

## Inside Stories: An Historic, Hopeful Time Transcript

Scott Simmie: Hello again, and welcome to this edition of Inside Stories. Today's episode is a bit of a departure. Certainly we're going to hear from our guest about life in isolation, but this guest, like many of us has been watching events in the United States unfold with great hope. Hope that the protests following the death of George Floyd lead to sustained change and ultimately a better, more equitable society. That's a big topic and our guest has much to say.

Scott Simmie: Joining me today on Inside Stories is Lamorne Morris. He's a terrific comedic actor, a huge basketball fan, and he joins us from his home in Los Angeles. Lamorne, welcome.

Lamorne Morris: Hey, Hey, thank you. Thank you for having me.

Scott Simmie: Thank you. Listen, lots of things are happening in the United States right now, and I'm referring here to this historic sort of civil rights movement that is unfolding. What are your thoughts about what's underway?

Lamorne Morris: It's unfortunate that it comes to this, but when you take a step back and you look at it, it's beautiful. It's beautiful because I feel like for the first time in our history in this country, everybody's on board. Obviously you have the few that want to keep the old guard and the old way of doing things, but when you look outside and you look in the streets, you see everybody marching. And it's not just in Minnesota or in Louisville or in these particular regions. It's the whole world.

Lamorne Morris: Speaking with friends in different countries, and they'll tell you, "Man, we've got protests going on now. We've got marches. They're so peaceful." And I'll ask like, "What's going on over there? What are they marching about in particular?" And they're like, "Oh, we're marching for what you guys are marching for, equality, the end of systemic racism and racism as a whole.

Lamorne Morris: It's the fact that again, we still have to fight for that is mind boggling. You know what I mean? It almost feels like something from a movie where you go, those days are over, right? And you realize, no, they're far from it because racism hides itself it's in the workplace, it's economic, it's from the foods you eat, what's available for certain communities to eat. It goes so much deeper than just hate speech.

Lamorne Morris: It's scary, but I think what we're seeing is a global uprising to say, "Hey, you know what? The people, we are the ones who are in charge, it's the people, it's the citizens," and that includes politicians, they're citizens as well. You know what I mean? We should all be on the same page. You vote to put somebody in place and you think that that person will be in charge of your voice to relay that message to the rest of the world. You know what I mean? But sometimes it doesn't work out that way. Sometimes the message gives a little skewed after they're in office. And I think the people are uprising against that. And I think it's beautiful.

Scott Simmie: You touched on the broad areas of society where racism can become ingrained, and that's why we call it systemic racism. That there's a system in place that allows it. And I guess the question is, how easy will it be to change that?

Lamorne Morris: I don't think it will be easy at all. And I think we're all, we're not naive as people. I think we know how hard it is. We know how hard it is to get daily tasks done. Our daily stresses in life, the things that we take for granted, just how hard life could be in general. But I think it's a lot easier because there is a strength in numbers. It's you can't go at it alone. And I think now that it's almost like, "Now that we've got your attention, here's what the world is about to do." And I feel like it's a beautiful time.

Lamorne Morris: I think that it becomes a lot easier for the message to be digestible when it comes in a form of that many numbers. And so it won't be easy. I obviously think there are small steps that need to

take place on the local level in each particular place and work all the way up through your system, through your Mayor, your Governor, your Congress person, all the way up to the top. You know what I mean? And it's difficult, but we've got great people spreading that message. People like yourself, people, everyone who wants to talk about it, that's part of it because people for a long time didn't want to talk about it.

Scott Simmie: A lot of people like to think of themselves as being, "Well, I'm not a racist, I've never been a racist. I have friends from all different communities," but the message that seems to be getting out right now is it's not enough to just be a non-racist. You must actively participate in making this a more just society. And I'm wondering if you feel that that is also the message that you're seeing coming out and that people are finally kind of waking up to.

Lamorne Morris: Absolutely. Because for a long time, even in the 60s, people were marching together, but a lot of times it would fall upon deaf ears because the action wasn't behind it. It's not enough to say something, but there's a lot of steps you can take. So, as a white person who has had privilege in life, if you were to say, "I'm not racist," that's great. Right. That's great. And you're probably not but then how do we take that a step further?

