

**U.18 Long Civil Rights Movement:
Heirs to a Fighting Tradition**

**Interview U-0586
Lynice Ramsey-Williams
August 12, 2008**

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FIELD NOTES- Lynice Ramsey-Williams

Interviewee: Lynice Williams

Interviewer: Bridgette Burge

Interview date: August 12, 2008

Location: NC Fair Share Office, Barrett Drive, Raleigh, NC 27609

Length: approximately 31 minutes

HEIRS TO A FIGHTING TRADITION: Oral Histories of North Carolina Social Justice Activists is a multi-phased oral history project which explores the stories and traditions of social justice activism in North Carolina through in-depth interviews with highly respected activists and organizers. Selected for the integrity and high level of skill in their work dedicated to social justice, the interviewees represent a diversity of age, gender, and ethnicity. These narratives capture the richness of a set of activists with powerful perspectives on social justice and similar visions of the common good. These are tales of transition and transformation, sea change and burnout, organizing successes and heart wrenching defeats. These are the stories of the Movement. This collection will be a valuable addition to the modest amount of literature about contemporary social justice activism in the South.

THE INTERVIEWEE: Lynice Ramsey Williams is an African-American, Christian woman born in 1948 in the Bronx, New York. She is the executive director of North Carolina Fair Share, a statewide people's advocacy, issue education and leadership development organization that works with low-wealth, unemployed, and working poor grassroots North Carolinians on grassroots issues and health care. NC Fair Share provides oppressed people the tools they need to fight their own battles for fairness. Lynice has taught community members about health care policy, organizing skills and leadership development strategies. This work has led NC legislators, Town Council members and County Commissioners to adopt and implement important health care policies that benefit those most in need. Lynice helped establish the *NC Fair Share People's Legislative Agenda* and the *NC Fair Share People's Advocacy Institute*, two programs that have significantly shaped the General Assembly's response to the needs of low-wealth North Carolinians. Lynice serves on the Board of the NC Alliance for Economic Justice and the Wake County Indigent and Uninsured Commission.

THE INTERVIEWER: Bridgette Burge graduated from Rhodes College in Memphis, Tennessee in 1995 with a degree in Anthropology/Sociology and a semester of intensive study of oral history theory and methodology. In 1995 and 1996, Burge and a colleague conducted fieldwork in Honduras, Central America collecting the oral histories of six

Honduran women. She earned her master's degree in Anthropology from the University of Memphis in 1998. In 1999, she moved to North Carolina and served as North Carolina Peace Action's state coordinator, and later as North Carolina Peace Action Education Fund's executive director. In 2005, Burge began her own consulting company to provide training, facilitation and planning to social change organizations. The same year, with the support of the Southern Oral History Program at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Burge launched the project "Heirs to a Fighting Tradition: Oral Histories of North Carolina Social Justice Activists." The interviews from this project are archived at the Southern Historical Collection in the Wilson Library at UNC-Chapel Hill.

DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVIEW: August 12, 2008: We recorded in the conference room this time since the back room is such a tiny space. So, there's more noise from the AC and from the front office door closing repeatedly as folks came in and out. It was a shorter interview. Again, I started the recording as soon as she walked in the office, so there's some nice chitchat and exchanging of the heirs brochure and the poster gift. She wanted to make sure she talked about her work on HIV/AIDS. I remembered to record ambient sound this time.

TRANSCRIPT—Lynice Ramsey-Williams

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Date: August 12, 2008
Location: Raleigh, Wake County, North Carolina
Interviewer: Bridgette Burge
Interview length: 31 minutes

START OF INTERVIEW

BRIDGETTE BURGE: You don't even have a chance to take a breath today, are you?

LYNICE RAMSEY-WILLIAMS: I'm fine. It's crazy, really crazy. We have a campaign that we're working on, a national campaign. It's Health Care for America Now. And so we're the lead organization for the state. So it's being kicked off Thursday at Open Door Clinic here in Raleigh. So, it's going to be good.

BB: What is it?

