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TRANSCRIPT

[00:01] ANDREA JOHNSON: That, you know, rather than be seen as like a burden or whatever the regular stereotypes are, right? Like being too loud or any of that, like, or aggressive.

[00:16] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[00:18] SPEAKER C: Hi, my name is Andrea Johnson. I'm 54 years old. Today is Halloween, October 31st, 2024. I am currently located in sunny Florida, Tampa, Florida. The name of my partner is Christian Christian and he is my son.

[00:37] ANDREA JOHNSON: Hi, I'm Christian Christian I'm 27 years old. Today is October 31st, as my mom said, Halloween. I'm currently in New York City. My, the name of my interview partner is Andrea Johnson and she is my mother.

[00:57] SPEAKER C: So, Christian, tell me, what does black love mean to you, and where do you see it in your life?

[01:04] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Right.

[01:05] ANDREA JOHNSON: So I, I think black love pretty much means, like, whoever's, like, giving the love or, or in that situation, accepts who you are for everything, you know, that encompasses your black identity. So, like, I feel like, like any, any way that you express yourself as a black person or a black individual, I feel like as long as that is accepted, right, you don't have any feeling, any fear that you're going to be judged one way, you know, for showing your culture where another person wouldn't be judged for showing their culture or, you know, fear of any kind of outlash or backlash, you know that you can be yourself, express your identity and, and be loved. You know, it's, you're not seen as a

burden or anything. You're seen as, you know, you with all these different branches, you know?

[02:06] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[02:06] ANDREA JOHNSON: Like where your, your identity is one.

[02:10] SPEAKER C: Of them, you know, that's good. And you're not seeing, like, any negative with any negative connotation.

[02:17] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Right. Right.

[02:19] SPEAKER C: What impact has it had on your life or in your family or in the community where you are?

[02:26] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Right.

[02:27] ANDREA JOHNSON: I think honestly where it kind of starts is when, at least for black men like myself, when you start to leave your home and interact outside of your regular community, you kind of start to see that disparity a little bit. Where, you know, at home with you, for instance, growing up, I never felt like I was a burden, you know, for anything that made me black, right? Like, I never felt like the type of music I listened to or the, you know, way I wore my hair on you or any of that was like, you know, out of the ordinary. That was just me. And I could, I could express that and then be me where I needed to be me. But when we start to leave the home and we kind of start to see, we have to dial down those parts of us, unfortunately, or else we'll be judged for that cultural identity or whatever you want to call it, even though others or other cultures in the same situation might not be judged. So just seeing that disparity in general had a huge impact and I think it has a huge impact on all of us, not just myself and black men, but all of us really where we kind of have to make these two parts of ourselves almost, right?

[04:03] SPEAKER C: Yes.

[04:03] ANDREA JOHNSON: Because you learn that you can't really show all of you to...

[04:07] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Right.

[04:08] ANDREA JOHNSON: The world, unfortunately. Or, like, to. Even if it's just your job or show all of you to. I don't know, your friend, your certain friend circle or anything like that.

[04:19] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[04:19] ANDREA JOHNSON: You realize you have to kind of filter yourself and. And you. You go through life learning how to navigate these situations from these two different lenses, you know?

[04:32] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[04:33] ANDREA JOHNSON: And you eventually. Yeah, I was going to say eventually you're sort of forced to embrace one, right?

[04:41] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[04:42] ANDREA JOHNSON: Either be yourself or follow the world.

[04:47] SPEAKER C: Is that what you do? Is that what you do to kind of get through that sort of weird dynamic? How do you deal with it? Have you chosen to embrace one versus the other, Andrea?

[05:03] ANDREA JOHNSON: Yeah, I think, I think a lot of people feel like they have to kind of dial themselves down, unfortunately, to, to be, to, to kind of survive where they are, whether it's, like, in a certain job or in their livelihood or Social Circle or whatever. But I think I've been kind of fortunate enough to, to sort of not have that realization, but have the support system that I needed to, like, ensure that, okay, I'm gonna make sure that I'm setting my life up so that I can be myself fully, you know?