Lamorne Morris: I was in Sherman Oaks the other day, Sherman Oaks, California, a quiet suburb of California. Funny enough, I was on my way to another protest, saw this one and decided, let me go here. There are about 20 people in a corner. And I went outside, me and a buddy of mine, and we held up signs and we sat out there for a few hours going across the street, holding up the signs, cheering, chanting, and in there a majority of them were white people. There was a young, a young white woman who led that charge.

Lamorne Morris: And I thought, "Man, that's something you don't see all the time." And that's the action that people need to take into consideration, supporting black businesses. People think that when you say, "I'm going to support a black business." I got a message on my Instagram the other day saying, "Was that racist to support a company based on the color of the owner's skin?" And I said, "No, if what you're doing it for serves a greater purpose," right?

Lamorne Morris: So if we know that throughout history a lot of these businesses are white owned and we shop there and we use all of our resources there. So the money that we have in our community that can be spread through our economy to help build our economy, we're spending it over here. And their neighborhoods, their roads get better treatment, their school system is better funded, all those things. We're not saying stop shopping where you're shopping, but we're saying there are other places you can shop, and in doing so, that wealth gap gets more narrow. So therefore our kids have a better way to live in these particular neighborhoods, in these areas.

Scott Simmie: I've been glued to Twitter and checking in on CNN and news networks as this has unfolded, and some of the clips that I've seen have been immensely powerful to watch. I'm wondering if there's one moment that you've witnessed over the course of this, whether it was when you were out the other day or on television or social media that has stuck with you as particularly powerful.

Lamorne Morris: Man, that's a tricky question, because some are more powerful in the positive way, and then some are powerful in the not so positive way. I've seen videos recently, and I'm not sure what the tactics were of the police, but I've seen videos where people are kneeling in they're crying and they're going, "Listen, I just want to hug you." There's literally a video of a kid kneeling. They're all kneeling, they're in a line and they're kneeling and they're saying, "Hey, we just want to hug you guys. Like, can we march together?" He's crying. He's like, "I pray for you at night. I cry for you at night. I cry for us. I cry for the pain we have, and I share the pain that you guys must go through as police officers having to do this job and knowing how tough it is. I cry for you for that."

Lamorne Morris: Then he just ran up and just snatched him and threw him on the ground and started manhandling him, and it was so weird. I just thought, "Did I miss something?" On the peaceful side, I was happy to see some of the changes that on a local level, that some of these places are making to their policies and the defunding of police and pulling back some of their funding for some of their more violent weapons and things like that. And using that money and taking that money, which takes up a huge portion of their budget, more than 50%, sometimes 50%, 60% of their budget citywide and statewide. I mean, it's great to see that they're moving that money and putting it towards better education systems, better community safety. You know what I mean? Things like that I always felt, but like that amount of money should go to in the first place. And it's great to see that.

Lamorne Morris: I work with a few companies, Disney, Hulu, Netflix, I'm the spokesperson for BMO obviously. And when you see BMO pledge that type of money towards this, and it's always an energy that I've felt. That's one of the reasons why I am working with BMO. It's easy. It's an easy collaboration because they share similar values with you. And that was one of the things that when they ... I didn't even have to say anything, it was one of those things that we brought it up and they were like, "Yeah, we're already on top of it." It's like, "Great. That's why we work together. It's not just a work transaction. It's more, so, 'This is what we're doing in the community as well. And how do we help serve those needs for the people?'"

Lamorne Morris: Which is what I think companies, a lot of their statements say it, but not a lot of them do it. And I am glad to see BMO is one of those companies that definitely does it. And I have a show coming out on Hulu. The show I have is called Woke and it's about this subject matter. It's about a guy who gets kind of roughed up by the police, mistaken identity, "We thought you were somebody else." But then the way they treat his white roommate is a little different. His white roommate's the one who could possibly be the one that should be looking at played by Blake Anderson of Workaholics, he's amazing.

Lamorne Morris: But he then starts to ... his eyes become open to the world around him. And it's such a timely show. It's such a beautiful show, and it's mirroring everything that we're seeing right now.

Scott Simmie: And just for those who aren't aware, BMO made \$1 million donation to the NAACP and some other organizations in the pursuit of equality and social justice. And kind of the nice thing for me about BMO is that they didn't ask me to raise this. They'd never interfered in any way with the podcast. So I'm pleased you were able to raise that. To shift more into your professional career, it's a bit of a hard turn out of this topic, but you just touched on it there with the Hulu, is what's that like for you when you get to combine your skills as an actor with a cause that matters?