LW: It's a national campaign. Basically to set the tone to keep people interested in health care being the key issue, and keeping that to the forefront. We'll also be doing Congressional visits and we'll be collecting stories, you know, what's going on with people. And the thing is is that we're hoping, and they're saying that some of the stories, they'll be able to provide transportation for them to go to Washington to speak on the Hill, which I'm so excited about.

BB: Yeah. Are you all going to do digital storytelling?

LW: I don't think digital. It could be--. Well, they are providing a camera so that we can document different actions that we have, but that might be something that we should consider.

BB: Yeah.

LW: And then what we're going to do on our website, which is being updated, which I'm really excited about, too--. We have some individual stories already that people are speaking to, their interviews. They're just snippets so that we'll have it streamlined. They'll be able to be streamed in to the website so that people will see how people working in their individual communities for change, and so we're so excited about that.

BB: I love that.

LW: So they just finished that last week, and so--.

BB: Who's they?

LW: Oh, this is Exchange Project that we work with. I'll give you one of the packets. That's where we--. In fact, Erin (**not sure of spelling, 0:02:55**) wrote some of the stories for this. We were doing--. I think I told you about this sometime ago that we had been working on a project where we did individual stories in people's communities that had happened.

BB: Yeah.

LW: So now they've made a disc out of it, and it's called (**0:03:15**) Theater. And we have packets. We'll be doing education packets, well, education pieces on this. This is like, we have the facilitation guide.

BB: [Reading from education packet] "Using drama to understand experiences with environmental health issues written by Erin Burge."

LW: Yes, phenomenal story. You should see this in action, this story. This is my favorite one, you know, faith in things not seen. It's phenomenal.

BB: Oh, I want the Heirs Project to get here. Well, we've got colorful packets.

LW: Oh, wow, yeah.

BB: I want to stream stuff online.

LW: We're pretty much there. [Laughter]

BB: Oh, girl, I'm so proud.

LW: So the stuff will start being streamed. They're working on our website to update it.

BB: Exchange Project is?

LW: No, Exchange Project won't be doing that. There's a person who's contracted to do our website, to put in the streamed pieces.

BB: Who's that? Because we've been, we need some help.

LW: This is a person, they're in, here in North Raleigh. Gosh, I don't have--. I think the number and everything is inside.

BB: Okay.

LW: But I'll get that to you so you can have it.

BB: Okay. I'll make a note of it to remember to get it from you.

LW: So I think those are more effective now, because I mean, people read, but they don't read at, long pieces in a sense. And so if on your web, if you can have actual things, I think that helps with your organizing pieces as well as people connecting, "Wow, well I didn't know people could actually do that in their neighborhoods and their communities."

BB: That's so beautiful.

LW: Yeah, “We need to get started.” So that’s what we’re hoping that would happen, with having these streamed interviews that people are talking about.

BB: I’ve been calling them podcasts, but I’m so--.

LW: Maybe that’s what they’re called, podcasts. [Laughter]

BB: I’m so--.

LW: Because I’m not all techie.

BB: I know. Me neither.

LW: So we’re excited about that piece.

BB: Good. Well I know I’ll have a lot to learn. It’d be great. Thank you for that resource. And for you, our new beautiful Heirs Project brochures. I thought maybe y’all could just--.

LW: Oh, cool. Look at that.

BB: Look at your beautiful mug. [Laughter]

LW: [Laughter] My pudgy face.

BB: Oh, that’s beautiful.

LW: Oh, this is great. This is great. I can’t wait to get my family--. What I’m going to try to do, I spoke to my brother yesterday in regards--. He lives in New York. That my family needs to--. Because all of them have good jobs and things like that, but we need to, they need to contribute more, you know, to the work. And I’m going to see to it that maybe they might do like a special type of thing, because I’m working to try to get some money to Heirs.

BB: Thank you, Lynice.

LW: So anyway, we'll see. Did you get a chance to talk to Forbes, [Rev.] David Forbes?

BB: I haven't.

LW: Oh, okay.

BB: I haven't yet, but I knew that today I was supposed to have that letter for you to sign for him.

LW: Oh, that's okay.

BB: And we've got it, I just didn't put his name on it and print it out yet, but it's ready.

LW: Okay, no problem.

BB: And I will get that to you, and maybe you could forward it to him electronically?