[05:42] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[05:42] ANDREA JOHNSON: So, like, because I. You feel a lot of that backlash and a lot of that tension and school, at least for me.

[05:51] SPEAKER C: Right.

[05:52] ANDREA JOHNSON: And as you grow older, I think you start to realize, especially in the information area era, and I. You kind of get to see how everyone is perceiving everybody. And at one time, you kind of get to decide, I guess, for yourself, all right, like, this is what I'm gonna do. Like, I'm gonna make a real shot at surviving, you know, in this world, being myself, right, doing this, whatever it is, like, instead of keeping my head down and, and, like, you know, going. The normal route or whatever was normal to me at the time. I decided, okay, I'm gonna. I'm gonna not feel bad for who I am. Like, I'm gonna try to make, you know, like, my. The music that I listen to, I'm gonna try to make that a part of myself. Like, you know, I I make music and whatnot, and. And so I'm like, I'm gonna, you know, show that to the world. That is gonna be me instead of. This dialed down version of me, you know, and it was, I think creativity really helps out a lot there, too.

[07:03] SPEAKER C: And, and so, yeah, that's a good point.

[07:05] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[07:06] ANDREA JOHNSON: So I think what I've, what I've sort of done to my, or for myself, at least, is I've kind of taken a really special care on, like, what kind of influence I get from certain communities, you know? To make sure that I don't ever have to dial myself down when I engage with them.

[07:31] SPEAKER C: That's good. It's kind of weird having this conversation with you because you're my son. So we're having like an adult to adult conversation. So like, I feel like I'm on the hook for whatever you said.

[07:44] ANDREA JOHNSON: No, you're.

[07:46] SPEAKER C: But no, I'm, you know, I've obviously had the pleasure of watching you grow over time, you know, And like you said, at some point, you really started to embrace your authenticity, which is what I would have wished for in a child, right? So, you know, I'm very proud as a mom to hear you say that you've gotten to the point where you don't, like, tone down any aspect of yourself.

Of course, there's, you know, there's something that's called situational behavior where you behave in a certain way where it's appropriate. It's appropriate according to your environment, but at the true core, you have that comfort level. So that's really good to hear as a mom.

[08:29] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[08:29] ANDREA JOHNSON: And I also think as time goes on, hopefully at least, right, for different generations, we'll find this easier to do. As you go back in time, unfortunately, just even decades ago, it was almost impossible, you know, as a black person to really to hold that individuality and say, I'm gonna be this because the world wasn't gonna let you survive by being that, you know, being an individual. So I think at least in like the information age, we're getting a really good opportunity to put that part of ourselves forward really, you know? Instead of the filtered versions.

[09:16] SPEAKER C: Yeah, and I think your generation, like, you know, people in my generation, my peers, we talk about that all the time. Like, your generation is going to be okay because you, it seems like you all get it in terms of just embracing diversity and having, you know, a diverse set of friends. So I think, you know, as I watch people in your generation and, and I see their circles of friends, close friends, et cetera. That just really makes me feel good.

[09:44] ANDREA JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah. There's definitely some pushback on that, unfortunately. But for the most part, I think my generation is huge on diversity. And we, since we're in this new information age, I feel like it brings its own set of odd issues with it, you know?

[10:07] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[10:08] ANDREA JOHNSON: You know, it's easier for us to show who we are to the world now. We have, like, a lot of intersectionality to kind of worry about, you know?

[10:16] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[10:18] ANDREA JOHNSON: But, yeah, yeah, we, we have, we have a very good opportunity with, with.

[10:23] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[10:24] ANDREA JOHNSON: To go for it.

[10:26] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: And.

[10:28] ANDREA JOHNSON: And so speaking of, like, future. Generations and whatnot. I wanted to ask you what, like, Legacy you have, like, you really want to leave for my generation and generations to come. Like, what? Where would you like to see us go early?

