

Steven: Alright, well my name is Steven Barnes and I would like to welcome all of you to the live in-studio audience and the home audience to our little writing symposium. We're kind of calling it 'Life Writing'. There are many different things that we might call it, but what this really is, is me and my good lady wife.

Tananarive: Tananarive Due. We've been married for 15 years.

Steven: One of the things is the most important connection between us. It was a connection from the very beginning, which is a common love of this thing called writing.

Tananarive: Tell them a little bit about how awesome you are, first. And I'll talk about myself, and how we met – I think it's important.

Steve: Okay. I've written 28 novels and done about 20 hours of network television, worked in film, comic books, stage, radio. All those things are just different forms – it's like the same water poured into different containers. The trick here is all I wanted to be was a writer. That was the thing that was closest to my heart was being a writer, so as I went out into the world, because basically everybody told me that I couldn't do it, that there was no precedent for what it was that I wanted to do in our community or really in the cultural landscape. I was extremely concerned with the pieces of the puzzle. What might be useful? What would leverage me? What would give me the maximum opportunity to try to make it? If I felt like this was the thing I wanted to do, and I was willing to risk my future at it, then I didn't want to take any chances. And I can tell you that one of the things that I never believed in was 'talent'. I believe it was going to be gut grinding, hard-work, over time plus some other things, but I never thought it was going to be a matter of either I "had it" or I didn't. I thought it was going to be a matter of I could hard enough and smart enough to somehow get there. And it was heartbreaking at times, and we'll tell stories about the different component pieces of how that went, and how we put ourselves together and what it is that we've done at this point.

Tananarive: Yeah, writing literally did bring us together. I'm Tananarive Due, I've written novels, short stories, working on screenplays; we actually co-produced and co-wrote our first short film together in 2013 – Danger Word. So that was very exciting. But yes, always wanted to write since the age of 4, didn't have a lot of role models for what I wanted to write as well. I'm primarily known for my supernatural fiction. I write some science-fiction, I write mostly fantasy. We've done a mystery novel series together with the actor Blair Underwood on the cover, The Tennyson Hardwick mystery series. We've done a young adult zombie series – Devil's Wake together. So we've done collaborative work as well as individual work.

Steve: And you've also done historical fiction.

Tananarive: Yes, I wrote *The Black Rose* which was the story of Madam C.J. Walker. I did that in conjunction with the estate of Alex Haley, and a novel called *Joplin's Ghost* which was partially historical, partially contemporary, jumping between timelines in each story.

Steve: And you wrote an actual autobiographical historical piece that was non-fiction.

Tananarive: You are absolutely right! And this, in fact – thank you for bringing that up, because this is the book I'm actually most proud of in the sense that it was about my family, my mother. I wrote it with my mother, called *Freedom in the Family – A Mother-Daughter Memoir of the Fight for Civil Rights*. It was not only the most difficult project I've ever worked on, just because of the emotions, and to be honest I'm more of a fiction writer. So having to adhere to facts in memoir with faulty memory and all that work was an interesting experience. Working with one's mother, God bless her, she passed away in 2012, but that's also – you know, you have to be very strong and who you are. She certainly was very strong and knew who she was. And I've also worked with my husband, so I think I probably done the two most difficult kinds of collaborations you can do.

Steve: We can tell you that we had to set up rules of engagement when we first started working together. And the most important rule, the first rule was that we have to be free to fight. We have to be free to fight for the things that we believe to be true. So what we wanted to do was completely separate the business and the relationship. It's not possible to do that completely, but one of the rules, the earliest rules was the **relationship itself was never on the table**. That no matter what's going on in terms of this, with the writing, this is a separate issue.

Tananarive: And the reason we had to come up with the rule is because, I think even before we got married, our very first and one of our worst fights was when we were trying to collaborate, just the treatment, we hadn't even moved to the script yet. We were collaborating on a treatment for a novel of mine called *My Soul to Keep*. So that, yes, has been a very interesting experience. And someone has to have the final say.

Steve: She clawed my eyes out, I kneed her in the groin. It was bad.

Tananarive: So we have rules now.

Steve: We have rules now. Now, here's the whole thing: over the course of my entire life, if I ever wanted to learn how to do something, I basically used the neurolinguistic programming approach. I would find somebody who could do it better than I could and I would look at three

things about them. I would look at their **belief systems, their mental syntax and their use of physiology**. In other words: their belief. What do they believe about the thing? What are their emotions around the things? What is their value structure around the thing? Secondly, their mental syntax. In what order did they do things? How did they actually think about it logistically? Philosophically and so forth, and so on? The schematics of it. And then the physiology – what did they do physically? How did they hold their bodies, how did they hold their faces, how did they breathe, how they moved?