LW: Right, because I think if he has a brochure like this, then I'm pretty sure--. And they're doing a story on Fair Share and the work, with the Triangle Tribune. That's going out I think this Wednesday, because she was here and did interviewing last week.

BB: Wow.

LW: I think was Thursday and Friday. So I don't know what that's going to turn out like, but anyway. Because we were like, I was jumping in between things. So we'll see.

BB: Well **(0:06:20)**.

LW: But these brochures look fantastic.

BB: Yeah, thank you.

LW: We've got to get some brochures made. This is great.

BB: Thank you. And here is a little gift for you.

LW: And Jama looks so serious, but it's a nice smile.

BB: I know. He can be like, he's got like, he said, "I've got a smirk. Where the hell did you get that picture?" [Laughter]

LW: [Laughter] That's wonderful.

BB: Here's a little gift for NC Fair Share, kind of our tenet there.

LW: Oh wow. Look at this.

BB: If you--. Yeah, you can read it out, because I've already got us rolling here.

LW: Oh, okay. [Reading] "If you have to come help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with me, then let us work together." Oh, I'll probably put that as one of my quotes, my quote in my emails. [Laughter]

BB: Oh, good. Isn't that something?

LW: Oh, this is really good.

BB: Yeah. That's the--.

LW: I like this. I like this.

BB: So, not service, but--.

LW: Thank you so much.

BB: You're welcome. It's a tiny token for your time and your--. And I wanted to say that I forwarded your oral history, your life history to some folks just as a bit of inspiration to some of the Heirs. And yours is wonderful, as everybody else's is, but as I was editing and preparing, it was just on my mind and heart. And there's so much joy and hope in it.

LW: Oh good.

BB: And just something about the past few days. People have been talking about, “How do I tap into joy when I’m so, when the anger and grief around injustice is so overwhelming?”

LW: It is. It is.

BB: So there’s so much you said in there about what sustains you, and your love for family and church. And so, you’ll see it.

LW: Oh, great. Very good, excellent.

BB: It was sent to you, too. Just so you know. Well let’s dive in because I know you have a meeting with ACORN. What’s that about?

LW: Well they’re the partners, they’re one of the partners in the, I call it HCAN. It’s Health Care for America Now, and they’re one of the partners. So we’re talking today, and just spelling out a little bit more strategy on some specifics that they’ll be working on, because we have the Congressional business to do. We’ll be doing, like I said, the stories statewide. And then we’ll be doing some specific Congressional targets that we’re looking at, and trying to get them on board, or at least to say that they would support the principles. They’re just common principles of health care that we have in a statement. So that’s what we’ll be looking at. We’re not promoting a particular plan because it’s not a piece of legislation or anything, but we want them to agree to specific principles that there’d be some kind of health care plan that they would definitely work on to have health care available for everybody. You know, it’s just some--. And affordable, you know, real specifics. So we’re hoping that they would sign on. That’s like the main thing, is getting Congressional people to sign on.

BB: Because then you can hold them accountable to values that they’ve supported.

LW: Right, right.

BB: Like it being a basic human right. But you signed this and--.

LW: Right, and that's what we want. And we even have to go to our foes, because we're hoping to set up meetings with Elizabeth Dole and--. [Laughter] And I hope she's out. I hope she's out come November 4th. [Laughter]

BB: [Laughter]

LW: But anyway, I've got some good ones. But hopefully, we'll see.

BB: Don't call her Libby.

LW: Right. [Laughter]

BB: I read about it. She gets all mad.

LW: Let's see. We're doing Richard Burr, that's another one. And then we wanted a support person who we know supports and backs health care for all. We're going to be really speaking a lot with Butterfield, because, and people in his district, so that they'll know that here's somebody that supports health care as a right, and the correct coverage for people. And then we'll also be exposing a lot more of the insurance industry, the profits that they're making and the problems that people are having with the insurance industry. And so we're hoping to have some actions at insurance places, like BlueCross BlueShield in particular.

BB: There you go.

LW: And so we're hoping to turn out a lot of people to be in front of their building and saying they're tired.

BB: We'll be there.

LW: They're sick and tired of being sick and tired. That's what we'll talk about today with ACORN.

