

TRANSCRIPT—SHIRLEY HAILEY & GIRVAUD JUSTICE

Interviewee: SHIRLEY HAILEY & GIRVAUD JUSTICE

Interviewer: Dwana Waugh

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Location: Charlotte, NC

Length: 1 CD; approximately 2 hours

START OF CD

DW: This is Dwana Waugh on July 15, 2006 interviewing Mrs. Shirley Hailey and Mrs. Girvaud Justice. Good Afternoon.

SH: Good afternoon.

GJ: Good afternoon.

DW: I think the first question I want to ask is, Mrs. Hailey when you first came to Charlotte because you lived in South Carolina, when you first came to Charlotte what do you remember? What are your earliest memories of Charlotte in the 60s and 70s? I have the same question for you Mrs. Justice who was born and raised in Charlotte what are your earliest memories of Charlotte in the 60s and 70s?

SH: It was so different because I'm coming from a small country town. Everybody knowed everybody. Your church family, everybody just knew everybody even at church or whatever. Then when I came to Charlotte to visit with my aunt I had a job waiting for me when I graduated. It was so different because the buses--. You could catch the bus and go anywhere. You could walk downtown. I did notice the people wasn't really, really friendly because I guess I'm from the country, and you know, you

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talk to everybody and whatever. It was a different atmosphere for me. But I learned as time went on, people are people everywhere. There's no difference. You just got to make yourself be a little more friendlier. Then you learn that they will talk to you back. If you don't say anything to a lot of them they aren't going to say anything to you.

My first experience was really pretty good because I left this little small country town and now I'm in the big city, Charlotte, North Carolina. [Laughter] I thought I was doing something because a lot of my friends was still at home and hadn't been anywhere. I had visited Charlotte before when my aunt lived in 3rd Ward. I came up and spent two weeks. I liked it then and I always--. Even then I say when I graduate from high school I was going to go live with my aunt in Charlotte, North Carolina. I thought that was the oh, the place to go. Then I had an aunt that lived in Stamford, Connecticut. She wanted me to come there but I chose to come to Charlotte because I was closer to home. I didn't want to go that far away from my mother because my mother wasn't doing too well at that point. Here in Charlotte I can catch the bus and ride back home at any time.

Once I got used to it and everything I liked it pretty good because my aunt had three boys and one girl. We always was very close. Like Taylor, he called himself my brother. His brother, he got killed. He was like a brother. Donny, the youngest one, he was like a brother. The only person I didn't get along too with well was the sister. She's the only girl. Then she would come home and spend the summer with us every summer. When we were there she was good but then when I came here it seemed like, I don't know if she was jealous of the relationship I had with her brothers or what because we was really, really neat together.

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My aunt was like a second mom. I love her even until today. She is 102 and doing great. Anytime I needed moneys for anything. I could write her and tell her need so and so. She would get it and make some for me. [Interruption-man in the background]

There was five of us. I have three brothers, and it was two sisters. I was the first girl. My mother had three sons. Then my next oldest brother, he left home earlier and went to Flint, Michigan and got him a good job. He was like my source of income. I would get twenty dollars every two weeks from him. Back then, twenty dollars was something honey. Trust me. He would always send me moneys with something. Then I would baby-sit because my senior year is one that it took a little bit more moneys than you had before. So, I baby sat a lot to make extra money. Then my aunt, if I ran out of money, needed money for something, write her, she would mail it to me. I been truly sort of blessed in that area. The only thing I dislike about, and this is for me, I wanted to go to Claflin College in Orangesburg. That was one thing I didn't pursue that sometimes I wonder where I would have been now if I had went on there because our church, AME Zion, we were one of the supporters of Claflin College. I could've went there. I went there for weekends with the Methodists Youth Fellowship and would come back and make reports. I just fell in love with the school. I said, "Oh, that's where I'm going to college." It didn't work. I don't know. My idea might not have been god's idea. I'm just leaving that alone. I met my husband in '54, right after I came here to Charlotte. I came after my birthday. I met him about two or three months later. We started dating and eventually we got married. There that was. The mother of seven children. We would have--. Girvaud, about how long now? We were married thirty-eight years when

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he died. It will be eleven years in October. That would have been forty-nine years now.
Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

DW: That's a long time.

SH: Ooooh, yes, a long time. We were living on Caldwell. When we got married we moved in, we stayed with his mom for awhile, then we moved into our own apartment. Then we moved from our apartment off Caldwell, here. Angela, my youngest child, was three. We've been here ever since. We was renting with option to buy. When the neighborhood improvement program came through we decided we would go on and buy the house. Would you believe, Girvaud, the house we bought was \$12,000 at that point?

GJ: That's about right. Which brings up another issue, Really and truly, I feel like they are trying to price the black people and the poor whites out of their homes. Charlotte is now geared to the yuppie class of people. The young whites that-- And the blacks that have the money that want to live downtown in condos. Nobody wants a house it seems like anymore. Nobody. They want condos or townhouses.

SH: Condos or Townhouses.

GJ: They have totally come in and destroyed this city. Charlotte, in my opinion, was once a beautiful place.

SH: It was. I thought it was the most beautiful place. Some of the houses was old houses because where my aunt lived, it was a old house. You know downtown, on Fifth Street, you know where the white folks lived. They moved out. The way they were built, beautiful homes.

GJ: Beautiful.

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SH: She was in a two story house. She had the whole house. It was upstairs, no, three stories, one, two. She had roomers. It was really, the way they were made, big picture windows and oh god. Those houses was just beautiful. Porches all around.

GJ: Exactly. They've gotten away from all of that. I mean, you could take a house that they put on the market today and sell for \$250,000, if I had the big, bad wolf here he could huff and puff and blow it down. They are not really constructed well. But you charge an exorbitant fee for our home anymore that's not worth the price. You're raising a house like she said, you pay \$12,000 or maybe \$15,000 for up to a tax base of up to \$125,000. I'm saying let's be for real. This is not even right. It is not right at all. You never stop paying for the house. You pay the tax on the house when you bought it. You're taxed on it until you die. Used to be when you were sixty-five years old, and I think that law is still somewhere back there, then you don't have to pay taxes.

SH: I was thinking about that Girvaud. I was trying to figure out-- I thought when you become a certain age you didn't pay taxes. Now, it doesn't matter who you are or what you are.

GJ: I really and truly think, and which I will be doing some research on down the road, that the disabled and the sixty-five year old people don't have to pay that tax. They took that information off the tax cards. Therefore-- How would you phrase it? Out of sight, out of mind. So if it's not there; if the information is not there for you to see you totally forget that that even existed. Then you don't question anymore about whatever. You say, "Oh I got to pay taxes" I think the city's robbing people blind because I really think people of sixty-five years of age and disabled are not supposed to pay taxes.

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SH: Do you think they didn't think a lot of us would live to get to be sixty-five?

GJ: Well they were hoping.

SH: You see it's not in their hands. It's in God's hands.

GJ: As things have gone over the years, practicing better health measures and trying to take care of yourself. People have lived longer. Just like when they jumped up and decided to give people who never worked up under social security, \$35.00 a month and take out \$3.00 for Medicaid. That was back in the--.

SH: Oh, really.

GJ: Yeah, because you know I was working for Social Security. That was a --.

SH: I didn't know that.

GJ: Yeah, I worked for Social Security after I left the water department and then from there I went to the Post Office. I wish I had stayed, though, at Social Security. I'd be honest with you. I really do, I really do. But I thought to myself, bad move. Why should you give people that never worked under a program--.

SH: I'm serious.

GJ: Anything. Because I felt like spouses maybe worked under it so maybe they could get their widows' benefits. Then they just took everybody who was seventy-two years of age or older and put them onto Social Security giving them \$35.00 a month when these people live to be a hundred years old, most of them. What was worse, that \$35.00 kept going up because they got a cost of living increase. It went on up to about \$112.00.

SH: Per month?

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GJ: Per month. That should have never been in my opinion.

DW: And that started in --?

GJ: That started in -- Let me think now. I went to the water department in '63. 1965. I went to Social Security in 1965. It started sometime in '65. It started because I used to--.

SH: I can't see you leaving the Social Security.

GJ: My brother kept talking about if you going to work make the most money you can make because postal employees were a different grade level. They made more money. If I had it to do all over again I never would have left. I would have stayed right there.

SH: I know Edwina worked for the water department. I didn't know you did too.

GJ: I was the first black worker at the water department.

SH: Oh, you go girl.

GJ: Right down there at old city hall.

SH: That's good.

GJ: Then she came along later and worked as a meter reader.

SH: I remember that real good.

DW: Mrs. Hailey, you said you got married in 1954 and you came--.

SH: I graduated from high school.

DW: You graduated in 1954, sorry. Did you stay with your aunt first?

SH: I stayed with my aunt. I came from home, my mother's home, to my aunt's home.

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DW: Okay. And then you met your husband.

SH: I met my husband that same summer. I graduated in May. We graduate in May. In South Carolina you get out of school in May. Here they were getting out of school in June. We're out of school almost the whole month before you all were out. I think I met my husband that August. We started dating. We dated a good while. We got married, started having babies.

DW: I wanted to ask you Mrs. Justice, you grew up in Charlotte. What do you remember about Charlotte in the 60s and early 70s?