Now, obviously for practicing a sport or martial art, that becomes a lot more important. But with writing, it could be something as simple as put your butt on your chair and type. How do you relax yourself when you type? Because any given skill is a matter of being able to go, to take the components that you need and reduce them to the level of unconscious competence. Basically, the pattern goes from **unconscious incompetence** – you don't even know bicycles exist; to **conscious incompetence** – you know that bicycles exist, you see people ride them, but you don't know how to ride one, to **conscious competence** – you can write a bicycle as long as you're paying attention to every little thing about the bicycle. To **unconscious competence**: Look Ma, no hands! With any skill where you want to express yourself emotionally, and that means the arts, you have to get the component chunks of it down to the level of unconscious competence. So that you can just flow with it, so you can just have fun with it, so you can just play with it.

Also, the process of learning is greatly accelerated by entering into flow state. And what you need to enter into flow state is enough challenge in the activity that it gets all of your attention, but not so much challenge that you're getting frustrated. It's somewhere in-between the two, it has to completely engage you, but you also have to have a sense of mastery. One of the things I've said is that every book I've written, I've never written a book that I could finish. There's never been a book that I started, where I knew how I was going to be able to finish this thing. I just set out with a certain amount of trust, but by the time I got to the end of those 100,000 words, I would have improved my skill sufficiently to finish the project that I set up for myself in the beginning. That means that I do the entire book in a state of fear, to a certain degree. But it keeps me mindful, okay? Now, that's been my approach. Honey, how do you approach this stuff?

Tananarive: I agree, I didn't want anyone to mistake the notion of unconscious competence for 'it gets easier'. Because, in fact, as you grow as a writer, you see more and more deficiencies that you couldn't even afford to look at when you were a learning writer. So as a learning writer, it's just like how do I finish something? How do I write a beginning, middle and end? How do I create a character I can believe in? What is a plot, how does that work?

Once you figure all that out, once that sort of thing is an unconscious competence, then it's the little fine-tuning. And so much of it is a mental game as writers. First of all, we all hate ourselves, okay? We all think that everything we write is terrible. That's normal, that's the voice telling you: you can't do it, why are you bothering with this? And that voice does not go away. It's just that the more you publish, the more your list accumulates, of short stories or novels or books that you've written, you can say to that voice: You have no idea what you're talking about, look at all I've done. "I did it before, I could do it again." But trust me, every writer struggles with this.

Steve: It's not just writers. That is a common thing to human beings. One of the things I'm going to do is I'm going to relate almost anything we have here to the question: How does one become excellent at anything? So there are two little pieces that I wanted to talk about here. One that I have a dear friend, one of the people I respect most in the world, named Tim Piering, who's a master in many different fields, and his comment was that to become excellent, **to achieve success, you need to have one well-defined written goal and plans for their accomplishment expressed in continuous action, and the capacity to take action despite the voices in your head.** That is critical to be able to move forward.

The other thing is to talk about the question of mastery. And I think that this is an important question to answer because we have to discuss this – we can be as modest as we want to, but the fact is we've been writing for what? 40 years or longer. She's been doing since she's been 4, so she's been doing it for 20 years.

Tananarive: A liar! But that's great, thank you, darling.

Steve: Ah, you're very welcome. But in order to speak to you, in order to speak to you honestly and straightforward, we have to step into the place of mastery. We have to be able to say 'Yeah, we know this stuff'. So that we can kind of clear the air about that. That's why you came here, that's why you bought this course because you believe that we have an answer to that. But how can you claim to be a master? Well, I spoke with – I know a lot of human beings who are really excellent at what they did. And all the human beings I know who have achieved a level of excellence, it is possible that the person who has the highest level of excellence at anything that I ever seen, where I've been able to observe what it is that they're doing was my first karate instructor, a gentleman named Steve Mohammed, who was not only a top competitor, not only was a police officer, bodyguard, so he had more street fighting experience than any ten human beings that I know; has not only trained other people to the level of championship and mastery, but is also a good, decent human being who's been able to express what it is that he is on the mat, in a martial sense, just in terms of being a good, decent man. And I asked him once, I said: Of all the people I know, it is arguable that you have the greatest clarity about this thing, called mastery.