BB: Good. I'll tell with Jake and Ella's hospitalizations just in these past couple years, our health insurance is more than our mortgage now.

LW: That's right.

BB: It's killing us. It's killing us.

LW: It's unbelievable, unbelievable. And see that's what we'll talk to, not all people who are uninsured. We want to talk to people who are insured and that are having problems with their coverage, also with the premiums. It's a crisis.

BB: It is.

LW: It's a real crisis. So even people who are insured, they're having problems. So we'll be talking to lots of people.

BB: That's right. And what did that CEO make last year, BlueCross?

LW: I know. Millions.

BB: Some ghastly--. Millions, it was tens of millions, wasn't it, last year?

LW: Tens of millions. Tens of millions. Unbelievable.

BB: We'll have to check that, but I mean--.

LW: But that's the kind of data that we'll be putting out there.

BB: Good, good.

LW: So people will have that, kind of, to get more fired up.

BB: Good, good. Well, shoot. You're ever busy, Ms. Williams.

LW: All the time. All the time. It's like, "Okay." Because they had called us. They had said, well they was looking around in North Carolina. They had talked with some others in regards to health care, trying to launch this campaign, and then they called us, because they knew the work that we had been doing toward health care. So I said, "Okay, we'll do it,

and have to hire to hire a person to kind of coordinate the work itself.” And hopefully she’ll be here by eleven, too. So anyway, it’s kind of went that way now.

BB: Good, that’s good.

LW: So I’m looking forward to it. It should be good, and it’s a good thing. So, we’ll see.

BB: Good. Well let’s talk about some of the HIV/AIDS work that we didn’t touch on last time, which is such a big part of your work.

LW: Yeah, it is. It is. And that’s through church. I head up the AIDS ministry at our church. It’s Christian Faith Baptist Church, and it’s the AIDS ministry. We have some great people who are part of the AIDS ministry. There’s about, oh I would say about fourteen of the, we call them disciples in the church, that’s a part of the ministry. The key things that I really like is that we are addressing as a black church, and one of the very few black churches addressing HIV and AIDS in our community, and trying to alleviate this epidemic that’s a crisis right now. And so we do a lot of education within the church and also have resources for outside of the church as well. This year we started testing, HIV testing. We started in our church first, the whole, people within the church were tested. And then we took it outside of the church. We had a whole, we called it a citywide testing, that was here in Raleigh. We did that in March.

BB: Wow.

LW: And that was in collaboration with National Healing for HIV, Healing for AIDS. It’s a national piece that’s done every year in March, the first week in March. But it’s a whole week of Black Church Week of Prayer for the Healing of AIDS. So we did that as a launch, kick-off. We did the citywide testing. And it was very, very good. The News &

Observer covered it. And so the thing is, is that we are not only just doing that. We also work on the legislation to make sure that the prescription drugs for HIV/AIDS patients, that that monies keeps growing. It's called the ADAP program. That's Assistance, AIDS Prescription Drug Assistance Program. Yeah, ADAP. AIDS Drug Assistance Program. And what it is, is that that provides the medications, which are so expensive for the uninsured. As you know, the medications are very, very expensive. And so every year sometimes, it comes up in the budget, that they're looking at cutting the funds. The thing is that it's not really enough anyway, because it's only at two hundred percent of the poverty level that you can get this assistance. And we would like to see it get higher, because a lot more people who are uninsured need this care. And so we're hoping that eventually that that would grow, but every session we're working at the General Assembly along with other agencies that's working on, AIDS agencies here in city, that that gets increased, because that needs to happen.

And then the other piece that we work on, which we just got finished doing, is a food drive. This is food for people who are uninsured, people who are living with HIV/AIDS that really have so--and they're low-income--that have so much problems, because the fact that the medicine is so expensive and most of the times they have to decide between food and medicine. And so the food pantry at Under One Roof, that's located off of New Bern Avenue, they have a food pantry that gives not only to adults, but to children as well. Every year, Christian Faith Baptist Church, the AIDS ministry, we provide, I'd say like, it's got to be over a hundred bags of food. And it fills, overflows their pantry. And then we try, if possible, even other times, people will give, and so that we give.