GJ: I remember that--. Well, I'll go back to '46 just because I remember what they used to call Earle Village, but they now have all the condos down there. It was called back then like Fifth, Sixth. I was born on Sixth Street Alley which--, that's what it was named.

SH: Oh, really?

GJ: I was born right on 1st Ward.

SH: That's what we called that then when we were on Caldwell. We called that area 1st Ward because once you cross Caldwell and the only other part was Brooklyn.

GJ: Right.

SH: Oh, I didn't know that.

GJ: Born right there and probably would have been there now if they hadn't come in and tore that up. Then years and years later they decided to put the village there.

SH: I remember when they started building the buildings there.

GJ: Yeah. Black people are like rolling stones not because we want to be. I'll say this it's because of urban renewal. It's the white man's process of destroying your

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history, your heritage and everything else. If you move year round then you don't know from where you came. You don't know who you are, what you are. This is a little game they play I feel like they play. That's not to say that every white has that mentality. It's enough of them that's in the power structure that's still want to hold black people down. They move you. They shuffle you around. I was in Sixth Street Alley. Then we moved to Brooklyn where the United Way building sits today at 301 South Brevard Street. That was where I stayed until--.

SH: Oh really?

GJ: Yes, ma'am.

SH: So you was right from Grace Methodist?

GJ: Yes, ma'am. Charlie's Grill was right beside the church.

SH: Yeah. I remember the old lady. It was a old lady when I knew it. Mrs. Willis. Charlie Willis.

GJ: Charlie and Susie's Grill.

SH: Pearl's sister, Marley, used to work there at the grill. All I remember is the older lady, had gray hair.

GJ: Yes, and she wasn't much taller than me.

SH: No taller than us.

GJ: That's Mrs. Susie.

SH: Never knew her name.

GJ: Charles Weber's daddy. Susie and Charles, they ran that grill. It was there many a--.

SH: It sure was.

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GJ: They had a beauty parlor and a barber shop right in between that.

SH: There was a dentist.

GJ: Then we had the dentists there, Dr. Russell and Dr. Tyson, Dr. Green. It was like a little professional building. It's what they call the MIC building today. That's one piece of history that they left. They don't really make it known to the blacks what it is or what it represents. Our master mason built that. Our bricklayers, all black, built that building. On Third Street, on the side, Mr. Dixon had his little sign and paint. He was a sign painter, had his little business there. He would get my mother to make him biscuits. About every week he'd ask her to make him some biscuits.

SH: Dr. Yancey, yeah.

GJ: That's right. We had a little ice cream shop down there in the pharmacy on the bottom layer. The doctor's were on the top layer.

SH: You walk in and you walk up to the doctor's office because I was going to a dentist there. I remember so well. But wasn't there another church from Grace down there on the corner of Stonewall and Brevard? Was there another church down there?

GJ: Oh, Friendship.

SH: I knew it was there.

GJ: That was my church.

SH: I knew I remember the church because, see we used to go over there to the movies there all the time. I remember there was a church below Grace.

GJ: Friendship. But Friendship got happy.

SH: That's right. I had forgotten all about that. Then there was East Stonewall on, down from St. Paul on--.

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GJ: Right. Then Ebenezer back across--.

SH: Independence. Ebenezer was back over downtown.

GJ: Right.

SH: Reverend Ryan.

GJ: Pastor Carey decided to sell the land.

SH: Oh, really?

GJ: Oh yeah, they sold out. They were the first church to sell out. Then we had to go sit out at West Charlotte Sunday after Sunday and have service in West Charlotte's gym because he sold them white folks the property. Talking about, "Yeah we going to build." They finally did build a church but it should've done just like the AME Zion publication house. They didn't sell their property to nobody. Grace didn't sell. He could've stayed right there but he jumped up and sold the property.

SH: Those churches to me were so beautifully built.

GJ: They were.

SH: You would have to go and see them they were so beautiful. I attended Grace for a long time, me and the kids. Then I attended Ebenezer Rev. Ryan. Then we started going to St. Paul on McDowell.

GJ: Then see, they came and took that church. They took St. Paul away. Urban development took the 2nd Ward High School, just took all that. When we came back from Brooklyn, back into 1st Ward,

SH: Oh you did?

GJ: Uh-huh. Right there at McDowell and Ninth. You remember the Hemphills. She was a teacher. She had her house. Then Ms. Ruth Suber stayed next door to her.

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We lived in this Anderson's house which was directly across from Hotel Alexander.

Then the Barnettes was next door to us. Ms. Barb had her beauty shop. The blind man, oh God, I used to write letters to him.

SH: That was next to Mt. Sinai ,in that area?

GJ: Yeah, and I'd go write letters for the mills. This is going to get you to where I say, "Rolling stone gathers no moss." We had integrated the white school, Gus and I, Deloris and Dorothy.

SH: That was Central.

GJ: Gus went to Central. I went to Piedmont. Dorothy went to Hardin and Deloris went to Alexander Graham. They didn't want black people in the white schools, no way. They tried to find every reason in the world why you weren't going to be there, plus did investigations on you and all this stuff before you could even go. To alleviate this problem, that was one way of getting black people away from white schools. That's why you don't know where your boundaries are. They done moved boundaries in Charlotte so many times to accommodate that, their stuff until our community boundaries aren't even in sync any longer. They came through, because Ms. Anderson had agreed to sell us the house. We just did a contract with her.

DW: The house here.

GJ: The house at 512 North McDowell Street. I stayed exactly one mile from where we living now. She came back about two weeks later and say, "I hate to tell you this. I'm not going to be able to sell y'all the house." She say, "Because, they going to tear them down." They did. I had gone to work for the Water Department and was still there when I went to work for the Water Department. Shortly after I went to work for

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the Water Department we had to get out. We had to move, find us a place. We had about thirty days to find us a place to live. Barnettes, they owned their house. See, black people owned property. That was only black hotel we'd had in Charlotte. It was nothing wrong with that hotel but they took it.

SH: It was a beautiful hotel.

GJ: It was a beautiful hotel.

SH: Beautiful. It really was.

GJ: When I went to get my business license, some white man, I don't know how the conversation came, you know, started talking about one thing and it led to another. He's got the butcher blocks and bread table in his house. In his house. In his house! He went in there one day because they were tearing down. He's say, "I saw this stuff." He'd say, "It was beautiful." He's say, "There wasn't nothing wrong with none of this stuff." He'd say, "I just thought, my god, I hate to see that stuff just be destroyed." But he ain't never really told nobody he had it. Told me but I don't know his name. But he took it. He say, "Rather than just having, because what they did they just bulldozed the property." They did. They just bulldozed everything. They told us they did it because a road was coming through. I was seventeen, maybe eighteen years of age. And a road was coming through. I am now sixty-one years old. That road has never come through. But, yet they putting condos up for white folks down there because black folks can't afford condos. I just hate to say it. Money base here in Charlotte, there's very few blacks that can afford condos.

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SH: Girvaud, what was the name of those, what do they have, those over here right from Earle Village. What was the name of that? They were brick apartments over there. What was the name of that little area?

GJ: Okay, Earle Village. You mean before they tore it down.

SH: Yeah, before they tore it down. [Pause] They got the condos there now.

GJ: Where they building the condos now?

SH: Well, they already have them. The ones they built?

GJ: The ones they built at Earle Village?

SH: Yeah, across the street from--.

GJ: It was still 1st Ward.

SH: All of that was 1st Ward? There wasn't a name for that little area where the brick ones? They tore them down and put those condos up there?

GJ: No, all of that was considered 1st Ward because the Youngs had their home. I'm talking about this was some of the more influential black people lived over there. The hairdresser, Ms. Love, she had a brick home. Mr. Barnett's house was wood. Like I said, his wife died in a bit, two months after he died. To my knowledge they had no children. I wonder did they even ever really get their money--.

SH: Probably didn't.

GJ: Because he died before they tore the house down. It's just so much the city has done that's been detrimental to blacks as a whole. They would never admit it. They would never say, yeah we did this. They still playing the same old, same old games. When they moved us from there we were lucky enough to come in a close proximity to where we live. Like I say, ole David Kinney, David and Lee, they saw how they could

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make a fortune in real estate business by block busting. If we put a black person on this block and we put another black person on this block. We can buy up the houses and then we can sell them to black people. That's what they did.

DW: I was going to ask you, what made both of you decide to live where you're living now?

GJ: It was about the only place we could live.

SH: We got shuffled around.

GJ: Country was still-- Mecklenburg country lines was still sort of close in the city. Then white people decided we'll move on out to the suburbs and get away from these black people. That's what a lot of them did. They went out to the suburbs. Now, the ones that are in the suburbs are staying in the suburbs. McCrory and Hugh McColl and all those people that have money and influence, they keep bringing this company in and that company in and all these people. But, you see where the coyotes are eating up the people's animals. It's true. You walk right down here to the corner, turn left and come back where the park has built a bridge. You walk that bridge at night coming home. You hear some saying, "hooo, hooo."

SH: Oh really?

GJ: We've got owls. We've got opossums. We've got rabbits.

SH: Have no where to go.

GJ: We've always had squirrels but we've never really had rabbits.

SH: We didn't have no opossums either.

GJ: Had when we first moved here.

SH: Oh you did.?