What is mastery, I said to him? I know that what you tell me, I'll be able to rely upon. And slightly paraphrasing, he said that **mastery is having control of your basics sufficient to be able to create spontaneously under pressure.** Now, I liked that. And I have combined that with things that other masters and people who've studied the question of mastery have said, to create a model that says that **mastery is a verb, not a noun. It's a process, not a place.** If that is true, then as soon as you have the basics of your craft, whatever that craft is, and have committed to practicing that craft for a lifetime... because one of the things that all these people that you call masters, none of them think of themselves as masters. They're all just students, they're all just continuing to improve. However, they will allow themselves to use the term “masters” because they know that the children need something to dream about. Is it possible to get so good at something that you are content? Is it possible that the pretender voices in your head will ever

shut up? Why should I do this for 40 years if at the end of that period of time, I'm going to be just as insecure as I was when I started? Why?

So masters will allow themselves to be called masters, but they laugh about it. Because all there is, no matter how far and how fast you run, you're always the same distance from the horizon. So **if you have accepted the path, if you have mastered your basics and you have committed to that path for a lifetime, you are on the path to mastery as much as anybody else on that path, no matter how far ahead of you they may seem to be.** There's just the path, which is one of the reasons why the greatest people in any field, when they meet a young student who is committed to it, they just love that student. It's just "come on in, the water's fine." The first time I had a chance to sit down with Ray Bradbury and poured out my heart to him, asking him: Was it too late for me to find the path to being a real writer? Because I've written so much stuff that was commercial, I've written so much stuff just trying to keep the doors open, just trying to keep going, trying to keep my life in the right direction. And he asked me, he said: Well, tell me, have you published? And I said: Oh yeah, I published seven novels, I did this and that. And he just laughed at me. He just laughed, he said: Oh, you have no problem at all.

Or as Leo and Diane Dillan, a husband-wife pair artists, magnificent artists, I had the same question for them, I spent a lot of time finding people to give me answers and crying my eyes out in front of them, and I said the same thing: Was it too late for me? Can I find my way, can I find my voice? And Diane Dillan reached across the table, took my hand and said: If you can even ask that question, it's not too late.

Tananarive: And it's very important to remember that question, why? Because you have to really *want* to be a writer. I almost feel it's as much a service to set someone free from that obligation, from feeling that they *have* to be a writer, as it is to give the writer tools to reach their goal. You have to really understand why you want to do this, because it is difficult. It is difficult forever, so have strong reasons. If I have to ask myself what my reasons are, it's when I feel most alive, I know there are writers who don't actually enjoy the process of writing, like even when they're in flow it feels like work, and I go through moments where writing feels like typing. Sometimes you have type 20 pages before flow starts and it feels like your characters are coming to life and talking to you – that's going back to childhood; I've been writing since I was a child. So there comes a point where I can, as Steve says, "go down the rabbit hole." The world disappears, if the world will allow itself to disappear and I'm at bliss and I feel that I'm at my best. I'm at my best as a writer, it's my best form. I can communicate, I can take something that you cannot give language to – for me, fear of mortality has always been a big issue in my life. Since a very young age, very aware of aging, illness, death for whatever reason. And that frightens me and has frightened me, so a lot of my stories are supernatural. No surprise, I've dealt with themes of immortality in *My Soul to Keep*, the *Living Blood* novels, *Loss*, *Joplin's Ghost*, the spirit that isn't at rest because they couldn't accomplish what they wanted to in life. So that's my reason, that helps my fears dissipate and I get to create characters that I think are stronger than I am. Coz I felt kind of pampered as a kid, I had two parents in the home, we lived comfortably in the suburbs.

I didn't have the trials that some of my friends had. I had a friend in high school, his mother was in a car accident, the doctors operated on the wrong side of her brain, she was like a child from that moment on. That, wow, I had nothing like that. I had my grandmother until I was

well into adulthood, two grandmothers into adulthood, so I felt I was maybe not prepared as well as some people might be for when those trials inevitably do come. We all face it, we all face that thing itself that we never had to face before and I like to create protagonists who embed those lessons in me, and you can rise up. And not just against an illness, but against a demon, okay? You can rise up. And we've seen it, we've seen it in ourselves, we've seen it in our family members, our loved ones.