And the other thing that we do is the AIDS Walk. We are part of that AIDS Walk, which we try to rally around getting, not only people within the church to be there, but we get people outside the church as well to be there, be a part. And we contribute. We contribute a lot of money to AIDS agencies here in the city, and we also give to the Lot Cary Baptist Convention. And the Lot Cary foreign mission effort works in Africa with orphanages and with families living with HIV and AIDS. One of the exciting parts about all of this is that it gives us an opportunity to not only work on the issue here, but also that our efforts are going outside of this particular area.

So we, in doing the work and we have done, there's a Houston House here in Raleigh. That's where people who are living with HIV and AIDS, well, really with AIDS, because they're really on the, almost on the brink of death, and we go there and we provide meals and spiritual support to people living with HIV and AIDS. Because I've been touched by this particular issue, I have a godson whose godmother had passed from HIV, well (**I couldn't make out her name, 0:17:06**) died of, she was at AIDS at that point. Then her sister passed, also with AIDS. We also had two, three other friends in our, just in our friendship. These are all people who lived in New York City. And they were under the age of forty, all of these people. And so I always had a compassion to try to address this in some kind of way, and I was just happy that the church had a venue. When I went there, and they said they had an AIDS ministry, and was like, we've belonged there now twelve years. I was just so excited, I didn't know what to do. And then I never, I didn't go to be like the head of the ministry, but as time evolved and being around the table and with ideas and stuff, then I've been blessed to be the head of the ministry. But the thing is, is it's tying in the church with public policy, as well as one-on-one service, as well as advocacy. So I think that puts us in another piece of

work that I think, and I feel churches need to be doing as a whole. I'm very excited about that work. It's also timely, that I think at the time that now, where we're looking at with--. And that was in the newspaper last week that it's going up higher.

BB: Especially for black women.

LW: Black women. That's something that really, really touches me a lot, because it doesn't make sense because this is a preventable disease. And so the whole piece of all of this is education. I think when it comes down to black women and just sort of figuring out, okay. How can there be a way in which, that we can address this particular issue? We've started youth forums within our church, talking to the young youth in the church about HIV and AIDS, STDs. One of the components of that training, and those workshops are about self-esteem building, because when an individual will actually risk their lives, because they just feel like maybe this individual wouldn't love them as much if they use or don't use something to protect their lives, it's just like, you know, what does that say? It's got to be a whole piece about self-esteem building that has to happen. And so anyway, we're doing those pieces, of trying to address, to make sure that at least there's some kind of, something that would happen with the work that we're doing to maybe stop some of this epidemic. And I'm happy to be a part of that as well. So yeah, my work just goes on and on. [Laughter]

BB: It's a lot, so much. Was there anything else that you remember us not touching on last time that you wanted to talk about? The HIV/AIDS work is the only one that you mentioned, but--.

LW: Right, I think because I just kind of wanted to make sure that that was stated, because I think that we also, as advocates, activists, and organizers, it's so easy to only be involved with the work that we do, which I think is critical. But then are there other areas

that we also would, giving what little pieces of this shred of this additional time that we have, which is very rare, seeing what other passions that we have, like in our hearts, you know. A lot of times it's just about, I think, passion. What are the things that you feel passionate about? And seeing if there is a little bit of time that you can spend to make a difference in that area as well. Because the problems and the public policies and the local issues, they will always happen as well, but then also, what it is that you individually feel also passionate about? Not only just involves your work, your paid work per se, but that you can give of yourself without having anything or pay for it as well. I think that we do this work, too, without pay. [Laughter]

BB: Amen. You know I was just going ask you about that.

LW: Many a day. [Laughter]

BB: Shoot. I have this--.

LW: Because of passion.

BB: That's right.

LW: Because of passion.

BB: And commitment. I know. Class suicide. **(0:21:26)** calls it class suicide. I tell you, I had the most wonderful conversation with Marnie Thompson, whose the director of the Fund for Democratic Communities, or Ed Whitfield's the director in Greensboro.

LW: Oh, okay, yes.