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GH: Yeah, because one got in our basement--. And I never will forget that. I don't know how that thing got in our basement. We're saying, fleas. We didn't know where the fleas were coming from. We didn't have no animals. Got in there and she went in there because it was warm and to give birth. She died and all the fleas came up. They came up through our vents. Between putting down poison for the rats because it's an underground tunnel through this neighborhood, this whole neighborhood's full of rats. They had big--because there's creeks, so many creeks and springs. So they lived on the creeks and springs. They would go underground and make their home. By putting down rat poison and different stuff I guess that eradicated the opossums too. Now the opossums are back. The raccoons are back. One night I had left a bag of apples on my porch. I went out and the bag was opened and something had eaten the apples. I thought well whatever's eating it. I don't think I want to eat it. So, I left them there. Here comes the raccoon. Thing's this tall. [Demonstrates size] He was standing up looking at talking about, "Hello. I got up early in the morning. "How are you? I was just having me an apple or two." I'm saying, "Oh, God." Big thing. Deer almost ran into me at school. Came charging across the intersection. I'm saying, "Make up your mind which way you going." They've taken all the country space and put concrete down.

SH: This one came back here during the winter, just jump right across my fence. I'm like, "Oh my God. That's a deer." Beautiful deer. And the dogs and everything just barking and acting crazy and everything. It's a deer jumping the place just going on about its business. No where for them to go.

GJ: No where for them to go but back to the area where they see the most trees. We fought to keep single family housing in here. The girl that was president up

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here in Optimist Park, I know she came to me and she said, “Yeah, well, Belmont and Optimist Park--“ I said, “You can’t speak for Belmont. You have to speak for yourself. Right now those people that bought Habitat homes are really fretting because they feel like they going to take their home. Evidently it has to has been some talk about it because I was talking to Ms. Simuel and she say, “You know, they talking about taking our houses.” When you open the pathways for them to come in and build the condos then that’s it. Once they get a condo in, they feel like they can take everything else’s around. Anything that’s in proximity of that red light on top of NCNB or Bank of America whatever you want to call it, means the stadium, the arena and then they going to put up some more junk down there. They want it convenient for the affluent.

SH: You know who they want it convenient for.

GJ: For the affluent, which would be the whites, because you don’t have that many black affluent people in Charlotte.

SH: That’s what they’re doing. Like she said earlier about the yuppie type whites, that house next to Renita’s, a couple was in there, a young couple. They moved out but another young couple had moved in. Looked like younger than they were.

GJ: That’s what’s up here on Twentieth Street.

SH: Oh really?

GJ: Oh yeah. They’ve been down there.

SH: Where about on 20th?

GJ: OK, when you get to Twentieth and turn, that first corner, there’s a house that sits on the corner. Right next door to that house. Young couple.

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SH: You know on Parkwood two young white couples has bought both of those houses, one on the corner of Seigle and the one next door to it.

GJ: And next to the Habitat house, Peggy's friend, guy that puts down the carpets. It's been one house in between her as to where the white guy stays. He's been in for two years. They just started easing in quietly. I'm saying, "Okay, you see him every once in a while." He's an older, I'd say fifty maybe. Forty-eight, fifty, fortyish, fiftyish. Then that corner house on Twentieth, next to it, is one. Two more houses are being fixed next door to it for white people. Then, you remember where the old lady stayed in the big, big house on, let's see. That would be Twentieth, then we cross to Nineteenth. Let me think. Harrill. She was on Harrill at Nineteenth, blue house. She had a handicapped-
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SH: They had that too?

GJ: Gutting it out. Going to refurbish it. Put it back up. That's why Bert Green bought that house in here when he bought it.

SH: By the way, I saw his picture in the paper with the Habitat for Humanity. There was a group of them.

GJ: Building that 100th house.

SH: Yeah. His picture was in it. When I looked I say that looked like that man named Bert Green. I read down there and sure enough there it was.

GJ: Really the main culprit to all of this is the City of Charlotte. I've asked myself for years and years and years if you can have a community. Back when I was growing up you didn't have drugs in our community. We did not.

SH: This was a nice neighborhood. I'm serious. This was really, really nice.

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GV: It was nice.

SH: When I first moved over here because they were already over here. This neighborhood, you didn't even really have to worry about locking your door if you went anywhere. I'm serious. Then all at once--.

GV: It's because they never let you know what's going on. The city is the problem, always has been. Piedmont Courts, it was white, built back in war time. As long as it was white it was okay. Then it was under the Housing Authority. Well, the Housing Authority is run by the city. They've always kept any Housing Authority properties segregated from this community in which they are built. They have a separate organization. You putting them somewhere over there by--. You all separating apart these people which means they never come in and intermingle and work with the community as a whole. So my mentality tells me that this is another thing to keep mess stirred up. You got two organizations right in the same community when everybody should be working together in that.

SH: That's so true, together.

GJ: There are some instances when you can't get it that way but the city sure shouldn't be propagating cause for people not working together. But they do. All their properties have their own president, own this, their own that. They do not--. They are here, you're here.

SH: Come together, so we can work it out.

GJ: But yet we--.

SH: It would be much better too. If we could come together and work with them. And listen, talk to each other. Diane, I saw her somewhere. She told me she was

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not going to be the president anymore or some. I just looked at her and I didn't answer her. I was like why're you telling me.

GJ: Ain't it the truth. She was one of our worse problems.

SH: I'm like why you telling me this.

GJ: People get so disgruntled but I keep saying, "You have to get up and be involved so you'll know." I used to do a newsletter. After I stopped doing the newsletter they passed out newsletters for a little while or whatever, but newsletters were never like my newsletters. Don't nobody know nothing--.

SH: It didn't have enough information in it.

GJ: About what's going on in the community. They don't keep you informed. That was the way it was when I got involved. Then we had the CDC. Here we go back to the city. About every black community has had a CDC. They've all failed. We had a black man in charge and maybe he didn't do what was right but still, you didn't keep the community informed about the CDC. All we knew is a little house set up there on the corner, set up there on bricks for I don't know how long. Couldn't get no information. Nobody was never there. You had something that was supposed to be working in our community but yet you're no involved in it. Then when you do become involved they got, "Oh no, you can't be involved because you know too much. You can see too much." [Interruption] To me that's your building corporation. It's supposed to be developing the properties but they didn't do it. Nowhere has this CDC really developed our property. They built the house back over here off Pamlico, an old folks center too, one on Harrill and one back off Pamlico. But they gave the properties to somebody in () which means the community has no control over the properties at all. But yet, this is supposed to be

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our CDC. Supposed to be doing what we want done. It's never worked that way. Bert Green, the director for Habitat for Humanity was sitting on the board of our CDC which is a direct conflict of interest. Who do you think the city gave all the property to over here? They gave it to Bert Green. If you go back and look up the rules and regulations for Habitat, before they could build the house in existing community they were supposed to meet with the community residents to find out what we wanted in this community. How many houses we wanted in this community. None of that was ever done. All of our rights have been violated. In researching things, I've found out that they have totally violated every contract that has ever been written that was supposed to safeguard the community. We haven't progressed any farther. We're farther behind now then we were back in the 1950s. Race relations suck. They really suck. During the most prejudice days race relations were better than what they are now.

DW: Could you talk a little bit more about what you mean by race relations are worse now?

GJ: You got more segregation than you ever had.

SH: Well that's right.

GJ: You don't see black people getting out and getting good jobs anymore. They are not doing anything to make good jobs accessible. Give you a for instance. They'll say, "Well, we don't have any jobs or our unemployment rate is low but we don't really have any jobs to give people." When Katrina came and they had to take people here into this city as a result of that, they set up at the Coliseum a place where one stop shop jobs, their cards whatever. People from the disaster area were able to get jobs when our people here were told there were no jobs. I don't begrudge anybody getting anything

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but we need to take care of home first. Before the disaster happened here people were trying to get jobs and they were being told there were no jobs. Now how do you think that make people feel. That makes people bitter. Plus you also brought people into our midst and never introduced us to any of them. I think as a community, you owed us that to say these are going to be some of your new neighbors or whatever. We don't even know who these people are. We've got rapist and some of everything else probably in our midst. This is why I say it sucks. You got a police department that should've been doing background checks on everybody that came here from Katrina or anywhere else. They didn't. They are saying on the national news you got over 463 child molesters that are loose. They don't know where they may have--.

SH: They don't know where they are.

DW: How many of the Katrina victims moved into--?

GJ: At first they said that 200 people coming to Charlotte. Then the state say easily say you'll take more than that. There's probably about 800 people in Charlotte from Katrina.

SH: All in different areas.

GJ: From Katrina. There are some here. We don't--. That's what I'm saying.

SH: We don't know. We did have some at our church but I don't think they are there anymore. You know what, I'm glad you brought that up, Girvaud, because I'm going to question this. We were supposed to be taking care of one or two families for a period of time but nobody else has say nothing else about it or nothing. I know there was one young lady joined. Two, but she left the church. I don't know what happened. We had a couple that came and visited a couple of times. They disappeared. So—

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GJ: See, they didn't keep track of anybody.

SH: I don't know because I think what it was, you know, like some of them when they were at different churches they would have a get together that everybody come out and meet them or whatever. We didn't do that. If they did I don't know anything about it. You don't know who's there and who's not there.