[10:48] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[10:49] SPEAKER C: So, you know, my legacy that I want to leave, especially, like, for you and the rest of the family, like, for the younger people in the family and for others that whose lives that. I just want to leave a legacy that shows them it's okay to take risks. And sometimes you can't get to the next level in anything that you want to do without taking a risk. So I'd love that for them to think of me

once I'm gone as someone who took risks when it wasn't popular to take them and who was somewhat brave enough to just jump out and do it to say, look, I'm just gonna go for what I want or go for what I believe in. So risk taking is important to me, and if I think of a legacy, but, you know, going back to the topic we just discussed, what's equally important to me is authenticity. And I'm so passionate about that, you know, both at work and in my social life and even interacting with you, like, I didn't get to that point easily. Like there was a time when I was younger where I was afraid of everything. I was afraid of my own shadow. I didn't talk to people. I was very anxious. And so I put on a bunch of masks, right? I just carried around like a bag of masks and I put a different mask on, you know, depending on the situation I was in, right? I was a sister, I was a daughter, and I would just pretend to be someone that was accepted. And so to your point earlier, I kind of dulled down my true self over decades. And so I think with maturity and experience in life and through work, I found that that was being detrimental, right? I was internalizing a lot of stress as a result of pretending. And so, you know, I'm 54, as I mentioned, at this point in my life, authenticity drives everything that I do. And so I want my legacy to be that she was not afraid to take risks and she was herself. Good, better, and different. And so at this point in my life, that's the way I go about my day-to-day activities. I am me. You get what you see. I'm not afraid to be vulnerable, so I'm going to tell you things I don't know that I want to learn. And now the challenge now is like, not everybody's going to receive that, right? Some people are going to be like pissed off because of who you are. You know what I mean? Your personality, how you address things. And so I'm learning to accept that I'm not going to please everybody, but it's not going to stop me from being authentic.

[13:40] ANDREA JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah, definitely. And honestly, when I think of you and considering that, like, risk taker aspect that is really like a, a legacy, I think, that you're, you're leaving on now. Oh, yeah, definitely. Because it's like, I, I remember, you know, times when I, I would be, you know, afraid, even now still, I'll be afraid to make a decision or to do something, and you'd, you know, push me to do it. And at the time, I wouldn't. You know, I'd be kind of upset, embarrassed or whatever. But, you know, now that I'm older, it's like learning kind of life is made up of those situations, you know, where you have to make, you have to make that decision, you know, like at work, you'll have, I'm sure you've had this. You'll, you'll just have kind of, like, a bunch of options in front of you and you need to like decide on a way to go about a certain project, right? And you just have to make a decision. You got to take a risk to get the most yield sometimes. So a lot of people will just freeze in that aspect and not do something. But I think when I think of you, I know that you're going to make a decision, you know, that's going to be, a priority for you. So I think, and when it comes to people in my generation, I think a lot of us sort of struggle with that, like decision anxiety. Oh yeah, definitely from everything. It'll be from deciding what to eat one day down up to picking a career path. It doesn't matter. There are tons of people who would be frozen over this situation.

[15:38] SPEAKER C: Why is that? Where does that come from?

[15:41] ANDREA JOHNSON: Decision anxiety in its own way. I think it's manifesting itself differently because we have different issues to look at in my generation. But the root of it all is really that kind of that fear of the unknown. You know, a lot of us, I think, kind of I speak for humanity really when I say

we like to be comfortable. So when I consider risk, I think of stepping out of that comfort zone.

[16:12] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[16:14] ANDREA JOHNSON: And so that in itself is kind of a brick wall to a lot of people, I think, in general, not just in my generation. It might manifest differently in my generation.

[16:26] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: But.

[16:27] ANDREA JOHNSON: It's still very present for everyone. But yeah, it's just that really that fear of the unknown. I can't control the future, but that scares you because you can't control the outcome. You don't know where you're going to land up.

[16:47] SPEAKER C: And you may not get instant gratification from your decision.

[16:52] ANDREA JOHNSON: Oh, yeah, that's a huge thing. That's a huge thing for my generation as well, because we have. Yeah, we get instant gratification from everything, right? Yeah.

[17:01] SPEAKER C: I'm glad you said that because I was projecting a little bit there.