BB: But Marnie's the president. She was, all her inheritance just went into this fund. She was raised wealthy and her parents always thought she was kind of a crazy liberal. But anyway, she's so down-to-earth. And so we were on this call with her Rima L'Amir, Heirs Project Development Coordinator, and we're talking, and I said, "I mean, do you know of

other groups who survived when there are just months of not getting paid? And have you ever seen groups that don't have--?" Because we're trying so hard to do it without foundation funding.

LW: I know, I know.

BB: And then she goes, "Well, people in the civil rights movement did it forever without any funding." And I was like, duh.

LW: I know. [Laughter]

BB: And then she said, "In some ways, other community, other civic engagement groups and community-based groups all around the world, say, 'Why do these Americans think they've got to get paid to do this work?' Like this is just part of the--."

LW: It's deep, but--.

BB: But the culture's different.

LW: The culture is different.

BB: And we do need to support more organizing jobs that are sustainable for people.

LW: Right. That's true, and with benefits.

BB: With benefits.

LW: Because I think that retirement--. You know, I have no retirement. But when you think about it, is that there's some basic benefits that many organizers do not have. Some don't even have health insurance or life insurance, health insurance, retirement. And I talked to Jim Grant, who's on our board of directors and he's also a long-time activist. Here he is now at seventy-something years old, and he was saying, "Well, I've given my whole life to this movement, and now I don't have any retirement." But that's why I'm still doing like I'm doing, and I'll do that until my last breath. I have a little something saved, and

saved aside that his granddaughter will be able to bury him. But there again, you're going, "Okay. Mmm. Something's kind of wrong with this in a sense, because why then, in doing so much of the compassionate work, then our people are just kind of left with nothing." And sometimes, we often think that maybe it could be or it should be where the sacrifice of just giving of yourself, and how it does come back, but then there also should be a way and a method in which you benefit as far as the basics. I don't think that any of us, that we can look and say that we're making the hundred thousand dollar salaries and all that, that maybe corporate structure has. Because given, if you put it on a measurement of your work and the work in a corporate structure, you probably would be making that amount of money, because that's what would be the type of monies that you would be making. But I think none of us work at the kind of salaries that we do deserve, but I think that we do deserve at least the benefits and the basics to do this.

BB: That's right, because you're also making a choice for your kids.

LW: That's right.

BB: And your grandkids.

LW: That's right, and your families.

BB: And you're setting an example for other people who might want to do movement work that, who'd be like, "I'll be damned if I'm going to die without a penny in my pocket, and make my parents and my kids have to take care--."

LW: I know, have to bury me and take care of me if I'm sick. So it says something that this does deserve something. You really, really, really should have something. And I know there's times and periods where, if grant funds don't kind of work out, that you have to make that sacrifice and say, "Okay, it's good to just pay the workers and pay folk than

yourself.” Keep the rent and lights on and what have you, which is a sacrifice. It really is, and you have to be thankful that if you have a spouse that works, maybe at a state job with decent benefits and a constant salary, that kind of keeps the flow of things going. Because without that, it’s very, very difficult. I’m blessed. I really am, and I’m thankful, but there are so many times to have to still go without, and make those kind of calls to the sacrifice, but I think that that’s why NOA is in place, you know, the--.

BB: National Organizers Alliance.

LW: Yes, to try to build on a retirement, because I think they’re addressing that piece. What I would really like to see, and I wish that would happen, if all of the groups, and that’s something I’m going to put on the table with Blueprint. They need to get a group plan, and if they would have a group plan, maybe that all of the organizations can buy into, it would be so much cheaper for everybody. Because if you’re in a group plan, you don’t have to pay these ridiculous, exorbitant amounts of premiums, because smaller organizations, their premiums are higher because usually it’s like individual insurance or two people type coverage. And it’s so expensive, so--.

BB: I know NOA has that around pension plans.

LW: Right, and I purchased--.

BB: But not around health, yeah.

LW: But I think that needs to happen, or either they set up that organizations can purchase something as a whole, because if we do it as a plan--. And I’m not sure if maybe insurance companies have it that it can only be an organization that has a payroll that actually has it. I know with the Justice Center and several others, and trying to find out if we could possibly get into their, you need to be on their payroll in order to do it. So it’s a hassle. It

really is. So we have to keep trugging at this, and keep praying and hoping that that's something that would happen, that people would be able to get the kind of benefits that they need, especially when it comes down to health care and things that, life insurance, things that people need in place should anything happen to them. Because you shouldn't have to do this work, and then also worry about well, if something happens to me--. And we take the most dangers. This is, there's times that we--. I mean, it may get to that point, too, where we're putting our lives on the line if we're going to really be out there. You never know what could happen to you.