GJ: Like I said, I think the city as a whole--. The police department, the mayor, whatever. You call yourself our mayor you owed us that to say we've got X number of people that are here. But no, they didn't even want you to see them. They didn't want you to be no where. People, they wanted to drop off water and clothes. "We don't want you bringing nothing out there." Then it got to the point where they didn't have enough money to do it. "Well, we'll take your bottled water." No, you should've say, "Well, they got to get settled in first. Let's have a welcoming affair." Just one night after they got them settled in, brought anybody in Charlotte that wanted to meet the new people out there to meet them, to get to know them, so you'll know, especially, the ones that were coming in your community. If they were putting them in your community you had the right to know these people in your community and whether or not they are credible people, whether they are rapists, or rather they are what. We had that right but the government and the people of the government--. The elected officials that act on your behalf feel like they control everything. The people don't have a right to know anything or to say anything or to do anything but just pay money. Just keep getting some money and paying some taxes that's all we really interested in. We'll take your money and we'll build a NASCAR. That wasn't voted on. That was one man's dream. Well, maybe more than one man's dream, but McCrory pushed that to the hilt until he got it to

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come here. Well, now they going to take the only parking lot that they had for the convention center and turn that into the site of the NASCAR museum. You built an arena--.

SH: We need that like we need a hole in our head.

GJ: That people voted against. People voted it down twice but you put it there anyway. You've violated our rights, civil and other wise. But it's okay, you know. That's with blacks and whites alike. It didn't matter if they wanted that. They did that but yet you have no parking at this--. To accommodate this facility. Disabled people have no accommodations. They tell me that if a disabled person comes they have to let them out at the farthest point of the building. But you notice there isn't no ramps or nothing up at the front.

SH: I don't know. I haven't been to the arena.

GJ: Well, and see the transit center is right there and with me catching the bus everyday. Plus I walk the tracks. I don't see no place for them to come in.

DW: You were talking, Mrs. Justice, before about you seeing things as being negative race relations today than, or worse now than they were--?

GJ: I feel like it's because part of it has to do with the schools. Give you a for instance. A friend of my son's, he's seventh or eighth grade, he was telling him recently about how the teacher aligns classrooms over here at Sedgefield, the lightest to the darkest so the whites are at the front of the room. The Asians are the next group. The Mexicans are the next group. The blacks are the back.

SH: This is in the classroom?

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GJ: In the classroom. You see, a Mexican child came out and told you that you probably wouldn't know what was going on. When Jason was in public schools I made it a point to remind him everyday, "Be sure and tell me everything that happens when you come home. Mommy wants to know what all you did that day and what all happened around you." He would. We need to educate our children to come home and talk to us and tell us what's going on. This kid, his mother is a Vietnamese, so she wouldn't really understand it, even with him telling her. It wouldn't really exactly phase her as to what's going on because she's not that knowledgeable about race or whatever. Michael is. He knows. He say, "The lighter you are the closer you, you white you go to front. You Asian you get back there behind them. You a Beaner you come in behind that. If you black you go to the back." This shouldn't be allowed. Our children need--.

SH: Somebody need to go check that out because I did it with my grandson when he was at Raimer Road Elementary. He would come home and tell me things. I said, "Ah." Then I say, "You know, I'm going to show up one day, check all this out."

GJ: Right. You have to do that.

SH: You have to. I got the teacher out of her classroom and the principal and we sat. Me and my grandson and them, I told her everything he had told me. I said, "And by the way, he said when the blacks--." There wasn't but four blacks in the class. You know she have to see them. "When they raise their hands, the black children, you ignore them." I say, "So, I want to know what that's about." I say, "Let me tell you something, when my grandson raise his hand, whether he right or wrong, you let him speak what he has to say." She say, "Oh, I don't remember doing it to the little child." He say, "Yes, you do. Anytime us black children raise our hands you never let us

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answer. You let the white children answer.” I say, “Now there, he telling you in front of your face. Into your face. Your principal sitting right here. And you going to allow this to go on.”

GJ: I had to get one put out of school. When Jason was in the second grade-- . Kindergarten, first grade--. Jason’s half white so they started asking what color was he. What difference did it make what color was he?

SH: You are there to teach.

GJ: You are there to teach. Then one day she going to ask me, “Can he read?” I say, “Well, of course he can read.” “I wonder because I see him going by looking at the signs on the wall and saying like fire extinguisher and I thought maybe he just knew what that was.” I said, “He knows and he also can read it.” I said, “He’s been reading since he was three.” I say, “So, he can read.” I say, “If you had any doubts why didn’t you give him a book and find out.” So what were you doing in the course of the day with my child? You weren’t teaching him reading.

SH: That he’s walking around looking at--.

GJ: And thought he just--. Where’s your mentality? Then they teach them to write scribbles. Teach my child how to write. “We just let them scribble, you know, they’ll start--”

SH: You don’t want a scribble.

GJ: Every time I go there, the very one I had to have put out, and that one talking about who they were going to date that night and where they were going that night. I’m thinking, “You all aren’t fit to be in a school.” Then because I questioned old lady bear about some things that had happened because Jason had come home and this

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guy had brought a knife. This other boy told Jason that--. He's a bigger boy. Jason say, "I don't know who he is." He say, "Oh that's okay I got my knife too. I'll take care of you. I'll look out for you. You don't have to worry about nothing." I'm saying, "Something bad's going on down here at you alls school. Get it together." She didn't like the fact that I even questioned anything. Next thing I know she's picking on my child. Then she tries to make my child as a trouble maker and he needs some psychiatric help. I say, "I'm going to psychiatric your help." I went in there and called for a meeting with the principal and had told Jason--. I can't remember exactly what she told him. "I wish I didn't even have to look at you" or something to that effect. He came home and told me so I kept him out of school the next day. Then I talked to the principal. I told him, "I called in to say Jason was sick. Jason wasn't sick physically." I say, "But to say something like that to a child is enough to make a child sick." I said, "I'm not playing. You're not going to mess with my child." I say, "Because I will bring a suit against you all in a heartbeat." She called the after school teachers in, black and white alike, and they told him they never had no trouble out of Jason ever since he had been there. She ended up getting moved out of that school. I found out she still in that school system.

It's teachers like this that are prejudice that keep going from one school to another. I found out from a friend of mine she had had problems with her three or four years ago when her child was in school. You got some very racist teachers within our school system. Friend of mine, her son, he asked me to tutor him. I did. He had a project. He had to do it by himself, he did it. I kind of monitored what he did. I let him use my computer to get information my Encarta disk. Child had an A paper. She gave him an F.

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Gave him an F and threw it in the trashcan. Boy came home almost in tears. He was in the tenth grade then. I say, "Ms. Freeman, I say you really need to go check on that." She called the teacher and they kept on until they got it raised to a C. But why give a child a C when they had an A paper? Talking about, "You went on the internet." He told them, "No I didn't. If you looked at my paper you would see." He had to reconstruct his papers again. She still wouldn't give him but a C for his work. You see, they have a way of degrading, especially young black men that are in school. I feel like to make them feel like they have no self worth. I feel like another thing is done--.

This community, like I say, we didn't have drugs over here. If we want your community, they found out they can use the age old term, slum, ghetto. Those black people over there they living in a slum. They living in the ghetto. It's turning into a slum. If you have people from the outside come in and sell drugs in my community from seven until one or two in the morning, you're destroying my community. You're destroying the people in the community. Then all you have to do is walk in and say, "Ain't nothing but a slum. We can take it under eminent domain. We can tear it down." This is a tactic that has been used for years is to use the eminent domain rule so you going to build a street or it's slum, it's a whatever. Whenever they want to take anything black people have they just walk in and take it. You might value my house at \$125,000 for a tax base but when you come to pay me some money I bet you not going to pay me that for it. And they know it. Most of the black people in this community now are older black people. That's the same way it was when we were forced to move from off McDowell Street and Fourth. Most of the people are elderly. They've worked all they lives, saved and scrimped until they

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could buy a home. When they buy it they maybe get to live in it fifteen or twenty years and then you going to take it from them; just uproot them.

DW: I wanted to ask both of y'all what you remember about Belmont when you first moved into it. [Taps Hailey on the shoulder]

GJ: Nice. Nice, quiet area.

SH: Napping honey.

GJ: We had several of the whites that stayed quite a few years but the majority of them moved out.

SH: My neighbor, she stayed until she wasn't able to stay there alone.

GJ: That's kind of what happened with the house where Jason is. When Mr.--. What's his name-- Grady? What was Grady's last name? I can't think of Grady's last name right now. He got really sick to where his wife, she really couldn't take care of him any longer. She had to put him in a nursing home. They ended up moving because the nursing home was farther away then here. So they moved in an area where she could try to be near him. The ones that did stay, I mean, they made good neighbors. We got along well. It's been some kind of law on the books for years and years and years, back in the 60s and 70s saying they were supposed to intermix the neighborhoods. It wasn't done. It really was not done. If it had then you would have had an equal balance in the schools. Our children wouldn't have to bear the brunt of the bussing. Our little kids get up and then they want to classify them as hyperactive, ADD. If you had a child five or six, seven, eight, even ten years old, have to get up and be out by five o'clock in the morning or five-thirty and travel an hour before they get to school, you'd be hyperactive too because you're irritable. Number one, when your body really hasn't gotten enough sleep.

