that come to mind when you think about age?

Relative, Number, Old.

5. Aging?

Wisdom, confusing, responsibility.

6. What is your perception of the elder community in America?

Oh, I feel like that our elders are respected, but not at as high a caliber as they are in other regions and countries. I feel like more often times than not, not always, but that elders in America are unfortunately and sadly looked at as more of a Yikes. I hate to say this . . . more of a burden and hardship.

7. In the Black community?

I do feel like the Black community respects our elders. I feel there are two sides. First: The elders you really respect who pass down stories, who give knowledge to the youth, very Grandma's handsque. Then there's the other elder in the community that kind of looks down on the youth, especially my generation. Like, they don't necessarily respect our independence or our choices and they're very vocal about it.

8. In your own words, define ageism.

Being negative or cruel towards someone at a varying age than you just because you guys differ in age.

9. Can you think of any examples of ageist behavior that you might be guilty of?

I'll admit sometimes I don't take into account what they had to see and endure to get to where they are today, so their opinions, though sometimes a bit * are really just how they were conditioned to be. I also talk in a voice I would talk to a baby in, and they've seen more than me so why am I doing that?

10. Do you think of aging as a positive or negative experience?

Positive.

11. Why?

Always more to learn, you can also do so many more things, like travel alone or have your own place. Independence is the word I was looking for there, just being whole to be an adult and be independent is a blessing, no matter the trials and tribulations of adulthood.

12. What do you look forward to as you become older?

I look forward to the life that I'm manifesting and putting in work towards. I look forward to having a family of my own, with children to teach and watch grow and blossom from me into their own people. Like motherhood. That is one of the most beautiful things.

13. What do you fear about become older?

The possibility of losing memories.

14. Why?

Since the Alzheimer's runs on both sides, genetically—I don't want to say it—but you get what I'm saying. So, I just live the healthiest and most active life I can so my brain just. . I don't know . . . would be used enough not to get Alzheimer.

15. What have you learned from the elders around you?

That you are your choices.

16. What advice has impacted you the most?

My Nana used to tell me all the time to do whatever made me happy, no matter what someone else wanted me to do. That and always being your own person because I've always gone against the grain. Being a Black woman is the best thing to be, and I wouldn't want to be anything else, but it comes with its own package of things to deal with in this world.

17. How do you stay involved with the elders around you?

I call them more often now. My Nana and I used to write letters.

18. Has this interview changed the way you think about age at all?

It definitely has made me more aware of my actions towards them.

19. If you could choose one word to describe this experience what would it be?

Fun!