[17:05] ANDREA JOHNSON: No, no, it's. I think it's definitely true. It's a different age. We have social media. You can scroll on, on some, some real page for hours or something and get lost, you know, constant. Funny videos or whatever you're watching back to back.

[17:23] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[17:25] SPEAKER C: What legacy would you like to leave behind?

[17:28] ANDREA JOHNSON: Shoot, I don't even know right now.

[17:33] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: I think.

[17:36] ANDREA JOHNSON: That's a very good question. When I think of it, I can only think of creativity really. I want people to embrace that. Side of themselves, you know, like, I think they're, at least when I was, like, a little younger growing up, the idea of creativity, really, to me, just meant, like, painting.

[18:02] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Right.

[18:02] ANDREA JOHNSON: And drawing.

[18:03] SPEAKER C: Sorry.

[18:04] ANDREA JOHNSON: But as I, you know, went through college and, and got out into the world and kind of. Developed myself as an artist, I started to realize that creativity is everything. It's everywhere. Like the, literally the, the way you speak, the Cadence of your, your words, you know, like the, the words, the specific words you CH choose in a sense, that's creativity. So it just, I think, learning to harness that. And learning to identify the parallels between, okay, if the way I'm speaking right now is creative, why is it creative? How can I apply that to something else? How can I apply that to music or even how can I apply that to math if you want to? It could be anything because creativity is all around us. So I think I want to leave a legacy where I you know, encourage people to embrace

that. And, yeah, hopefully I can make it easier somehow for.

[19:14] SPEAKER C: Other people. Yeah, yeah, that.

[19:17] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: That.

[19:17] SPEAKER C: That's good. And you gave me that book to read. I forgot the title of it. I promise you, I'm reading it.

[19:22] ANDREA JOHNSON: I'm gonna.

[19:23] SPEAKER C: I'm gonna finish it. It teaches just that. That creativity is and everything, because when I think of myself, I'm like, I always tell you, I'm absolutely not creative, but. You know, through watching you grow up and. And sort of come into your own skin and be brave enough to be creative outwardly and share your creations with the world. You know, I've been. I've been encouraged to start to create a little, like, learning photography from you, which has been interesting, but, you know, I'm gonna. I'm gonna stick at it.

[19:59] ANDREA JOHNSON: Yeah, and I think you're a good photographer. You're always telling me like, oh, you should take this picture and take this picture. And I'm always like, I'm like, you should bring a camera with you. You always think I'm like, snap it at you when I say that, but I'm saying it because like, I agree with you. Like, it's a good picture, you know, and I think you would enjoy taking that picture with your own film camera kind of thing. But yeah, that's a good, Yeah, yeah.

[20:27] SPEAKER C: Yeah, it's good to, it's good encouragement. Yeah, yeah, I'm gonna stick at it like it's a part of risk taking, right?

[20:39] ANDREA JOHNSON: Okay.

[20:42] SPEAKER C: Okay. Yeah, so photography, you know, I'll continue to stick at it.

[20:47] ANDREA JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah, I think it'll be a great outlet for you, a great way to express yourself creatively. Especially when you get that first roll back and you see... Yeah, yeah, that's.

[20:58] SPEAKER C: What I'm looking forward to developing my role. I have a few more pictures on it, but I think you're right. Once I get it back, it'll boost my confidence and spark something in me. So you talked a little bit earlier about being brave to be yourself, brave enough to be yourself. How do you define and celebrate who you are, even if it goes against societal expectations?

[21:31] ANDREA JOHNSON: That's a good question. And honestly, I struggle with that for a while, for a pretty long time, I think. I think a lot of people, a lot of kids at least, struggle with the fear of being judged. You know, and a lot of that comes with, from, like, just the fear of being perceived in general. That's scary, you know, for almost everyone. But, and I think, I think unfortunately, a lot of people do get judged for being themselves, which, you know, will throw you into sort of this survival aspect where you're like, okay, if I want to be accepted, I need to. Conform to what they want from me kind of thing. But I think what a lot of people can or what I think was good for me at least was to look for, like, role models, I guess, or, like, look for, for aspects of myself in, in, like, greatness in the world in general. So, like, if I was, you know, if you were, if you're bullied, for instance, for, if you're bullied, for

instance, for being, like, I don't know, smart or good at math.