The human capacity for strength is amazing, but I think sometimes we need reminders of that, so for me, creating those stories, not only helped me – I hope! – but help others. I heard from a reader once who said that reading my novel, *The Living Blood*, helped her stand up to a home invader. I never had a home invader in my life, what would I do? But she said she just remembered Jessica's strength and she stood up. And if you study criminology, you know that thugs try to pick people that won't stand up. People who are easy marks. Even if you pick up what seems like a silly weapon, that's better than cowering in the corner. So that lesson was helpful to her. People who have been ill told me they were reading the books to escape into that world so they could forget their illness. So I know why I write and it's very important for us to understand why we are undertaking this path. Because it is so difficult, and sometimes it doesn't give us back what we've – most times, let's face it – even if you've published, it never sells the number of copies you think it should sell. You don't get the kind of acclaim you think you deserve. Every writer thinks they should be on the New York Times Bestseller list; only a handful of writers get there. So there is no 'there' as a writer. Except what's in you, your sense of accomplishment, your sense of conveying your truth to the world.

Steve: If I was to ask myself why do I write, I wrote originally because I used to tell elaborate lies in order to keep from getting spanked, you know. I turned them into stories. I remember my mother coming to an open house, a little girl coming up to her and saying 'Ms. Barnes, is Stevie really a vampire?' And she looked at me, and went: Of course not! Steve, did you say this? Mom, how can I possibly say that? Vampires don't come out during the day! So I got into doing this, and a little later on I wanted to write stories because I looked out at television, I looked at the books, my father was not in the home when I was growing up. So I became pretty much addicted to stories of adventure, because I was trying to ask the question: What is it to be a man? So it was Ian Fleming with James Bond, and Robert E. Howard and Edgar Rice Burroughs and all these things, and one of the things I noticed was there was a lack of people who had a similar melanin content to myself in such books, and when they existed it was really, pretty bad. Conan would come into a town and be repulsed by the stench of Negroes and Edgar Rice Burroughs would talk about white men have imagination, black men have little, animals have none. When people lay it out that clearly for you, you can feel that there's a vacuum. And you want to step into that, you want to create something that creates the archetypes that are pleasing to you, that are significant to you.

So I started writing. I also started writing because when I was in junior high school, it was the 3 years from hell. I mean everybody has times in their lives when things are not working very well. That was mine. I was getting beat up by the girls, it was just awful. And I found, when I got into high school, I brought that insecurity with me. And one day, I was in drama class, and one day, the senior board wanted to do a trash assembly for cleaning up the campus. And they asked if anybody in the drama class could write a skit for them, and so I said I could do that. And

they like what I wrote, so they offered me a chance to get up on stage. Now, I don't know how many of you remember the old television series Laugh-In, but there was a guy on Laugh-In named Henry Gibson. He would tell funny little poems. And so, I did the same thing, I walked out on stage, I wrote a poem and I walked out on stage with a flower made out of shredded newspaper and I walked out there, in front of the entire school and I said: "A poem, by Henry Gibson.

"I like to look at trash heaps tall and towering to the sky!
They're beautiful, yes one and all, and made by you and I.
Perhaps one day, these joyous things to which we've given birth,
Will take the flight on orange peel wings and conquer all the Earth!
Thank you!"

And the audience died! There was applauding and cheering, and people were patting my back, and girls were paying attention to me, and I was saying to myself: "Me like! This is okay!"

It became a matter of, I found a way to be in the world that gets me some attention. That makes me friends, and the more you do something, the better you get at it to a degree. So I would tell stories. I used the Scheherazade technique in self-defense. The bullies were still after me, but I would tell stories to the members of the football team, I'd tell them half the story at lunchtime and after school, if they'd see a bully start to push me around, they'd say: Leave the little brother alone! I said this is good, both gaining pleasure and avoiding pain. You can train worms to do the Macarena if you could set that up right. It's been said that the only two questions that are worth asking are: **Who am I?** and **What is true?** And what is true about the world, what is true about how can I get people to like me, who am I in terms of what is it within me that I have to endure, that I have to bring forth in order to be attractive to women? Because I wanted the attention of women and the admiration of men. It's just very blunt. And as you go through life and you keep asking those questions, you start getting answers.

And now, when I write, its in purer form. What is true about human emotions, what is true about the way the world works? That is often related to what plots are. Because a plot is nothing more than what a given character does in a situation. But then, who am I? What is it to be human? What is man thou art mindful of him? My plots tell me what I think about the ethical structure of the universe, how does the universe respond to our efforts? Is it kind, is it neutral, is it evil? What are human beings, to the degree that I can go deeply enough into myself to find any human motivation. And I can, there is no human motivation I cannot find within myself.