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Number two you've been on that crickety bus ride all that time. You don't feel like doing any work when you get to school.

SH: Number three you're probably hungry.

GJ: Yeah.

SH: You can't focus if you're hungry, on an empty stomach.

GJ: They are not looking at the root cause of the problem. You keep busing our children. Why don't you let the young children go to school later during the day and the older children go early? Everything's done in such a way where it really affects us adversely.

DW: I was reading a couple of articles that are dated now, but they label Belmont and Piedmont Courts as being in a "fragile" community.

GJ: Every black community in Charlotte is considered "fragile" if you look on their books. Every black community has been labeled "fragile". Not one did they leave in a non "fragile" state. Our community still wouldn't have been as bad. Piedmont Courts, when we knew anything, we're hearing stuff on the news about the drug dealings and how bad it is. The gangs and whatever is in the Courts. You see that came from meeting people out at Earle Village and forcing them out and pushing them into an area where we didn't have crime. We just come right on with your crime. I'm going to give you a perfect example of what I'm talking about. A lady that came out of Earle Village was arrested about two weeks ago now named Ida May Harris, always has been into crime. They arrested her. She's seventy some years old. You remember Ida May. Stayed up there across from Brenda's house on Allen. She was selling drugs and liquor

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and stuff then. The community police worked to get her out. They got her out and two weeks later she was back. Somebody rented the house in--.

SH: Somebody else's name.

GJ: Else's name and put Ida right back in there. You would think if she came from Earle Village. She started out in Earle Village. She was young then. She's seventy-six years old.

SH: She knows.

GJ: But she's growing. She's had prostitution. She's had drugs, liquor. She's got everything. Anything you want I think she could get at her house. That comes back to what we talk about the city. If the city's doing their job judicially and other wise, why is a seventy-six year old woman being arrested--.

SH: Time after time.

GJ: Time after time after time. Shouldn't there be some law on the book where these people--. They are nuisances. Then they should be arrested and put in jail and throw away the key. This is why young black men and women can't do any better. Because you see an elder out here selling drugs, that's one of your role models. I mean they 're doing it and getting away with it. I'm sure the children that she's raised probably doing it and getting the grandchildren that she raised probably doing the same thing. That says to that the law is lacking as to how to deal with citizens that corrupt the community. These people are left. You see what I'm talking about running down your community. You leave them in the community to keep selling the drugs, to keep bringing black people down. If the drugs aren't here you going to have an upstanding community. People in Georgia somehow secured the Piedmont Courts property. It was

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under their control. It was under their control, Kermit, he's a community police officer and Jeff Bingham and a couple others, they would go up there and work the Courts. The man came in cleaned it up, put out the vagrants, put out the no goods. The Courts was looking good. In fact, the Courts probably would not have had to have been torn down, but the city got their hands back on it again. When the city got it back it got worse than it ever was.

SH: There you go again.

GJ: The man was up there rehabilitating property. It looked really nice. It was getting back to where it was when white folks had it. When the city got hold of it again it just went right back down to nothing. That's says to me if some company out of Georgia can come in and clean it up, why can't you clean it up and keep it clean. You don't want to clean it up and keep it clean because you wanted that government money so you could put up those condos over there.

DW: Now, was that back in the 80s when they came in?

GJ: That's been really recent. It's been recent.

SH: Oh, dear.

GJ: This is a age old game that's being played. The game never stops.

SH: Goes around in a circle. Just keeps going around and around. Like they say, where it stops nobody knows. They know where they'll stop. What are they doing with that empty spot down there where Sixteenth Street apartments? Going to put--?

GJ: I don't know. You see, that was CDC property. That was community owned property. If we could get a lawyer to go back and look at all the property that was owned by this community I'd be willing to bet you they've stole--and I've raised that

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issue with Stan Watkins. How much property has been stolen from this community? I say, "By all legal rights we own a lot of property." I said, "You're building things on property that really belongs to us." He said, "Yeah, you're probably right." You notice we never got an answer and we never got nothing clarified on that seven page letter with all those questions about Bert Green having so much control over the CDC when he was director of Habitat. The city, they say, "Well, we investigating." They never, ever given us a definitive answer on that.

DW: Was this a letter that the community got together and sent?

GJ: It came from our community organization.

DW: I kind of wanted to shift gears a little bit and ask you; I'll link a couple of questions together. I wanted to know if you felt that there was a sense of community pride when you first moved into this area in the 70s.

SH: Oh yes.

GJ: Yes.

DW: And how that's changed over time.

GJ: There's still community pride.

SH: Especially in a lot of the people that own their homes or whatever. Then when you get renters coming in that don't even care. It doesn't matter to them. It does something. I don't know what it is about some of them. Not all of them. For instance, this house right here [points to the house next door] it needs work done to it but they had one group of renters that was all right, the Muslims.

GJ: Those other things that they had in there.

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SH: Oh, those other things wasn't--. I had one group of neighbors that I don't know--. The young lady had to make them even--. I told her to come to see to look at their yard and things. Really. So they could clean up the yard and thing. It was just horrible. It was embarrassing.

GJ: The boy that was living there with her, that's the one that ended up killing that man. They had let him go. We were saying, "That man actually just killed a guy. He ran up on the curb and ran over the man." Through getting the investigation reopened they found out that--. They say, "Well nobody saw him." I came home one evening, soon as I drove up--. How many cops were out there? We had cops everywhere. Everywhere. Then they wouldn't let Jason talk to me. Then Kermit said, "Everything's going to be okay. They want to talk to Jason separately and apart from you." Jason saw almost all of the incident that happened.

SH: Oh, okay. I remember the incident.

GJ: Because he say, "Mom, I think you need to get out here in a hurry." So I stuck my head out the door and I keep my phone somewhere close to the door. And I said, "Oh God." I saw the man go up underneath the car and drug him all down in there. He stopped right there at Mr. Clarence's. I dialed 9-1-1. I just figured it was a man. I say, "Is he still under the car?" The guy looked at me. I say, "Is he still under the car?" He said, "Yes." So I called and they send the ambulance and fire and all that. Nobody ever, not one cop that was on duty that night ask nobody any questions pertaining to this incident. I kept on our community police officer. I say, "They're going to close it." I say, "You mark my word. They'll close it. It's just another black incident that happened

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in a black community. So what do they care.” Black on black crime really does not matter in Charlotte. It has never mattered in Charlotte.

SH: I’m serious.

GJ: That’s another thing that’s really bad. Let them go out here and harm a white person or Vietnamese person or something then it’s a world of different colors, shape, form and everything. “Oh, we going to find out who you are and where you are and do this.” I thought possibly when they had those home break ins that they were talking about the last couple of months that it had happened to black people. It happened to white people. They didn’t waste no time finding the boys that went in there and beat the people and raped the women. But yet, you break in my house and you beat me and I have to fight for my life. Then when I go downtown you say, “We can’t prosecute your case because didn’t nobody see anyone but you.” I ask them who else needed to see him. I’m the one getting beat. Who else needs to see him? When the officer came out. “What’s wrong? You wouldn’t let your man in the door so he had to knock the window out.”

SH: Oh my goodness.

GJ: These are the kind of questions you going to ask black people. You don’t know who I am or what I am. What makes you have the right to assume that this was my man, a seventeen year old boy? Uh-uh, this is why race relations are bad in Charlotte.

We have a pretty decent police chief. I’m going have to give Noah Wickie credit. When Noah Wickie was chief things had really took an upswing in Charlotte. Our new police chief, things have progressively gotten worse. Crime has constantly been on the

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rise. No more community involvement with police. If it is it's just in a set few communities not over here.

SH: You don't hardly see a police over here anymore. You used to see them all the time. Now, you don't hardly see a policeman.

GJ: I even paged one last night because Mr. Clarence was telling they beat the old man. It must have been last Friday. Well it would have been Saturday morning.

SH: Who beat him? Where was he?

GJ: In his house.

SH: What's his name beat him?

GJ: No, it's two boys. He don't know who they are. He said two young men came in and beat him. They left a message for him to get Red, to tell Red that they *would* be back. I'm saying, "Okay, it needs to be reported." I say, "Did he report it? When is he gonna report it?" I kept hearing the ruckus. When it's late at night and I told that man, his son that he needs to come cut the trees in his front yard because I can't see beyond the trees. But I kept hearing something and I kept looking out my window, even went to the front porch to see in the house. I can't see it. They were beating him then. I had no idea. I know Red quite often be up there beating the women so you just never really know what's what. They were beating him then.

DW: I know both of you have been involved in different agencies in the neighborhood. Mrs. Justice you were part of the Neighborhood Development Corporation. Mrs. Hailey you were talking about a daycare that you started after you moved here.

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SJ: A group of ladies started a daycare at the basement Parkwood CME church. Sure did.

DW: I was just wondering if you could both talk about your experiences being an activist in the community with the different agencies you were involved in and what those agencies were.

SH: I was involved with the what we called Freedom Neighborhood Association. We were involved in a lot of different things with the--. What was that group, Girvaud that we had to vote for people to be in through the Model Neighborhoods thing?

GJ: Model Cities.