[22:53] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Right. Or something.

[22:54] ANDREA JOHNSON: Someone calls you a nerd.

[22:55] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[22:57] ANDREA JOHNSON: And you feel bad about that.

[22:59] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Right.

[23:02] ANDREA JOHNSON: You can go and look and say, and look for aspects of math and things that you think are cool or even things that that person thinks are cool if you you know, I'm gonna try to break through to them. And I think that that really helps you. That'll help you out because you'll be like, okay, like, what they're saying has no meaning because, like, yeah, you know, they, like, I think it's cool or, like, I I love this skill that I have or this thing that I do, right?

[23:31] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[23:31] ANDREA JOHNSON: Even though they're, you know, because a lot of times if someone makes fun of you for. Being an individual, it could come from them projecting, you know?

[23:39] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[23:40] ANDREA JOHNSON: Especially if they're specifically drilling down on that individual individuality, you know, or what, what it is that makes you different. It could be because they wish, you know, they were in your position or that they were getting that attention or whatever it may be, you know?

[23:57] SPEAKER C: Yeah.

[23:58] ANDREA JOHNSON: So the, the real, the real thing to do, I think, is to realize that what makes you different is great, you know, like that. It's out there. It's. It's perfect. You know what I'm saying? Like, you. You don't have to prove it to anyone but yourself. That's. That's it. So what I think, really, what I do is, like, those creative aspects when it comes to, like, you know, even starting with music, as I just, like, dive into it and I surround myself with it, and I'm like, okay. This is something that's different, whatever. I'm not even gonna see it as that. I'm gonna try to see it from my lens and even from, you know, the context of itself. I'm gonna look at. At music in general and. And get what I can get out of it, and then I'll let them judge me, you know?

[24:48] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[24:48] ANDREA JOHNSON: Later. Once I've gotten myself confident in my. In my own skills, and that's kind of what I'm doing now, even with. Film photography. I'm just now picking it up and like, and I'm doing exactly that, really. I'm like, okay, I'm diving into it, doing whatever, taking every picture I can, you know, embarrassing myself as much as I want, I guess. But I'm looking at my own growth. I'm looking at it in the context of where I was before as a photographer or before I even knew how to take pictures. To where I am now, you know? And I'm like, that's, that's huge. That's great. Like, I'm,

I'm building up this skill that I love, you know?

[25:32] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[25:32] ANDREA JOHNSON: And so I kind of embrace that. I, I just, I really embrace it. I embrace those differences when it, when it comes to creativity, I think, especially.

[25:46] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[25:46] ANDREA JOHNSON: But I, I just kind of look at it. I think, okay, this is why I think it's cool. And that's the only reason, regardless of what this person could come and say, oh, that's stupid, but they have their own convoluted reason that they've done mental gymnastics to get to.

[26:08] SPEAKER C: Right, right.

[26:09] ANDREA JOHNSON: You don't have to worry about that. If they don't like it for some arbitrary reason, then you can like it for some arbitrary reason.

[26:17] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: So.

[26:18] ANDREA JOHNSON: It kind of cancels out. So, you know, I just try to separate the society's expectations or societal expectations from my own growth, you know, and as. As an individual, so.

[26:36] SPEAKER C: Oh, I'm a proud mama right now. I take all the credit for that. No, I'm just kidding.

[26:44] ANDREA JOHNSON: No, definitely. I think. I think you definitely. Yeah, you definitely do.

[26:50] SPEAKER C: Like.

[26:52] ANDREA JOHNSON: Like you were saying before, with your risk-taking you definitely inspire me to do that, to. To be myself. Embrace that. Embrace those differences, you know, look at things a different way, honestly, like, you know, before I even knew what spirituality was and all of that, you know, I was very. Analytical kind of person. I really looked at things from, like, you know, physical or emotional. You know, I never considered these other aspects, but, of course, you added a whole new poll for me to consider, you know, with spirituality. And I know that's something that's very important to you, so. And I brings me to my next question, kind of. I wanted to ask you how spirituality How's it like served you as like a source of strength or guidance in your life?