There are a vast number of things I would not do, but I can imagine myself doing anything. Just anything. And what part of me is that? What part of me has to be twisted and sick to do that? What part of me has to be stronger than I am to do that? What would my past have to have been to do this? All my characters are me, all my characters are different from me, all human beings are me, there's a West-African concept called 'num' that basically is the idea that there is one life force, looking out through many eyes. And that's very much the way I feel about it that we're all exactly the same on one level; we're all totally different on another. If you can move back and forth between those dualities, you understand. And when you understand

yourself and that you're capable of just anything, if you can love yourself despite the fact that you screwed up so many times, and fallen so short of what it is that you want to accomplish, then you can also extend that love and understanding to every other human being in the world. And you stop being so disappointed in people. You realize that people are just doing the best they can with the resources that they have.

One of the things I said is that the only thing you need to not feel inferior to any other human being in the world, is to give up your need to feel superior to other human beings. That everybody who feels like 'People are better than me' – trust me! Somewhere inside them they think 'Yeah, but I'm better than those people over there!' If you give that up, you get to give up the other one too. And you get to walk, just feeling there's just people. So everything I write at this point is pushing myself, me as the writer, can I do this piece? Can I communicate? Because writing and all art is communication. The movement of an emotion from one mind to another. Successful art is communication that is received. That is received and that the person feels is emotionally motivated in such a way to be willing to exchange some of their value for some of yours, that you're creating something that is of value to them that they perceive it is a value. And that you have self-respect to demand to be treated as if that has value.

There's art in the techniques of things, there's art in the understanding of yourself so that you've got something to say about human beings. There's art in the having an idea of what the world is, a philosophy about what the world is. A cosmology, an epistemology, a sense of what we are, that you then express in your work. Why do I write? Primarily just because it's the thing that I found in my life, one of the three things that comes the closest to touching some aspect of myself that nothing else touches. One of the others is my martial arts practice. One of the others is my relationship to my family. Nothing pushes me the way my family does. Nothing has hurt me as much as my family, nothing has nurtured me a fraction as much as my family that all of these things are aspects of these questions: Who am I? What is true? To the degree that they are the most important questions to ask, if you can tie everything that you're doing into one of those two questions it automatically becomes significant in a way that no other sorts of activities can do. If you can take a look at something you're doing and it is an answer to the question: Who am I? Or an answer to the question: What is true? You automatically gain energy from it, because that's what it is that helps you move forward.

Tananarive: And during this lecture series we will either jointly or individually be addressing topics for roughly a half hour with questions after each half hour. This was our overview portion. After this, we will be discussing plot, character, poetics and language, breaking into writing, breaking into the business, genre writing; that's today, and then tomorrow we have sessions Writer's Toolkit 1&2, Making Danger Word, our short film which is a discussion also on screenwriting, crowdfunding, which is what we did to make that film, managing a career, an entire session of Q&A and then our closing remarks. Hopefully, you can join us for all of the sessions, we really look forward to our feedback with you, and our conversations with you, and thank you so much!

Steve: Thank you!

Tananarive: Do you have any questions, just to start us out?

Steve: Yeah. Basically, we sealed that portion of things, but if you have questions that you'd like us to address. We're being very informal now, so...

Tananarive: You can stretch. Please don't feel like you have to sit. We'll be switching out. I will be moving for the next lecture, because Steven will be conducting a plot lecture.

Steve: Vic, did you have a question?

Vic: So, when you were talking about ethics and plots respond to ethics.

Steve: Plots respond to the ethical structure of the universe. What is the ethical structure of the universe? Is it primarily neutral? Is there a God? Is there something that is good? And I think that every human being has to come to their own conclusions about this. How do you understand stillborn children or slaughters or newborn babies, or sunflowers? How do you make sense of what you see in the world? Or do you believe that there is no sense? It's just all chaos and that we have to find our own meaning? Whatever it is that you believe, you need to go deep into that. But that's, you know, that's that.

Vic: And I have one more question if nobody else does. I'm always full of questions. Tananarive, you have an academic background also.

Tananarive: I do, I forgot to mention that, thank you. Well, you know, I started as a writer. I've been stating in job interviews that my writing career got in the way of my teaching career. So I feel like a latecomer. But for 7 years I've been teaching in the MFA program at Antioch University here in Los Angeles. Which I'm not shilling for the program, just so you know though, a low residency means you only have two residencies a years for 10 days each, one in December, one in the summer. The rest of the time it's all online, so you have an individual mentor. Your mentor reads your work, gives you feedback, 3 years later you have a teaching degree. Or, if you're not interested in teaching, some people do it to teach and some people do it because they want that dedicated deadline and that time to write. And I would honestly say that the biggest value of any MFA program, and there are a lot cheaper ways to get this, is the community of writers. You need that community to stretch you, to call you on your bull, to give you feedback and to continue to be a critical reader of their work as they grow. That was invaluable to me, and I'll probably discuss that later. And for 3 years I was at Spellman

College in Atlanta. And it was a fantastic in-between job, and I'm trying to recreate that dream job in LA.