SH: Yeah. You know we had Ms. Hart was one of our whatever in our area and we had to vote on her. We were very involved with that like community. Her sister, Edwina, was involved heavily with the Charlotte area fund. We were a part of that, attend meeting and things. With the Freedom Neighborhood Association we were involved with a lot of things with Mayor Bell. What's the one died? Alexander.

GJ: Fred Alexander.

SH: Fred Alexander, Liz Hair, Betty Shafflin, Don Carol, Liz Hair, Pat

GJ: Pam, Pam or Pat. I saw a letter from her the other day, an old, old letter.

SH: Peter Gilchrist.

GJ: Which they need to put out of office. I'll say that to his face. Then you started up here--. Oh but let's go, we going to stop when we get to that remodeling, revitalization. People really, literally have been shut out of those meetings. Meetings are taking place we really don't know any--. The leaders, the true leaders in the community

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don't know anything about it. They were having meetings then seems like they just stopped.

SH: We were going to all of them. We didn't hardly miss nothing to stay on top of things. Then all at once what happened. They started having them, what? Didn't they start having some meetings early in the morning?

GJ: I think that early in the morning like Wednesdays. They know that people can not come to meetings that time of day because they work or in school or whatever. We've told them time and time again most people that really have a vested interest in this community; you have to see them after six o'clock as a rule or maybe on a Saturday. They are not interested in the people with the vested interest. They are interested in bringing in enough white people, doing their little stuff underhanded behind closed doors. When you know anything it's done. Just like they going to put an asphalt plant—

SH: Sure were.

GJ: Right over here in our back yard. The girl that was over there--. I was sick. I was so sick but I got up and went to the meeting. I wrote a letter to all of them, the mayor and whatever. It so happened that the assistant city manager was at this meeting. I wanted to know if they were willing to be responsible for our health bills. We're older and you going to put that kind of fume and mess right here in our midst, same as what a coal miner would be experiencing if he were in a coal mine. I bet you it got stopped. They had fast tracked.

SH: Oh yes, girlfriend got on that.

GJ: They had fast tracked this man's stuff.

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SH: She brought me information and I sent it up to the church. Dr. Moss talked about it from the pulpit. Then he had everybody signing the petition. She was really instrumental in that. If it hadn't been for Girvaud I think they would have built it. I'm being honest with you.

GJ: I think so, I do. I know Linda was up there saying she was doing, but her voice didn't really carry a lot of weight. You can say we don't want this--.

SH: Linda, she didn't have the personality. You have to--. And you see when you speak you are very firm. You've done your homework. You know exactly what you're talking about when you speak. Linda, a lot of times, was going by what somebody else had told her. And didn't do her homework.

GJ: Then she was the only paid president I know of.

SH: Oh, she was paid?

GJ: She was paid. They wrote a grant out through Fighting Back Under the Community of Shalom to pay her a salary to be president of that community. I feel like that's one job you shouldn't be paid for because you don't have the community's interest at heart. You getting a check that's it. You getting a check. You should have the interest at heart. I feel like you really don't. All you worried about is that check coming in.

DW: I was going to ask who would you consider or what type of people would you consider to be the leaders of Belmont.

GJ: The ones that really came over here from jump street that restarted this community because we really did. The ones that settled in thirty-five, forty years ago are the ones that I consider the true leaders of this community because we're the ones--.

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SH: Mrs. Justice is really one of your leaders in the community. I would love for her to be up for one of those awards when they have community awards time. She would be number one to be one of them, my opinion. I don't care what nobody else say or what they think. That's my opinion. She has been a person that know how to go about getting something done. I've learned a lot from dealing with her, going to the meetings and listening. The only thing about it at the meetings--. [Interruption] Is this your car?

DW: Uh huh.

SH: You need to move it.

DW: Okay.

SH: The women are the backbone. It seemed like we were out there doing whatever we need to do.

GJ: With or without a group sometimes.

SH: We just do what we have to do.

GJ: Just like we needed better lighting over here. My mother, when she was living, she was an activist that wouldn't wait.

SH: She was. What class that was she went to?

GJ: She went to the Model Cities School.

SH: Yeah, yeah. Her and Doris. It wasn't that nobody over here that would sit back and not do anything. We, as a whole, was involved. We had people that did--.

GJ: Come out. Back then you had more city officials. You had people like Stan Brookshire was there. Mayor Belk was mayor. When they were mayors, they were good people. They were people that believed in community and worked with community. They would listen to their concerns.

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SH: They were people people. They wasn't like--. You could tell they wasn't prejudice. They treated people like people.

GJ: Even Sue Myrick. She's a Republican.

SH: Sue Myrick was all right.

GJ: She listens. She did work for this city.

SH: Oh yes.

She worked for everybody in this city.

SH: I have to give her credit for that because every time you would turn around she was sitting up at our church for service. Funerals too. I have to give her credit.

GJ: Have to give credit where credit--. In fact, I'm going to write her a letter thanking her. She's the only one that took a stand about the Mexicans. I means, it's got to be addressed. All I say to any politician is right is right and wrong is wrong. You have rules and regulations. That's why you make them so you need to adhere to the rules and regulations. Why do you want all of sudden just jump up and make all these changes and say, "Well, we let all these other people in?" When you got people that have been on the roles for fifteen twenty years waiting to try to get their citizenship. That's not right. That's not fair. We have to be fair about whatever it is we do. That's what's really getting Charlotte in trouble and America as a whole. People are not being fair. Our politicians are not being fair some of them. They're playing favorites. You try to play the game so when comes time for the next term your party will get in office. That's not what it should be about. It should be about protecting the rights of the people and keeping this country sovereign. Right now we don't have jobs enough in this country to

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take care of people we have. You going to keep letting everybody else in here. There ain't that much fruit picking in the world.

DW: What do you think makes the difference between Sue Myrick and Stan Brookshire and the Belks versus--?

GJ: They have morals. They have principles. That makes the difference in anybody not just them, even us as citizens. It's your morals and your principles that predicate who and what you are and how you going to deal with life and deal with people as you travel down life's way.

SH: They were really humble type people, Stan Brookshire and Sue. She was more humble. I can't say a word about Ken Harris, nothing, because I don't know nothing he did.

GJ: Yeah.

SH: Pat McCrory's another one. I don't get it with him.

GJ: It's about money. It's about, he's--.

SH: He was so upset about the moneys the new school superintendent got. Talking about he say, "He's making more money than I'm making." I'm like, okay, you about money.

GJ: It's about the money. It's exactly what it's about with him. And power. He's a very power hungry person. His realm is not to do any thing with any state. He wants to be your next president. He wants to be in the presidential lineup. When you're trying to build your way but you step on so many people when you're building your way. You can't step on people because what's the old folks say, "The ones you pass on the way up, you got to pass them on the way down."

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SH: You're gonna meet them right back down. Trust me. Now like Peter Ridick, our school superintendent that he didn't stay long. He was neat. He was at our church so much. The reason they got rid of him. You know what the word was about him.

GJ: The white one?

SH: They talking about he like the black folks too much.

GJ: Child--.

SH: Every time you saw him he was with some black folks. They had to get rid of him. They were not going to allow him to be in that long. He was too--.

GJ: They got rid that one out of Cabarrus County too.

SH: Oh yes they did, didn't they?

GJ: Because he was a fair and upstanding man. He came in here trying to do what was right and go according to what the judge's decisions had been set down about busing and integrating these schools equally and fairly across the board. They got rid of him. They fired him and said, "Okay we'll give you so much severance pay but you going."

DW: Was that Eric Smith?

GJ: No. He wasn't no good.

SH: He wasn't either.

[Laughter, intelligible, interruption]

GJ: What was his name? He was neat little old man. When he went back he went right back in his little country stump town. He does good things up there. I can't think of his name. He was a nice person. You have to apply things equal across the

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board. That's what's not being done, just not. We had meetings. Us leaders were called in to come and meet about our police chief and Noah Wickie was resigning. Who do you want for the next police chief? The people didn't pick that man. Even the city council didn't pick that man. Pam Syfert decided she wanted that man and she put him there. When you get that kind of power, it's time to go. We paying you. You need to listen to what we are saying. Even at that time when they were trying to bring him in here as chief, I even say then, for the record, Charlotte needs to have a building moratorium. You don't need to build nothing for at least five years. They said, "Oh no, we can't do that." You're totally destroying. This city is just building, building, building. They say they have a plan in commission. They say they have planners.

SH: Whose on the planning commission?

GJ: I would love to know where you got your education because you haven't planned nothing right yet. You just building because you can build--.

SH: Probably some people that don't know what to do anyway like they did when they got the architectural firm for our church, even though they didn't. I'm like they need to stop picking people because you're supposed to be up there, you know everything. Come to find out you don't know nothing. Admit you don't know.

GJ: Exactly.

SH: If you don't know, you don't know. You don't know nothing about building a church just tell them no, don't choose me because I don't know nothing about building a church. Our church is a monstrosity. You walk out of the building you walk down into your sanctuary. Go to other churches, oh they are so beautiful.

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GJ: Ask the people, ask your members. They're the ones that paid for this. You don't. That's what gets me. When one person gets somewhere they think it's all about them and they in charge of everything. It's *the people*. The government is the *people* and we would do well to realize that you're only elected officials supposedly there to carry out the will of the *people*.