[27:48] SPEAKER C: Yeah, it's a good question. And the answer would have been different at an earlier point in my life when you were young, as you know, I used to drag us to church every Sunday. And we had a church family which served its purpose at that time, right? It gave us a sense of community since we lived so far away from our blood relatives. It was important to me to introduce you to spirituality at a very young age. And, you know, I'm smart enough to know, I've been smart enough to know over the years that your journey is yours, right? And so whatever it's going to be, it's going to be in terms of your connection, you know, with spirituality, so. I've sometimes taken a step back. Sometimes I'll tell you something that I'm learning about spirituality to see if it works for you. But at this stage in my life, and I feel like I'm entering the next part of my life because I'm probably six or

so years out from retirement. I still feel like I'm 35 inside, so I don't even know how that happened. Yeah, I still feel young. But at this point in my life, spirituality is extremely important. Because I realize over time, you know, how much material stuff doesn't matter. And it's really all about you and, you know, your soul, so to speak, and your power, the power that you have inside of you to change situation. So I'm big on, you know, realizing the power that I have. It's not outside of me. You know, I believe in, in the, in the Divine Spirit, but. And not but and I know the power that I have within me. So I'm big on like positive affirmations, you know, I'll call you up sometimes and tell you like I'm so depressed and I'm so stressed out and you're like just take a breath. So you know I'm doing the positive affirmations, listening to you know Tibetan sounds and different sounds on different frequencies and it's helping. You know it helps me in every aspect of my life at work, Absolutely. In my personal life, absolutely. Because again, I understand the power that I have. That can be good or bad because like if I'm having a bad day, like I'm going to project that energy, you know, you've experienced this, like I'm not, I'm not somebody you want to be around if I'm having a bad day. But the realization to me is so important. Like if I'm having a bad day and I'm just treating people not nicely, you know, the realization, I can stop those thoughts and to act and say, really look internal to say, what's going on? And almost always it's like fear. I'm fearful of I'm not going to get that promotion. They're going to kick me out of technology because I didn't study it in college, just fear. And so I have to stop that fear. And the way that I do it is through self-realization.

[31:00] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[31:01] ANDREA JOHNSON: And I think, honestly, the importance of that is something you passed to me as well. The importance of, like, being able to do that introspection, you know, seeing that there's, even if, you know, seeing that there's some blocker or something that. That's in your. Your way of your specific Journey and realizing that there's something you can do, you know, something that you. You can. You can, even if it's not something that you can change externally, maybe there's a way you can. Differently view the, the situation. You know, like, I, I think something that's very, been very important to me is, is the realization that everything that happens in your life, it's, regardless of whether or not it's your fault, it's, you know, fortunately, it's always your responsibility. And, and so, like, if you if you. I don't know. Let's say, like, if your car breaks down or whatever, because the person before you forgot to put gas in it, you know, that in itself is. Is. That's their fault, right? For instance. But it's your responsibility to deal with. Right. You can decide to sit there, call them, scream at them, yell, you know, right? Because while, you know, they may deserve some kind of feedback for that, some.

[32:33] SPEAKER C: Kind of constructive feedback, deserves some kind of feedback.

[32:37] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: That's good.

[32:38] ANDREA JOHNSON: Yeah, they deserve some kind of constructive feedback. They might, you know, it's up to you to solve the situation.

[32:47] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah. Yeah.

[32:49] SPEAKER C: I think that's funny you say, you know, it's your responsibility, irrespective of like

what happens to you and what causes it to happen. The way I look at it is, you know, things happen to you that sometimes are out of your control and for reasons sometimes we don't understand. But what is our responsibility is the way we react, right? And so I talked about me having a bad day, just treating people not nicely. That's my responsibility and I have to assume that responsibility, right? And that may lead me to go apologize to folks say, look, I really had a bad day, but you didn't deserve what I said to you. So I try to keep that in mind. Like, the way I react is 100 my responsibility. And that, that sort of takes, takes you out of this blame game.

[33:39] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Right.

[33:40] SPEAKER C: Because some people like to blame everybody.