Lamorne Morris: Well, it's great because when you're younger and you get into this business, you just want to be funny and have fun and go to parties. And it's like this cool thing. It's like, "Man, I'm on a TV show. I get to do cool stuff. I get to meet cool people and work with cool people." But then the older you get, the more life is affecting you and the more you realize how much influence you have over it, and the amount of kids that look up to you and listen to what you say. So you have to be really careful with what you say, apologetic when you're wrong and be able to correct yourself if you've made an error and an error.

Lamorne Morris: And doing a show like this has more weight to it because of that, because now you get to have fun. You still get to do all the cool stuff, which comes with the territory in a business that we're in, talk to cool, people meet cool people, but you also get to say something. I showed a few friends some clips from the pilot, and people really loved it. They really enjoyed it. And it wasn't necessarily all because of the comedy. I love doing the other stuff too. Like just goofing around doing like movie Bloodshot, that came out. Superhero stuff. I get to be goofy and say nonsense and have fun and run around. That's great too, but it's cool to mix in a lot of real life in that as well.

Scott Simmie: I did want to touch a little bit on what your life has been like since the pandemic came into being, obviously it really changes things up when you're normally on a set or working on a movie. What are typical days like for you right now in the midst of this?

Lamorne Morris: I live with ... it's me, my brother and my writing partner, one of my best friends. Us three live together and we turned one of the rooms into like a mini gym. The grocery store is about a mile away and we have a pool and a basketball court. I have a half court, I have like a hoop over there and I love playing basketball. I love playing basketball. My brother loves working out. My writing partner loves working out and playing basketball. That's all we do, man. We sit and we write, we play basketball and then work out. I try to work out as much as I can, but it becomes normal in a way, which can be a little scary. It can be a little scary because now we're getting so used to being in the house that, as the city is opening up, I'm still kind of not going anywhere.

Lamorne Morris: I want to get used to getting back outside and doing more things and going to restaurants again. I love going to restaurants. I love going to bars, but we understand what needs to be done when a pandemic of this proportion hits, so we're kind of doing our part to stay put and stay safe. But that's what we do, man. We kind of hang out around the house. We talk a lot about the state of affairs. We talk a lot about work. We're constantly developing ideas. I did need a break from back to back to back years of not having a break. And this was an unfortunate break, but I definitely needed the recharge with everything that's been going on with work. So I'm happy to kind of just lounge around at times.

Lamorne Morris: And people who know me know I'm a night owl, I get most creative at night. I feel like throughout the course of the day, my brain is a little foggy. Even when I'm trying to write or think of ideas, but then at night, I'm like up and I'm texting people, but they're already in bed. Like, "Hey, what do you think about this? What do you think about that?" And that's when I watch all of my stuff, that's when I watch my favorite shows or news or sports highlights.

Lamorne Morris: And I will say this, this would have been very welcomed of a quarantine if the NBA season was still going on. I would be all about it. I would be ... because that's how I am during NBA season anyway. Leave me alone. The Lakers are playing. LeBron's on TV, leave me alone. But it's [inaudible 00: 18: 05] versus LeBron right now. I got to watch this game. [inaudible 00: 18: 08] on TV, leave me alone. So yeah.

Scott Simmie: How are you dealing with the NBA withdrawal?

Lamorne Morris: I think I started to become physical, like meaning, I started breaking out in hives and I think that this reaction has become more personified. Where I feel like a decrepit old person, where I can't move. I just feel like a part of me is missing. When I say obsessed, people ask me what my hobbies are. I go, "Watching and talking about basketball." That's it. That is it.

Scott Simmie: I really hope, because I'm in Toronto. So I really hope you were happy for Canada when the Raptors won last night.

Lamorne Morris: Oh, absolutely. I spent a lot of time in Canada, obviously with BMO and a big Kawhi Leonard fan. I love the Raptors. So I'm a huge LeBron fan, right? So LeBron for so many years, has a terrorized the town, but the year he leaves, it was like, "Okay, cool. I get to watch like a team that is out of the country, that a lot of people kind of wrote off, and they didn't realize, you switch some personnel a little bit and you make the right trade or you make the right move, you're on a winning course.

Lamorne Morris: It was really cool to see that city, because then you go back to the city afterwards, there was a whole new energy you guys had. You guys have this swag now of like, "Listen, we came to your country. We dominated your sport," even though it is a Canadian sport. Right?

Scott Simmie: It is.