SH: Because we put you in there.

GJ: But then they say, "We're the government." We are the government. You are the people.

SH: We paying you your salary.

GJ: You are there to do our bidding. Too easily they forget that. They just jump there and decided they going to do this and do that. I look at what's going on with Bush and Guantanamo Bay and all. Shouldn't no court had to tell him he's got to do something different. The Geneva Conference was established well back before World War I for that reason to protect our soldiers. If you going to take other people, no matter who they are, what they are, and disregard the Geneva conference and treat them like they are nothing what do you thinks going to happen to our people when they are fighting a war. How we live is what people look at. How many young black me look up to Mugsy and all those basketball players. I say you need to look at home and look for role models there before you look out because ball players are not always all that. The higher you are the more you are looked at. If you do something wrong then other people think it's okay for me to do something wrong. This they need to remember.

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SH: That's had been going on in a conversation we were having, me and some of the girls. We were talking about some situations. I'm like; if they see the leader doing something wrong the congregation going to think it's okay for them to do it too.

GJ: Exactly.

SH: Because it's okay, I can do it. It's not okay. If he's on his way to hell, you going to go to hell with your eyes wide open. You know it's wrong. Two wrongs don't make a right.

DW: I'd like to ask you both, in terms of being active in Belmont, what kind of challenges did you feel like you faced. What was the most difficult or some of the more difficult things you had to deal with?

GJ: Trying to get other people involved.

SH: Trying to educate our people to get them to come out to some of these meetings and learn about what's going on in your area. We cannot lead nobody nowhere and then we know where we're going. Then some of our people need to be educated so badly.

GJ: Yes, they do.

SH: Some of us don't know, but they don't want nobody to know they don't know.

GJ: Exactly.

SH: That's even sadder.

GJ: They're still a lot of black people over here that don't read and write not just Belmont. There are black people within the nation that don't read and write. Even some that have come out of school since I was in school cannot read and write which

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says to me something's lacking in the school system big time. They can't read, write, or count. That you need more than anything and that's what they ought to be putting back in school. I don't approve of this school having this and this school having this. Every child should have the same opportunity, all across the board.

SH: I am with you 100%.

GJ: You shouldn't have fifty eleven different schools. Put everything in every school so everybody has the same shot for whatever it is she or he may want to do. Then hire the teachers that are credible to teach our students well.

SH: Most of them don't teach nothing. Not just put anybody in there looking for a paycheck that comes every month. The majority of them--. I have a problem with any teacher if you leave out of your house like you're in a fashion magazine and come back home looking the same way. Something is not right.

GJ: Another thing just like they were talking about how much money they spent trying to recruit teachers from this state and this state. You can do that by mail. You can send flyers all over the nation saying we need teachers. So why do you have to travel? Too much money is being spent needlessly that could be spent for schools or whatever and give the taxpayers a break. Just because they got the money they just going through it right and left, right and left. They feel like any time they want some more we'll just put something else on you alls taxes. Money is taxed before you even bring it home. How many more times is it supposed to be taxed? It's taxed when you get it. It's taxed when you go out and buy something. Then everything you buy is going to be taxed for the rest of your--. That's unfair. That's just excessive because a simple solution to the whole problem but the man with the plan can't see it yet. You got enough

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contractors. You got enough parents that have children in school to build any school you need to be built. You got people that will give you donations for supplies for tax write offs. There's no need to tax people to build schools. People would be willing to build schools rather than pay taxes. I tell you something else, if not you got enough prisoners in the jail that can go out here and build these schools. They need to be doing something besides getting a free meal three times a day and watching television. Our roads and schools and anything that we need could be built.

SH: I don't think that's fair and getting three decent meal a day. Not one, two. Three.

GJ: You don't want to do nothing with your life, fine.

SH: They call it the big house.

GJ: Yes, they do. Get up and work. Everybody needs to work for whatever it is they're getting. They're getting something so they need to give back. That's what I always try to teach anybody, especially children that I deal with. You get something out of life always learn to give something back. You can't take away and never give back.

DW: Did you all feel that it was the same when you started out in the 70s and 80s that people have over time become less involved in the community or has it been about the same?

GJ: About the same. People become complacent. It's not so much from the community standpoint but from the national standpoint because things are so out of kilter there until people just lose interest after awhile. They feel like nothing they do is going to make a difference. That's the mindset that is hard to change.

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DW: I just have a couple more questions because I don't want to monopolize all your time. I was curious about what you issues you think are important issues for the community to deal with today.

GJ: Trying to maintain what we have and not let folks come in and take anything else from us and keeping down crime.

SH: Keep down crime. I think if we get rid of that a lot of other stuff would be eliminated. What make it so bad, Girvaud, we talked about this so much. It's not the people that lives around in here it's the other one that's coming in. That's where the biggest part of our problem come in.

GJ: That's where most of our problems come from, outside.

SH: Outsiders. The people that live here, we're fine and comfortable. The people that do all the other stuff, some of the people don't even live in the area, somewhere across town somewhere.

GJ: Steal cars and bring them the car from over here. Nobody from over here stole it. You going to hide it over here. You feel like it's quiet down in there. Nobody will look for it down there. You have people walk through, drive through, case your neighborhood just so they can see what all going on.

SH: Because the lady that was staying there at one point by herself, her son died. The man was trying to break in on her, getting in her window, broad daylight. He was from way over there off West Boulevard. The policeman wanted to know why in the world he got out--. What in the world was he doing over here? The policeman know where he live and everything, over there. He told him, "What are you doing over here trying to break in on this woman?" About had that woman scared to death.

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GJ: They say Shaky's doing better. You know who Shaky is the one who used to walk around here with his cart sometimes and stayed up on Belmont and made the tree up there his home. His name's Jeremiah Gaither. That's his name. When we would go down to the police station they would have the police flyer where they'd been tracking this man for years. Jeremiah Gaither has been in every black community in Charlotte.

SH: You're kidding?

GJ: No, I'm not. Jeremiah been over here. Jeremiah's been in Griertown. Jeremiah's been over in Seeversville. Jeremiah's been there. I'm saying why have you let this man plant community after community all these years. Like I told Kermit--.

SH: Something is wrong with him, isn't it?

GJ: Yeah. Somebody gets his Social Security money. Somebody's his payee. Kermit said his sister is. Then his sister needs to provide for--. She needs to put him somewhere or whatever or else the state, the city needs to say we going to put him in an institution. We'll take the check and let the institution keep it. Why would you let this man--?

SH: She gets the check?

GJ: She gets a check. I told Kermit I said, "I used to work for Social Security. You all can make a legal report. You're the police." I said, "You've got proof how this man over the years has been just one place to another." I say, "She needs to be cut off as the payee." It's like they don't try to find--. They knew about the sister. So, why don't you do something? This man has, I mean, green dots on this community. That's Jeremiah. Red dots in this community, that's Jeremiah. Yellow dots on this, Jeremiah. It does not make good sense. That's what I'm saying, black on black so what do we care.

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SH: Long as you're not in my area I'm fine.

GJ: I know sometimes you get some pretty decent cops come out and they really work hard to make things better. Then when you get to the judicial system they slap them on the hand and throw out all the charges and say, "All we going to charge him for paraphernalia. Then what does that do to your cops that are willing to work and clean up communities.

SH: They don't want to do anything because what's the point. What good does it do them?

GJ: That's what one said when I called them about the call over here. He say, "It won't do me any good to write it up." He say, "I spent four hours writing up a report last week. Caught one in the car." He say, "They got to court. They threw it out."

SH: That's a shame.

GJ: They can't get no support of their superiors, no support from the judicial system. See something's got to give in order for any community to survive. The middle class of which now, they are really like about to be poor white people anymore. They might have been middle class a few years back, but the way things are going they about to down there with us. Even they are dwindling. Even they can't stay afloat. What most people--.

SH: They living paycheck to paycheck.

GJ: Paycheck to paycheck. Yeah. What most people realize is America has not changed. In England they had the serfs and what all the different classes of people, the kings, the knights, the serfs, the whatever. That's what's wrong right here in the United States. Yeah, race relations are awful but it's not just race. If ever you wanted to

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see what America really is when Katrina happened the veil was pulled back and so clear that race--yeah, it's up here--but class in a notch above. Race and class. We're dealing with two things. It's not just a race issue. It's your status. If you aren't up here then you down here. You about nothing. That's when white on white--. If you're poor they don't really want to see you.

DW: I wanted to ask you what are considered good jobs in Charlotte today and how that might have changed over the years.

GJ: There ain't no good jobs anymore. I guess you might say jobs at Bank of America might be good. That all depends on what a person's looking for. Technically, for black people, the best thing they can try do is try get an education and go into business for themselves.

SH: A business of their own.

GJ: They are not really any good jobs.

SH: Get you some training and everything and open you a business of your own.

DW: Do you feel that the work you have done in the community, do you have a sense that it's appreciated and it's beneficial to the community?

GJ: It's definitely been beneficial and I think it's appreciated. It may not be appreciated by all. It is appreciated.

SH: It sure is.

DW: There's been a lot written about affordable housing and both of you talked about the building up of condos and tow homes in the area as opposedto houses. I was just curious what your take is on this crisis in affordable housing and where it seems that

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public housing is starting to shift. For example, Piedmont Courts will most likely follow the pattern of 1st Ward and follow the pattern of Oaklawn area that the poor people or the low income people who lived in those areas in the past will not be able to return--.