[33:42] ANDREA JOHNSON: For, like, I mean, a lot of people, you know, that's, like, the first thing people seem to do when things go wrong is, is who do we blame? You know, why did this happen? Or not why this happened, but who did this kind of thing, right? Rather than, rather really than the why, like, yeah, or the how, how did this happen? How do we fix it? How do we stop it kind of thing, right? And then you can decide who gets punished for it or whatever you want to do later, right? But what's important is moving forward and what doesn't move us forward is playing the blame game, so.

[34:17] SPEAKER C: Yeah, yeah, yeah, that's right. I think, you know, one thing that I do cherish in our family is just the stories that were passed down over time. You know, my mom, of course, passed away in February of this year. It was a blow for both of us. She was like your best friend when you all used to hang out. I find myself cherishing the stories that she told us about her life. My grandma, who you also had the pleasure of having a relationship with when you were really young, those stories just are so much more meaningful to me at this point, having gone through a little bit of loss, especially in the matriarchy, right? My grandma, now my mom. I've just been reflecting on those stories and trying to hold them close to my heart. So I think in our culture, As black people in the black community, that's extremely important because no matter what happens to us, we will always have those legacies and those stories of history, you know, triumph, spiritual experiences that were handed down through the generations.

[35:33] ANDREA JOHNSON: Yeah, yeah, definitely. We have examples of strength to build upon and to look up to. Especially in those moments when we need them, you know, sometimes when you're, you know, you've dealt with some kind of negative situation or multiple back to back.

[35:54] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[35:54] ANDREA JOHNSON: And you really need that push forward, you know, you can look to those examples. You can look to even within yourself too, you know, because we, as Black people, we build on that strength, you know, in our communities.

[36:11] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Yeah.

[36:11] ANDREA JOHNSON: Look to those anchors and whatnot. And I think a lot of the times the anchors can be found within us.

[36:18] SPEAKER C: Absolutely.

[36:21] ANDREA JOHNSON: And then that's, that's a huge thing to realize. And that's kind of like, I guess, the Pinnacle of, of, like, human existence. Once you, once you can learn that, I guess you, you can really do everything. But, yeah, I think, I think that that's, that's definitely huge to. To kind of... and that's also something that... another thing that you passed down to me is the confidence in myself. You know, that's a huge thing I've struggled with, but seeing you, you know, especially over these last past years take risks and, you know, reap your rewards.

[36:56] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: And.

[36:58] ANDREA JOHNSON: You know, like actually get to see your work, the profits, the yields of your work in front of you. Really has pushed me to build that confidence, because we need that to move us forward, because nobody's going to pick you up in the morning but you. So that's something that I've definitely admired.

[37:22] SPEAKER C: That's good to hear. I appreciate that, son. Thanks, Christian Thank you for sharing that. Yeah, I think it goes back to the spirituality question, right? As quickly as you can understand how much power you have inside of you, that in itself gives you confidence because you walk into rooms differently when you know the power that you have, right? You're not holding your head down. You're like, I deserve to be here. I deserve to sit at the board table as opposed to taking a chair along the outskirts. You deserve to be in the places that you are simply out of the essence of who you are.

[38:02] CHRISTIAN CHRISTIAN: Right.

[38:02] SPEAKER C: And that you draw on that power during trying time times, like you said.

[38:08] ANDREA JOHNSON: Yeah, definitely. Absolutely. So, yeah.

[38:17] SPEAKER C: Did you have any last thoughts?

[38:19] ANDREA JOHNSON: No, I think we definitely summed up the points I wanted to. To hit today. I want to thank you definitely for. Giving me this opportunity to have this conversation with you on StoryCorps.

[38:34] SPEAKER C: Yeah, this is, I truly thank you, Christian, and I know I truly mean that. I think you know how much I mean it. Like this has been one of my dreams to be able to do this, and there's no other way that I could have imagined doing it other than with my adult son. So I appreciate you. Thank you so much.

[38:55] ANDREA JOHNSON: Yeah, no problem, Mom I'm glad I got to deal with you, too. Remember the first time as well?