Steve: So, questions, and we'll make some decisions on whether or not these questions should be addressed on air.

W: So, Steve, you mentioned 'num'; can you tell us which ethnic group...?

Steve: No, I cannot off the top of my head, but I think. Wait a minute. I think that it was... because I was doing research for Great Sky Woman at the time, so it would've been one of the groups, one of the nomadic desert groups. The ones that basically live the hunter-gatherer lifestyles. They are operating in West Africa.

W: I haven't been able to find it, I Googled it when you mentioned it in a pitch meeting once. And I haven't been able to find it.

Steve: It was in a book, if I remember correctly. It was not in *The Washing of the Spears*, that was the Zulu stuff that I was reading for *Lion's Blood*. But it would have been in a book that was written by ethnographers telling cosmological stories of ...not the Dagon...not the people around Kilimanjaro, the Chagga. I'll remember the name if I don't try to push it. They're not related to the Banto. Oh, wait a minute. Remember the movie *The Gods Must be Crazy*? It was "kung" people. There was a book, it was collected, it was written by a South African husband and wife on these people. I have no idea if anybody has an IMDB number. I was doing some very strange research at the time, trying to find stuff.

W: I do have a question. How did Dr. Cosby find you? I want to tell you. When I read [inaudible] that was so deep for me because I write stuff for Dr. Cosby, and my team just [inaudible] you relay that story and I was like: That was so deep.

Tananarive: Just so you know, he and his Wife, Camille, made a very huge endowment to Spellman College to create the Cosby Chair. So it was actually the Spellman search committee that reached out to me. I went to Atlanta because my mother was there. We went without a plan, as I'm fond of saying. I was looking for journalism jobs because that was the last full-time employment that I had, and journalism has completely changed since I was a journalist. And I was surprised and pleased when the English department reached out to me to offer me a job teaching composition. Okay? And it was like: Yes, I will do it! I never taught composition. I never taught grammar. I'll do it, I'll do it! Unbeknownst to me though, there have been discussions of bringing me on as a Cosby Chair and so, I became the first Cosby Chair who was

actually teaching there, at the time I got the appointment. So I went from the little teeny office, teaching beginning students, to the big office, doing whatever I want, basically. Teaching one class a term, so it was a fantastic experience and I would not have talked to Dr. Cosby at all, except that I asked the president of the college to pass on word to him of how grateful I was for the position. I mean it's an amazing position for an artist to have that opportunity. I did a couple of Octavia Butler celebrations on campus, brought in Samuel Delaney – huge experience, just to thank him. And Steve and I actually had that opportunity. We talked to him on the phone. I got to not only thank him for the Cosby Chair, but you know, Cosby Show, thank you, thank you. Those images are just so nurturing and important. They were a huge part of my life as a child. And for Steve it was really meaningful to see Bill Cosby in I Spy.

W: He relayed how he felt when he just got off the phone. And that is just so deep for me to vicariously... He had posted it on Facebook.

Tananarive: So that's what happened. I see. Yes. That was huge.

W: Living that, that is powerful and it so evokes pictures of my head, that was so edifying.

Tananarive: Well, good. It was life-changing for me to have that experience, no doubt. Yes?

W: Question about the Octavia Butler celebration and conference and everything at Spellman? You plan on continuing with that there?

Tananarive: Man, I wish I were still at Spellman, I would be all over that. And the department chair. Dr. Tarcia Stanley is now the First President of the Octavia Butler Literary Society, which is through the American Literature Association. So it's an official literary society, and she's asking for funds, and I think some funds have been offered to try to do a bi-annual. I think she geared towards conference. Coming from outside of academics, I did more of a celebration which was sort of loosey-goosey. You could come and do what you want. A conference you'd probably have a call for papers, and that whole thing which was not something I was interested in doing. But yes, the short answer is, that is an Octavia Butler crazy college. Not just her, there are a lot of people there who are deep into Octavia. So I would not be surprised if we see, maybe not in 2015, maybe 2016 they'll do it again. There's talk about doing one here, Riverside. Maybe next year.