GJ: I know they weren't able to return in Earle Village.

SH: They aren't going to be able to return in Piedmont Courts.

GJ: I don't think so either.

SH: I think it's going to be another Earle Village.

GJ: I do too. They kept saying it wasn't but I really feel like it's going to be just like Earle Village.

SH: If they put condos or something like Girvaud said who can afford it.

GJ: They swear they going to have so many single family units there but that remains to be seen.

SH: If there is, there's going to have to be somebody on Section 8 or something.

GJ: Thank you.

SH: You know what they are doing. The minister and his wife, his wife came over and talked to me yesterday evening. You know the home they have over there, you know the apartments over there next to the South Park area. You know they said they were putting in different areas, the low income apartments. They got to get their property from over there. They got to come out. They are hoping they'll some of those folks out from over there into this house.

GJ: Why are they coming?

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SH: Because they want the property. They are not high class enough to be over there anymore so they got to go. THEY GOT TO GO.

GJ: You see, now there we go again.

SH: That's what you're talking about. They got to go. [Pause] They got nobody from over there. Everyone from over there that's in those apartments has to come out.

GJ: They didn't want them over there.

SH: They got a certain time to be out. They've given them a deadline already. They get ready to push it down.

DW: Do you think the things that are going on in the neighborhood and in especially in Piedmont Courts will be useful or beneficial for the larger Belmont community?

GJ: Nope. Really don't. I think it will be harmful for the Belmont community as a whole. They may not have a lot--. You know, white crime's always something's been hush hush. Kept very well hid but you have more white folks coming over here--.

SH: Oh yes. Husbands and wives.

GJ: Buying these drugs than the law allows.

SH: They find cars.

GJ: You going to come over here and buy drugs in my community, but yet the black folks that sell drugs on these streets are not going to sell drugs on the streets in Myers Park. Number two ask yourself why ain't nary a white person ever been caught and brought in for drugs. [To interviewer, "Now I got to go."] Drugs come in here somehow. I don't care whether Cubans fly them in or the Columbians fly it in. They

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don't sell it once it gets here. It's got to be somebody at the top. It's somebody at the top with money. How is something that is way up here with the dollars getting way down here to the man that don't have a dollar?

SH: Makes you stop and think too.

GJ: Why is it when you go to court and see all these people being prosecuted for drugs, it's always some foolish black person. They'll go out here and they'll feel like they a dime a dozen. Used to be they maybe pimp a dollar and get you out put you back on the street to sell. They don't need you. If you get in there they leave you. They go find another fool to sell for them. Ain't nobody bringing in no white folks and charging them for drugs. There's got to be some very influential people bringing in these drugs. Somebody controlling these drugs, not only in Charlotte, all over. It's just not here.

SH: It's the big ones too. They are really making some moneys.

DW: I just have two more questions and then I'm done. I was going to ask you about the mixed income communities. I've heard some people say that it's a very positive thing.

GJ: That's what Earle Village is.

DW: Mixed income?

GJ: It's mixed income. That's what that's going to be. Uh, uh.

DW: Not a good thing?

GJ: No, because all I see over there more and more is white people.

SH: White folks.

GJ: What black people--. Drugs still over there in Earle Village.

SH: Not long ago there was an incident.

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GJ: Drugs still there. Never left. As soon as they put it back drug's right there.

SH: But you would never hardly know.

GJ: This one girl that used to drive for the school system, when they drive buses they have like three months down time. The school system don't provide them with any work which means they don't have funds and by the time they get unemployment for that time frame it take them that long to get the unemployment check. She had a house in Earle Village, very nice person. She lost her house because she didn't have work for those three months. They going to let you stay there even though you fall behind but you going to pay something. Put her out. What is that to help black people? You trying to work and move into something they say is nice, used to be in the Village, trying to be somebody, trying to maintain your lifestyle. They not working with you. They not working with you at all.

DW: I guess that would go in the face of it the people that were saying it was positive was that at least people that were lower income will have middle class, different people to talk to.

GJ: The only people it's positive for is they got some people they still providing Section 8 for it.

SH: That's it, bottom line.

DW: The last thing I wanted to ask you both was why stay in Belmont?

SH: Why not stay in Belmont? I like Belmont.

GJ: I do too.

SH: I like it here. I think we're in the center of everything.

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GJ: Uh-huh. It is centrally located to everything.

SH: We are right in the center here. I love it here.

GJ: I may have been--.

SH: I'm serious. I love it here. I was about to get real upset because she was about to move at one point. I was really--.

GJ: I'm still I think eventually I am going to move.

SH: I thank God that she stayed that long. I really do. She's been an asset. She really has.

GJ: Because I would like more space than what I have here. There's no place you can go in Charlotte anymore to get space. Everything's cramped up on top of everything. That's not the way, I don't think God intended for us to live that way. You need your space. I'd like to have me a farm, have me some cows. I'd like to go be a farmer now.

SH: No, she didn't. [Laughter] But the property she did have out was gorgeous. It was pretty. It was beautiful out there.

DW: Now this is my absolute last questions. With all the changes that are going on in the community, what would you say that your ideal neighbors, what would they look like? How would they be given all the changes taking place?

GJ: Within--.

SH: Our little area.

GJ: We have the ideal neighbors.

SH: We really do. We're not just saying this. We have some neat neighbors right in our little area. It's something like, what do you call it, a little comfort zone.

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GJ: Yes, people from other parts of Belmont will come up, well like June. He come up and he say, "This the quiet zone. I can't believe it. Am I in Belmont?" Normally you don't hear shooting, anything down here. It's just like the police hired some guy from England to come over here, clean up Belmont. They had been showing him stats and whatever. I was there that day. He says, "Well, is there is anyplace in that God forsaken community that don't have all these little red dots?" I said, "Sure." He said, "Where?" I say, "On the street I live on." Sure enough when they put McDowell Street up there he didn't see no red dots. Now we've had trouble here lately but we monitor and we'll get rid of it. We'll figure out a way to get it out of here if it gets in. It don't stay long. He say, "Well, why you bring me here? There's your answer. Find out whatever it is they do. What is it she do that makes it green dots on her street? Then you all do the same thing through out the whole community." You see, the whole community's not going to do that because people come in here intent on selling drugs. The president, we had more trouble--. They bust her door down twice, took the battering ram down and knocked the door off the hinges because too many drug dealers was on her porch. If they don't live there, you got them up on your porch--.

SH: Something's going on.

GH: Something's going on. One time I actually had to sit on that street forty-five minutes. I couldn't back up and I couldn't go forward because it was so many of them. They didn't care about you being there. They weren't going to move until they finished conducting their business and all of them were always on her porch. Then she say, "I know you think I'm a drug dealer." I say, "It's not what I think; you don't worry about what I think." I say, "I've always heard birds of a feather flock together and people judge

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you by the company that you keep.” “I wasn’t even at that house, dada dada da.”

“Okay, but it’s you’re house. You know that man ain’t bringing the battering ram and knocking them doors off the hinges for no reason.” He told her, “If I come back and knock that door down one more time, you won’t have a house because I’m going to see to it that it’s taken.” One thing I give him, he don’t like drugs and he don’t like drug dealers.

DW: The new chief?

GJ: Oh no, he’s a drug cop. He’s working in some other department now but he was a street cop, dealt with drug and addiction. That was his job is to get the drugs off the street. He was kind of true to his job. He worked hard at helping clean up things. Then we had another guy that worked hard. McColl fired him because he just got a little bit too close to that comfort zone you talk about where maybe some of them white folks would have been found out. So they hurried up and got him out from over here.

SH: This is the way it is about all the time right in here. This is it. There was a time it wasn’t it but god is awesome.

GJ: Like I say, the thing of it is we know who we deal with because we had a nice house that used to be there, garage house. I love that house. I was crazy about that house but they sold drugs from it all the time. They would make a raid. They never could get nothing. Never. Which says to me you got a leak somewhere.

SH: Have to.

GJ: You got a leak because if you didn’t have you could find--. Same way with the corner house when they raided Wyatt. They came two o’clock in the morning knocking the door off the hinges. They didn’t find nothing. Wyatt wasn’t even there. I

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had seen Wyatt less than four hours before they came. He left out. He didn't take nothing with him. I was looking right out my window. He didn't take a thing with him. When the cops came they couldn't find nothing. Maybe two hours after they left some woman came up the street and went to the old liquor woman's door that used to be there before we got her out from over here, Ms. Bell. She had went and got the package. She knew where the package was in the house. She got it after the cops left. The girl came and picked it up from her. Went back down the Crosscreek and Wyatt, Wyatt is out. You know he was supposed to be serving two lifetime sentences. That man didn't make ten years. This is the thing these old folks they don't make no time in jail once they put them there. They put them right back out here so they can keep the drugs in your community. You work like a dog to help get them out of your community and they put them right back.

DW: I wanted to ask you both if there was anything I didn't ask or anything that you think is important that I should've maybe asked.

SH: Honey, I don't think nothing what you didn't ask. Trust me.

DW: I want to thank both of you all for taking the time out to do this.

SH: No problem.

END OF TRANSCRIPT