Lamorne Morris: Wasn't basketball invented in Canada.

Scott Simmie: Yeah. Peach baskets were hung up in Italy, Late 1800s or something. Yeah. Well, listen, you mentioned Bloodshot a minute ago. I want you to know that I watched that the other night, I loved you with your British accent. And my son had watched Game Night and said, "Mom, dad, you got to come watch this movie." So we watched Game Night a few weeks ago. And we think we all think you're really funny. Like, you've really got that feeling, when we look at you, there's something special when you come on a screen and we know you're going to make us laugh somehow. We feel good when we see you, so you obviously you've got that thing, whatever that is. Yeah. Well, I'm curious, though, what would you do if for whatever reason you could not do what you're doing now, what would be your second choice in life?

Lamorne Morris: Well then my second choice goes away too, because it would be professional basketball player, but I'm not that good. My body's broken down and giving up on me, but I would ... then it's a cheat because I would still be in the entertainment business somehow. I like being behind the camera as well. I've directed before, so I do like that creative touch and that energy of having something that you've created. I'd focus more attention on writing as well and creating those stories for other people to act in and other people to produce and create. But if it wasn't entertainment on the movie and TV side, it would probably be sports journalism.

Scott Simmie: So listen to this sound because it's an important one.

Lamorne Morris: Yes.

Scott Simmie: That is a knife hitting a water glass, but that signals that we're going to wrap things up with a rapid fire round of some short questions. This one is from my son, a big basketball fan. Name your all time starting five.

Lamorne Morris: LeBron James, Michael Jordan, Shaquille O'Neal, Magic Johnson, Tim Duncan. I'm going to go. Yeah.

Scott Simmie: What would be your all-time favorite movie?

Lamorne Morris: The Matrix? Definitely my favorite movie.

Scott Simmie: Tell me something people would not expect goes with being a professional actor.

Lamorne Morris: Tons of research, I would say. Especially character actors, Daniel Day-Lewis probably is studying the crap out of somebody, to the point where it's you probably can't sleep. You're trying to dive into that psyche. Studying. Yeah. I would say a lot of research goes into it. Someone writes a script and if you can't quite understand what they're saying, you got to do research on a lot of these things too. I had to research coding for crying out loud for Bloodshot. So yeah, I'd probably say tons of research going into it.

Scott Simmie: What's your go-to dish when you're cooking at home?

Lamorne Morris: During the quarantine, it's been steak, rice and greens, some sort of vegetable to go with it. I have a grill outside, so it was just fun to be outdoors, so I just grill as much as I can.

Scott Simmie: Nice. I did see a little video on YouTube where you gave some publication a tour of your home. It is an awesome home.

Lamorne Morris: Oh, thank you.

Scott Simmie: And I'm wondering if I come to visit LA with my son and wife, if you will invite us over to visit.

Lamorne Morris: Yes, I can grill for you. We can play basketball. Whatever you want to do, you have a pool day. It'd be my pleasure.

Scott Simmie: Awesome. Listen, Lamorne, I really want to tell you, I appreciate your time today so much, and I appreciate that you we're willing and in fact wanted to speak about the events that are happening in the United States, because obviously it's so important for everyone. So thank you so much, Lamorne.

Lamorne Morris: Thank you. Thank you very much. I just want to encourage everybody to go vote, go vote, vote as much as you can. Even I, as long as I've been alive, I still am learning stuff every day. I'm still trying to get myself more activated and more energized. And I know we're running out of time, but I have a friend, Qasim Rashid, we grew up together. I know his struggle being poor growing up. He knows mine. We were super close. Political rights activist, he's an attorney, fights for prison reform, all those things. Running for Congress. Virginia's first district, so please make sure you ... just look out for him if you're over there in Virginia and he's somebody, he's young and I remember Obama talking about young people starting change, and he's young, and I think people really gravitate towards the messaging that he has. So I advise you guys to go challenge him on his thoughts as well.

Scott Simmie: Lamorne Morris, thank you for sharing your inside story today.

Lamorne Morris: Thank you very much. Thanks for having me.

Scott Simmie: Lamorne Morris is very funny in the new release Bloodshot with Vin Diesel and also in the hit movie Game Night. A reminder, you can watch for him and I certainly will be watching in an upcoming Hulu series called Woke. That's it for this special episode of Inside Stories. Thanks to BMO for presenting this. I'm Scott Simmie, thanks for having me over. See you soon.

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