BB: Look at '78 in Greensboro, right?

LW: Yes.

BB: And look at farmers who are dying of pesticides.

LW: That's right.

BB: And you think about farm worker advocates out there in the fields, too.

LW: That's right. So we really need to, I think that's another piece of advocacy that should happen, is that we should be talking to one another about, okay, how can we help in regards to this area? And I think that if we pool our resources together, we can do something.

BB: Well I know that Marnie Thompson, Marnie, Marnie from the Fund for Democratic Communities, wants to pull together like a round table about small non-profits doing social justice work, and just like a fishbowl of how, like what we face and what our fears are and our ideas for what might help. So I hope that you can come to that in the fall and share some thinking around your ideas. They're good.

LW: That would be good. Yeah, and we all have to take better care of ourselves as well. So far it was--.

BB: I know girl.

LW: We're eating on the road, so--. [Laughter]

BB: [Laughter]

LW: It's like--.

BB: I'm on my way to interview Lynice. I forgot to eat. I'll be damned if I'm not going to go through Bojangles' and get a chicken biscuit.

LW: I know. [Laughter]

BB: There's probably eight thousand calories in one of those chicken biscuits.

[Laughter]

LW: [Laughter] That's the wrong, and you think of health, you know, but--.

BB: That's right.

LW: I'm trying to eat better, but it's just that, portions, you know. Because a lot of time I'll eat fruit, but it'd be a whole bag of fruit, you know. [Laughter] What good does that do, a whole thing of grapes like that, and two bananas and two peaches and no--?. You know, just, you know chill. And so the thing is to sort of look at ways in which, how we take care of ourselves as well, so we can be around a little bit.

BB: That's true.

LW: And not only that, to be able to enjoy our children and grandchildren.

BB: Walk up a hill with them.

LW: Yes, yes. Get on the floor with them. I know my two-year-old granddaughter's saying, "Jama," because they call me Jama because in African that name is Grandma. And

so my grandchildren call me Jama. And so she was saying, “Jama, come on, come on.” I was like, “Uh un.” “Jama, can you come down?” She was like on the floor like doing these tumble sort things, and I was going, “Jama can’t do that.” “Come on Jama, come on Jama.” And I said, “No Jama can’t do that. I tell you what. I’ll say yay when you get--.” [Laughter]

BB: And let’s wait until somebody gets home saying, “Help me. I need help.”
That’s how I feel.

LW: So it goes on, but I think as we continue to take care of ourselves and be in this, because the work is about the good, I really believe that we will be taken care of. We always will. We always will, and it’ll be for the best. I mean, it’s just unbelievable how sometimes when, okay you get to a point even myself, I know where, okay, if this grant doesn’t work out, what will happen? There’ll be some kind of thing that will happen. And somebody will call up, “Are you interested in doing that?” And it’s like, oh my gosh. [Laughter] I know it’s nobody but God. And I’m saying, “Yeah, we could do that.” So things always work out if we just, you know, we I think have good faith, it’ll all work out. So, Heirs will be fine.

BB: Heirs will be fine. Say it again.

LW: Heirs will be fine. [Laughter]

BB: [Laughter] I need you to keep saying it.

LW: It will be fine.

BB: So will NC Fair Share. That’s a great way to end. Thank you. Thank you.

LW: Yeah, okay, all right. I like that t-shirt, too.

BB: Oh, Highlander seventy-fifth, that’s right, seventy-fifth anniversary.

LW: Seventy-five years.

BB: It’s probably got baby crud and they’ve torn it, but that’s all right.

LW: No, that means that--.

BB: I'm a mama in the movement.

LW: [Laughter] I think that's such a good thing. It's so good for children, so good.

Oh, they're blessed to have you.

END OF INTERVIEW

Madeleine Baran, September 15, 2008